

## Defend Libya against imperialist attack!

The following statement was issued by the International Executive Committee of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) on 20 March.

The International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) calls on workers around the world to take a stand for military defence of semicolonial Libya against the attack begun yesterday by a coalition of rapacious imperialist governments. The French, British and US rulers, in league with other imperialist governments and with the blessings of the sheiks, kings and military bonapartists of the Arab League, wasted not a moment in acting on the green light given by the United Nations

Security Council on Thursday to slaughter countless innocent people in the name of “protecting civilians” and ensuring “democracy”. French air strikes were quickly followed by US and British missile attacks, while Egypt’s military regime is providing arms to the Benghazi opposition forces. From Indochina and the Korean peninsula to the US-led occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan today, the “democratic” imperialist rulers waded in the blood of millions upon millions of their victims. Recall that Britain and France historically carried out untold massacres in the Near East, Africa and the Indian subcontinent in order to pursue their colonial sub-

jugation of those areas. Recall that Italy, now providing the use of its air bases for the attack, is responsible for the deaths of up to half the population of Cyrenaica in eastern Libya during its colonial rule prior to World War II.

Prior to the current attack, the conflict in Libya had taken the form of a low-intensity civil war, heavily overlaid by tribal and regional divisions, between the Tripoli-centred government of strongman Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi and imperialist-backed opposition forces concentrated in the country’s eastern areas.

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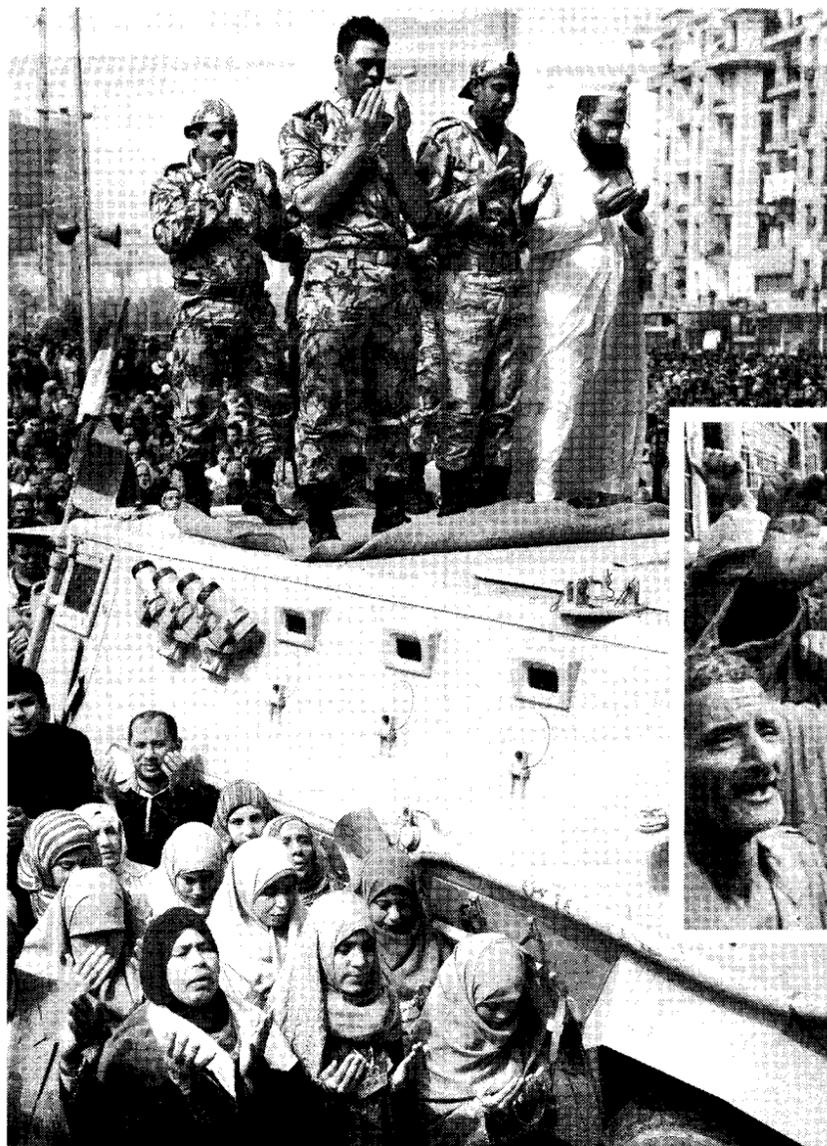
## Working class and oppressed facing capitalist state repression

# Egypt under military rule

The downfall of strongman Hosni Mubarak was brought about by a mass upheaval involving all classes in Egyptian society, including the oppressed women and the working class in the factories who had waged strikes on an unprecedented scale in recent years. However, the upsurge resulted in the takeover of power by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Egypt’s military — the backbone of the bonapartist capitalist state apparatus — now holds direct power, largely with the approval of the working class and oppressed. The democratic aspirations of the masses are a potentially explosive force for further protests, thus the military rulers have been constrained to grant concessions such as putting certain figures from the old regime on trial and freezing the assets of some businessmen while promising that parliamentary and presidential elections will be held later this year.

As yet, the generals have not resorted to outright repression against the working class, relying instead on appeals to the “national interest” to end strikes. However the military council has taken aim at the tens of thousands of workers at Egypt’s Mahalla spinning and weaving factory, whose strikes played a key role in the overthrow of Mubarak. On 17 February, when Mahalla workers re-launched their strikes, the army closed the premises for three days. The following day Egypt’s ruling military council issued a warning that it “would not allow the continuation of strikes harming the economy and national security” (ahram.org, 18 February). Welcoming the army’s statement, the head of Egypt’s Federation of Investment Associations, Mohamed Khamis, said “I think people will follow the instructions because they trust the army” (ahram.org, 20 February).

In an ominous threat of coercion, on 23 March the cabinet approved a law that criminalises demonstrations, protests and sit-ins which are deemed to “interrupt private or state-owned businesses



## For a revolutionary workers party!



Women, soldiers pray during protest in Tahrir Square, 25 February. Right: Suez Canal Company workers in Ismailia City strike, 9 February.

or affect the economy in any way” (ahram.org, 23 March). This effectively means all strikes and protests can be outlawed.

Despite widespread illusions that the army will not attack “the people”, on 9 March the military violently removed the remaining protesters from Tahrir Square. At a press conference a week later, many of those detained by the army

described their experiences of beatings, torture and degradation of young women, some of whom were subjected to “virginity” tests. One report said: “According to eyewitnesses, thousands are still being held in the military camps with detainees packed inside the Egyptian Museum, which has been turned into a torture chamber by the army” (ahram.org, 17 March). Male chauvinist thugs violently

attacked a Cairo demonstration to celebrate International Women’s Day on 8 March, threatening women with slogans including “the people want women to step down” and “the Quran is our ruler”. A few days earlier, Egypt’s Coptic Christian minority were attacked by Islamic mobs in an incident leaving 13 dead and around 100 injured. The violence erupted

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# Libya...

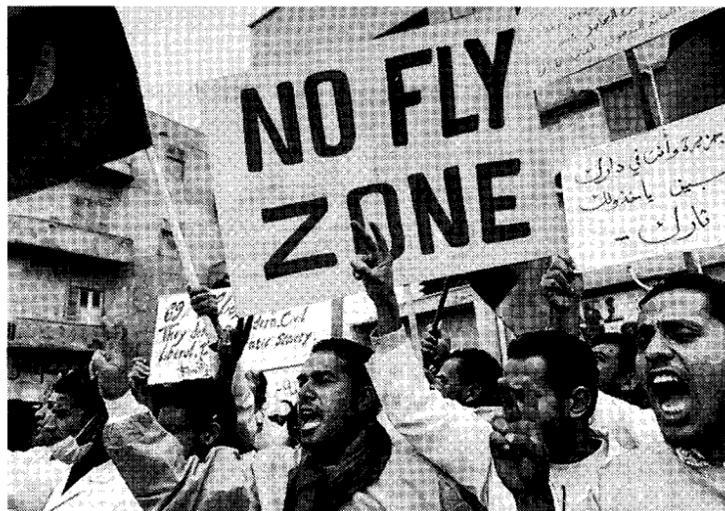
(Continued from page 1)

Workers Vanguard no 976 (18 March), newspaper of the US section of the ICL, noted that “Marxists presently have no side in this conflict.” But as the article continued: “In the event of imperialist attack against neocolonial Libya, the proletariat internationally must stand for the military defense of that country while giving no political support to Qaddafi’s capitalist regime.” The civil war in Libya has now been subordinated to the fight of a neocolonial country against imperialism. Every step taken by the workers of the imperialist countries to halt the depredations and military adventures of their rulers is a step towards their own liberation from capitalist exploitation, impoverishment and oppression. **Defend Libya against imperialist attack! US Fifth Fleet and all imperialist military bases and troops out of North Africa and the Near East!**

Recall that the slaughter of well over a million people in Iraq began with the imposition of a UN-sponsored starvation embargo and a “no fly zone” in the 1990s. The latest action by the Security Council, including the neo-apartheid South African regime led by the African National Congress, underscores yet again the character of the United Nations as a den of imperialist thieves and their lackeys and semi-colonial victims. The abstention by the representative of China, a bureaucratically



Left: Rally in support of Libyan strongman Qaddafi outside Tripoli, 11 March. Right: Supporters of Libyan opposition in Benghazi call for imperialist intervention, 13 March.



AFP photos

deformed workers state, gave tacit approval to imperialist depredation, emboldening the very forces which seek to overturn the 1949 Chinese Revolution.

The crocodile tears shed by the imperialist rulers and their media mouthpieces over the Libyans killed by the Qaddafi regime during the recent wave of protests stands in sharp contrast to their muted response to the continuing massacre of protesters in Yemen — whose dictatorship is a key component of Washington’s “war on terror” — and their ongoing support to the Bahraini kingdom, which hosts the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet. To aid in crushing mass protests, Bahrain last week invited in troops from the medieval-

ist and theocratic Saudi monarchy, a key bulwark of US imperialist interests in the region. In the eyes of the imperialist rulers, Bahrain’s Shi’ite majority and the Yemeni masses are less than human, with no rights they are bound to respect.

Numerous social-democratic leftists, typified by the United Secretariat (USec) and the British Cliffite Socialist Workers Party, have done their part to prepare the ground for imperialist massacres in Libya by cheering on the so-called “Libyan Revolution”. Having urged support for the cabal of pro-imperialist “democrats”, CIA stooges, monarchists and Islamists that comprise the Benghazi-based opposition, these reformists now feign to balk at imperialist military intervention in support of the opposition. The New Anti-Capitalist Party, constituted in 2009 by the USec’s French section, signed a call for a demonstration yesterday demanding that the Benghazi outfit be recognised as “the only legitimate representative of the Libyan people” — which French ruler Sarkozy had already done! At the same time, those left groups that have promoted illusions in Qaddafi’s “anti-imperialist” pretensions — such as the Workers World Party in the US — seek everywhere and at all times to chain the working class to a

mythical “progressive” wing of the bourgeoisie.

We pledge today, as we did at the time of the US Reagan administration’s bombing of Libya in 1986, to “undertake every effort to propagandize the need for the world working class to take the side of Libya” against its imperialist enemies (“Under Reagan’s Guns in Libya”, *Workers Vanguard* no 401, 11 April 1986). In the pursuit of profit and domination, the same capitalist ruling classes that brutally exploit the working class “at home”, only to throw workers on the scrap heap during periods of economic crisis, as today, carry out murderous imperialist attacks abroad. The struggle against imperialist war cannot be conducted separately and apart from the class struggle. Only socialist revolution can overthrow the system of capitalist imperialism which breeds war. Our path is that of the October Revolution of 1917, led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, which was a beacon of revolutionary internationalism for the proletariat everywhere. We struggle to reforge the Fourth International as an instrument that can lead the working masses, from the Near East to the imperialist centres, forward to new October Revolutions and a world socialist society. ■



TROTSKY

## Permanent revolution means the dictatorship of the proletariat

*In regard to Egypt today, reformists mouth the phrase “permanent revolution”, gutted of revolutionary content: the programme for socialist revolution. Writing at the time of the 1905 Revolution in Russia, Leon Trotsky advanced the theory and programme of permanent revolution, stressing that the agrarian revolution, political democracy and other tasks could not be realised by the weak and*

*dependent bourgeoisie. Rather, as Trotsky later summarised in generalising the perspective of permanent revolution to all dependent capitalist countries, the programme of permanent revolution takes as its starting point the need for the dictatorship of the proletariat.*

“With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries, the theory of the permanent revolution signifies that the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving **democracy and national emancipation** is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leaders of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses....

“Without an alliance of the proletariat with the peasantry the tasks of the democratic revolution cannot be solved, nor even seriously posed. But the alliance of these two classes can be realized in no other way than through an irreconcilable struggle against the influence of the national-liberal bourgeoisie....

“The dictatorship of the proletariat which has risen to power as the leader of the democratic revolution is inevitably and very quickly confronted with tasks, the fulfillment of which is bound up with deep inroads into the rights of bourgeois property. The democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a **permanent** revolution....

“In a country where the proletariat has power in its hands as the result of the democratic revolution, the subsequent fate of the dictatorship and socialism depends in the last analysis not only and not so much upon the national productive forces as upon the development of the international socialist revolution.”

— *The Permanent Revolution* (1929)

reprinted in *The Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects* (1969)



LENIN

# WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

For a federation of workers republics in the British Isles!  
For a Socialist United States of Europe!

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## Partisan Defence Committee

# Salute to heroic Japanese power workers

We reprint below a 19 March letter sent by the Partisan Defense Committee in New York to the Federation of Electric Power Related Industry Workers Unions of Japan (Denryoku Soren). The PDC also sent the union a donation of \$500, and encourages trade unions and others internationally to do the same. The union in Japan can be emailed at [icemjaf@blue.ocn.ne.jp](mailto:icemjaf@blue.ocn.ne.jp).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The Partisan Defense Committee (PDC) salutes the heroic members of your union who are risking their lives in an effort to control the dangerous situation at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant following the earthquake and tsunami. The PDC is a class-struggle legal and social defense organization associated with the Spartacist League/U.S., which, along with the Spartacist Group Japan, are sections of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

The valor and dedication of the Fukushima Dai-ichi workers stand in sharp contrast to the parasitism and greed of the owners and managers of TEPCO and their unofficial spokesmen in the government. They have endangered the population with their obfuscation and mismanagement. For the capitalists in every country and every industry, the overriding concern is their profits and not the safety of the workers or the interests of society as a whole.

All of this underlines the urgent need for trade-union control over safety and all working conditions at every level. If the labor of those who toil is to serve the interests of society and not the bottom line of the bosses, it is necessary for the working class to take power and rule on the basis of a collectivized planned economy.

We intend to circulate this message to organizations within the workers movement internationally and encourage them to likewise extend their support.

# War against Qaddafi's Libya: imperialist terror and lies

The following article is adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 977, 1 April 2011.

MARCH 31 — For two weeks, US, British and French imperialist forces have pounded the semicolonial country of Libya with a brutal air bombardment and sea-based missile attacks. In attacking the military defences of bourgeois strongman Muammar el-Qaddafi's regime, the imperialist coalition is attempting to clear the way for the Libyan opposition — a motley bunch that includes monarchists, tribal leaders, Islamists, CIA assets, defecting military officers and former regime officials — to advance towards territory held by Qaddafi.

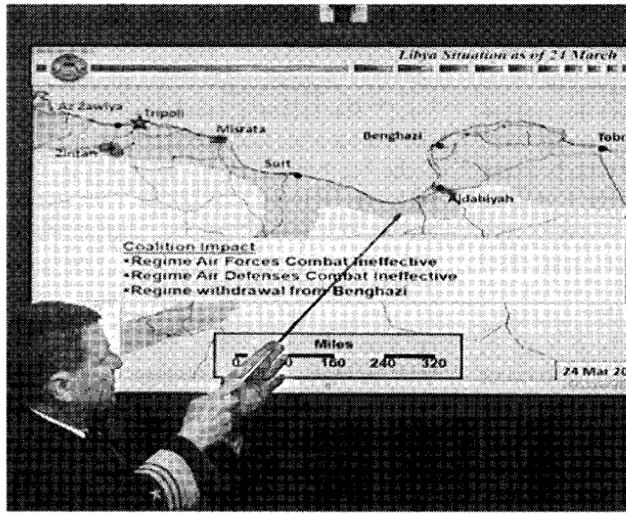
Barack Obama and his French and British allies self-righteously proclaim that their military intervention into this oil-rich country is for the purpose of “protecting civilians” — the cover provided by a resolution of the United Nations Security Council. The US military, parroted by its agents in the bourgeois press, routinely lies that the “precision” strikes have singed nary a hair on the head of a civilian. Just three days into the air war, Libyan villagers were shot by US Marines retrieving a pilot whose jet crashed outside Benghazi. The civilian toll is sure to mount with the continuation of operations, now under NATO command.

From very early on, Conservative prime minister David Cameron advocated a no-fly zone over Libya. On 21 March, parliament overwhelmingly voted to support the military attack on Libya outlined in the UN resolution. Intoning that military action against Qaddafi was needed to “avert a bloody massacre”, Cameron was backed foursquare by the Labour Party leadership under Ed Miliband who described the bombing of Libya as “a just cause”, saying of the Qaddafi regime: “We have seen guns being used on unarmed demonstrators. We have watched warplanes and artillery being used against civilian population centres”. Miliband is upholding the blood-soaked mantle of Tony Blair who was second to none in supporting US imperialism in the bombing of Serbia in 1999, the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and again of Iraq in 2003.

As noted in the International Communist League statement printed on page one, what had essentially been a civil war between Qaddafi's Tripoli-centred bourgeois regime and an imperialist-backed opposition based in the east of the country — a conflict in which the proletariat had no side — became subordinated to imperialist military intervention with the start of the bombing on 19 March. In the present conflict, the workers of the world have a side: military defence of semicolonial Libya against imperialism and the opposition forces, which are acting on the imperialists' behalf. As revolutionary leader VI Lenin explained in *Socialism and War* (1915): “If tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China on Russia, and so on, these would be ‘just,’ and ‘defensive’ wars, *irrespective* of who would be the first to attack; any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory against the oppressor, slaveholding and predatory ‘Great’ Powers.”

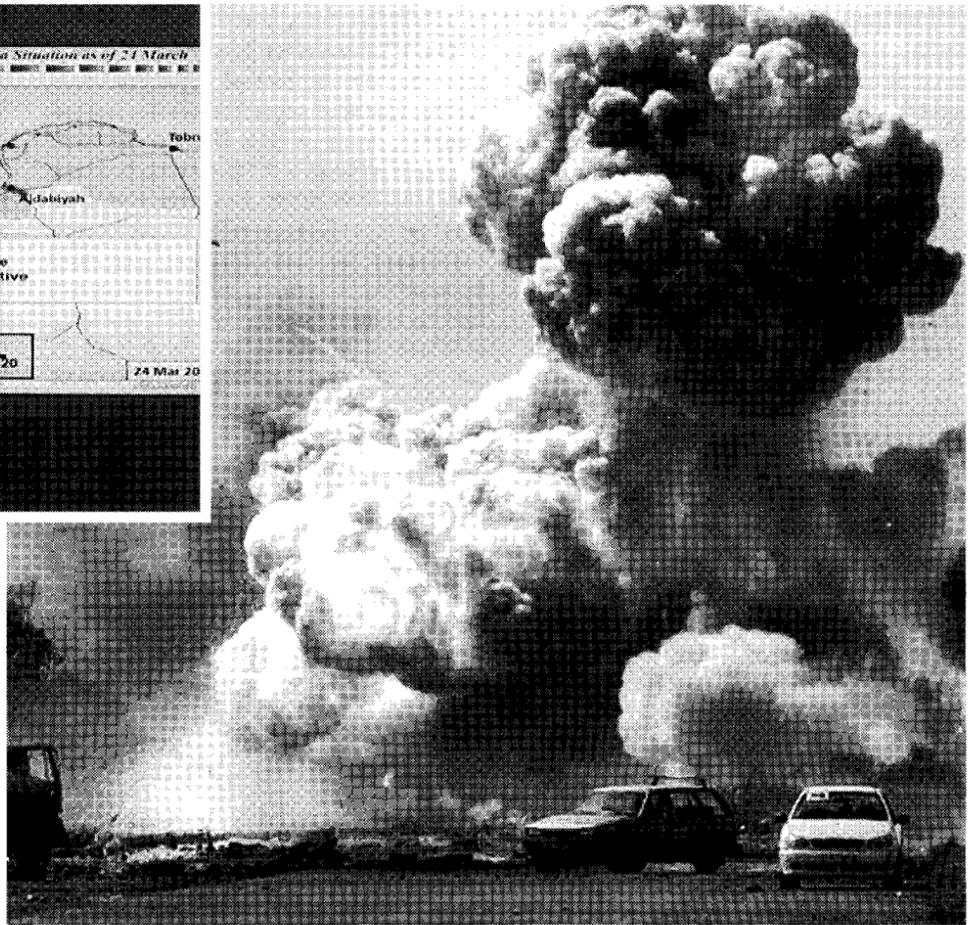
## Imperialist brigands, media hacks

Just as the capitalist press retailed George W Bush and Tony Blair's lies about Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction”, the capitalist press is demonstrating



Getty (inset), Reuters

**Right: Bomb attack on Libya, 20 March. Above: 24 March Pentagon briefing, as imperialists continue to pound away in support of their front men in anti-Qaddafi opposition.**



again over Libya that truth is the first casualty of war. Lurid tales — none verified — of a mass slaughter of Libyan civilians in the east were wielded as the *casus belli*. The *New York Times* editors who retail the line that the Western attack is about defending helpless people were the ones who did Washington's bidding by knowingly suppressing the fact that Raymond Davis, the man arrested in Pakistan earlier this year for killing two men, was working for the CIA.

An official of the North Korean bureaucratically deformed workers state made the utterly rational statement that Libya's dismantling of its nuclear weapons programme had made it vulnerable to military intervention by the West (*New York Times*, 24 March). Thanks to that intervention, which began eight years to the day after the US-led “shock and awe” assault on Saddam Hussein's Iraq, the rebels have recaptured much of the territory they had earlier lost to the Libyan government. Nevertheless, as we go to press, Qaddafi's forces have repulsed the rebels' attack on his hometown of Surt.

The imperialist powers did not get where

they are by protecting civilians, but by slaughtering those standing in the way of their quest for profit and world domination — and by providing money, arms and “advisers” for their colonial and neocolonial lackeys. While those protesting the oppressive US- and British-backed regimes in Bahrain and Yemen are gunned down and dispossessed Palestinians face a renewed wave of Zionist state terror, Cameron and Obama cry crocodile tears for the Libyan rebels, whom they are now considering arming.

Richard Falk, a UN spokesman, pointed out that the Libyan uprising was “more in the nature of a traditional insurrection against the established order than a popular revolution inspired by democratic values” (*Al Jazeera*, 23 March). He added that threats of intervention only arose when “the domestic tide turned in favour of Tripoli, which means that intervention was called upon to overcome the apparent growing likelihood that Gaddafi would reestablish order in his favour”.

As Marxists, we have always politically opposed Qaddafi's capitalist regime, a dictatorship that has brutally suppressed any-

one suspected of opposing his rule. At the same time, we have consistently defended Libya against imperialist attacks, as in the 1986 US bombing under Ronald Reagan. At that time, Qaddafi's daughter was killed in an attack on the family compound that was clearly meant to assassinate him. For the US Cold Warriors, chief among Qaddafi's “crimes” at the time was that he was a military client of the Soviet Union. With their current attack on Libya, the imperialists are jettisoning the rapprochement they reached with Qaddafi over the last decade, when his regime closely collaborated with Washington in the “global war on terror” and helped police the Mediterranean to keep African immigrants out of Europe.

For its part, the Libyan opposition is angling to gain control of the country's substantial oil and natural gas wealth. Rebel forces have been rounding up, torturing and killing anyone suspected of being a Qaddafi supporter, especially black Africans alleged to be his mercenaries. Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch reports that fleeing Africans have been pushed off ships sent by European governments to evacuate their nationals (“The Battle for Libya”, *New York Review of Books*, 7 April). In this, the opposition takes its cue, and then some, from the oppression of African migrants under Qaddafi. As for the “humanitarian” imperialists, European governments are ramping up efforts to prevent refugees from making it to their countries.

Even before the bombing began, we noted in “Imperialists Hands Off Libya!” (*Workers Vanguard* no 976, 18 March) that the proletariat in Libya had been devastated as a result of the civil war, with migrant workers fleeing the violence and racist attacks. The article continued:

“The future of the Libyan masses will be decided by working-class struggle that extends beyond the national terrain to include the proletariats of Algeria, Tunisia and, especially, Egypt. That requires the forging of revolutionary working-class



Spartacist Canada

French flag at 19 March Toronto demonstration built by International Socialists.

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# Egypt...

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over a relationship between a Christian man and a Muslim woman, which is taboo in Egypt. In a society where barbaric “honour killing” is common, according to a 15 March BBC report the woman’s father was killed by a family member for failing to kill his daughter.

The imperialist powers, who trembled during the anti-Mubarak mobilisations, have given a vote of confidence to Egypt’s military regime, which for decades ensured that Egypt was a strategic ally of US imperialism alongside Israel. British prime minister David Cameron visited Egypt in February, followed by US secretary of state Hillary Clinton in March. Clinton intoned in Cairo that the people of Egypt “broke barriers and overcame obstacles to pursue the dream of democracy”. Within days French, British and US armed forces unleashed the massive bombing of Libya, with the crucial backing of Egypt’s presidential hopeful Abr Mousa who is secretary general of the Arab League. The bombing of Libya is a bloody affirmation

(bourgeois) democracy. The urgent task of revolutionaries in regard to Egypt is to dispel illusions in the myth of a classless “democracy”, which politically disarms and disorients the working class and is an obstacle to building a revolutionary party in Egypt.

We print below an abridged version of a presentation given by comrade Mick Connor at a Spartacist League public meeting in London on 26 February.

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On 17 December last year, a young man named Mohamed Bouazizi was selling fruit and vegetables in the central Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid. He was forced to work as a street vendor, because like countless other Tunisian youth he was unable to find any other employment. For years he had been abused and harassed by the police, ostensibly for not having a permit to sell. On that day they confiscated his goods and beat him. In protest at this treatment Mohamed Bouazizi set himself alight. He died of his injuries on 4 January.

The death of this young man was the spark that lit the blue touch paper across the Arab world, leading to the downfall of

demands, spurred by the increasingly intolerable conditions of life. Workers are demanding bread and freedom. But the situation has also created an opening for the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood.

With the dictators overthrown what happens now? There is no automatic progression from these upheavals to a socialist revolution against the capitalist order. Winning the most fundamental necessities of life — decent jobs for all, healthcare and education — requires the working class to emerge as the leader of all the oppressed — the unemployed youth, the impoverished peasant masses, the urban poor and the women — and to fight for power in its own name. Our task as Marxists, through our propaganda, is to popularise the programme of socialist revolution, which alone can address the felt needs and aspirations of the masses. The fight for socialist consciousness, and for a programme that will achieve the emancipation of the workers and the oppressed in North Africa and the Near East, means overcoming many obstacles.

Chief among those obstacles today is pervasive nationalism as was seen in the

1882. In 1952, a group of military officers known as the Free Officers Movement, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, overthrew the monarchy and ended the British occupation. Since that time the army has been viewed as a guarantor of national sovereignty, particularly against the Zionist state of Israel.

Nasser, a bourgeois nationalist, claimed to be leader of a mythical “Arab socialism”. His success in peddling this myth was aided by the treachery of the Stalinist Communist Party, which supported him. In fact Nasser aimed to crush the combative Egyptian working class and within a month of seizing power he delivered a massive blow to the workers movement. When a textile workers strike broke out in Kafr Al-Dawwar near Alexandria, Nasser had two strike leaders hanged on the factory grounds. The Communist Party was banned and strikes were outlawed. Undeterred by the murder and imprisonment of their own comrades, the Stalinists continued to support Nasser, finally liquidating into his Arab Socialist Union in 1965.

The role of the military in Egyptian politics has remained the same under the subsequent dictatorships of Anwar el-Sadat and then Mubarak. While Mubarak was hated and despised, there are considerable illusions even today in Nasserism, due largely to the betrayals of the left.

## For a revolutionary vanguard party!

In fact there has been a significant wave of workers strikes over the past few years, notably in 2007. Over two million workers have taken part in more than 3000 strikes, sit-ins and other actions in the past decade, largely in response to privatisation which has brought increased misery to the working people. The strikes have been spearheaded by workers at the Mahalla al-Kobra textile mills, the country’s largest industrial complex with a workforce of 40,000 workers, including a large number of women. Mahalla workers walked out on the first day of the anti-Mubarak protests, directly opposing the regime for the first time. Around 6000 workers on the Suez Canal also went on strike. The Canal is one of the world’s strategic waterways, with around eight per cent of international trade passing through it.

The proletariat is the only class with the social power and historic interest to overthrow the capitalist system. That requires the working class to be transformed from a class *in itself* — simply defined by its relationship to the means of production — to a class *for itself*, fully conscious of its historic task to seize state power and reorganise society.

The indispensable instrument for the working class to take the lead is a revolutionary, proletarian vanguard party which would defend the rights of all the oppressed and downtrodden — women, Coptic Christians, ethnic minorities, homosexuals. A strategic task of a Leninist party is to champion women’s emancipation in Egypt, where women’s oppression goes to the heart of society. Religion in Egypt is omnipresent and, like all religions everywhere, weighs heavily on women. Religion and social oppression are rooted in backwardness and reinforced by imperialist subjugation.

The oppression of women in Egyptian society is codified in law. The Constitution declares: “The State shall guarantee coordination between woman’s duties towards her family and her work in the society” and “the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (Sharia)”. Polygamy is legal, as is repudiation (by which a man can divorce his wife simply by saying “I divorce you”). The woman, of course, cannot repudiate her husband. Abortion is illegal in Egypt, with very few exceptions,

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Grey Villet



Reuters

Combined and uneven development in Egypt. Left: State-owned TV manufacturing plant, 1963. Right: Farmer in the Nile Delta. Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution addresses these contradictions.

that the sham of imperialist “democracy” is but a mask to conceal the actual relationship of the neo-colonial capitalist states to the imperialist powers: subordination.

The Egyptian military meanwhile is trying to give the appearance of a transition to “democracy”. A series of amendments to the constitution, centred on minimal measures such as limiting the president to two terms in office, were overwhelmingly approved by a referendum on 19 March. This result benefits the most conservative elements in the society — the military, former president Mubarak’s National Democratic Party and the Muslim Brotherhood — who campaigned for a yes vote. Posters by some Islamic organisations whipped up fears that a no vote would threaten article two of the constitution which states “that Islam is the religion of the state and that *Sharia* (Islamic law) is the main source of legislation” (ahram.org, 4 March). Calling for a no vote were organisations that played a key role in the February mass mobilisations, such as the January 25 Youth Coalition, as well as the secular liberal organisations including the Wafd, Tagammu, Nasserist organisations and the Democratic Front. But the so-called secular parties are politically bankrupt when it comes to combating religious reaction: the January 25 Youth Coalition includes a wing of the Muslim Brotherhood.

The liberals and their left tails are in the forefront of promoting illusions that under mass pressure and “vigilance”, the Egyptian military will usher in a period of

the dictator Ben Ali, which was the catalyst for the sequence of events that has been unfolding in the past weeks across North Africa. The most spectacular and important of these events was the millions-strong protests in Egypt, preceded and capped by a wave of strikes, which finally succeeded in toppling the hated strongman Hosni Mubarak — a strategically important ally of US and British imperialism. Mubarak had ruled the country with an iron fist for nearly 30 years.

The present situation in Tunisia and Egypt provides an important opening for the working class and its organisations to come to the fore, and for the construction of revolutionary workers parties to fight for socialist revolution. While the fall of the bloody dictators in Tunisia and Egypt has rightly been greeted with jubilation by the workers and oppressed, the brutal system of capitalist exploitation and oppression remains intact. In Egypt, power was handed over to the military, the central pillar of the repressive state apparatus. Particularly because there are massive illusions in the army, we warn that the army will not hesitate to use its repressive power against the working class in struggle if capitalist rule is threatened.

The upheavals in Tunisia and Egypt drew in virtually all layers of society, excepting only the upper echelons of the bourgeoisie closest to the regime. It is notable that despite the history of religious and ethnic conflict in the region the protests have centred on secular-democratic

large number of Egyptian flags on the protests. A key task of revolutionary Marxists is to combat nationalism, which is always antithetical to the interests of the workers. Nationalism is used by the bourgeoisie to obscure the class divide between the tiny layer of obscenely wealthy capitalist exploiters and the vast majority of impoverished workers and peasants.

Nationalism in Egypt is expressed in the belief that the army is the “friend of the people”. But whose army is it? The military regime has denounced workers strikes and told strikers to go back to work. Not surprisingly therefore, the army takeover has been supported by all wings of the bourgeois “opposition”, including the Muslim Brotherhood.

In all capitalist countries the army, along with the police, judges and prison guards constitute the core of the bourgeois state, an organ of class oppression to maintain through violence the rule of the exploiters. To win state power the working class will have to smash the bourgeois state apparatus, including by splitting the army along class lines — the conscripts versus the bourgeois officer corps — winning the soldiers to the side of the working class.

Illusions in the army are a deadly danger to the working people and the oppressed but they run very deep. Egyptian nationalism was born of British imperialist subjugation and humiliation — the British had occupied the country from

# Pandering to reactionary Muslim Brotherhood

The following article is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 974, 18 February 2011.

The ouster of Mubarak after years of dictatorship has lifted the lid on Egyptian society and its many contradictions. The tremendous mobilisations of unemployed youth, students, women and workers have created space for the left and working class to engage more openly in political activity—an opening that is directly threatened by the military takeover. At the same time, the upheaval has provided an opening for the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood, the country's largest opposition movement.

While many protesters say that they would oppose the Brotherhood coming to power, in the absence of a viable revolutionary proletarian alternative it could win a hearing among the desperate masses. This is not least because it provides clinics, schools, charities and other social services for slum dwellers that the bourgeois state fails to provide. A mass movement, the Brotherhood is heavily entrenched among professionals, students, peasants in rural areas and other petty-bourgeois layers as well as the lumpenproletariat of the impoverished urban slums. In the last parliament, despite state repression and electoral rigging, the Brotherhood had 88 seats compared to the 34 seats for all other opposition parties combined.

Because of its historic hostility to workers struggles, the Brotherhood has not made significant inroads into the working class. But it has found allies in its attempt to win support among workers and youth. The opportunist Revolutionary Socialists (RS) group in Egypt—heavily promoted by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain, a section of the international tendency founded by the late Tony Cliff—has been fostering suicidal illusions in the Brotherhood. The RS tries to invest these obscurantist clerical forces with “anti-imperialist” credentials and has pursued alliances with them over several years. No one should be fooled by the Brotherhood's claim to fight against “all forms of injustice, tyranny, autocracy and dictatorship”, as a statement of theirs published in the *Guardian* (8 February) proclaims. Whether or not it is currently in any position to make a bid for power, the Muslim Brotherhood represents a deadly danger to the working class, the Coptic Christian minority, all secularists, gays and especially the brutally oppressed women of Egypt.

The RS is so fascinated by these reac-



1953: US president Eisenhower meets in White House with group of Muslim delegates, seeking to build anti-Communist alliance during Cold War. Muslim Brotherhood leader Said Ramadan is second from right.

## Cliffites on Egypt



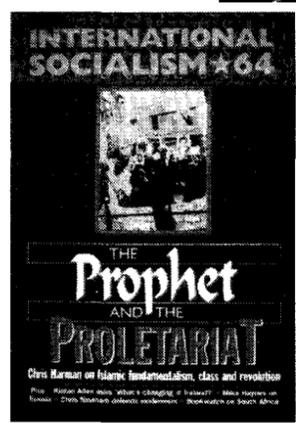
5 February Muslim Brotherhood statement posted on Revolutionary Socialists organisation website.

tionaries that it posted on its website a 5 February statement by the Brotherhood, complete with the Brotherhood's emblem of crossed swords. In a reminder of the criminal betrayal by the opportunist left internationally in the 1978-79 upheaval in Iran, when these groups supported the mullahs led by Ayatollah Khomeini, the RS today is championing anti-Semitic Islamic reaction in Egypt. Capitulation to Islamic forces or any other form of religious reaction is antithetical to secular humanism, not to mention the liberating goals of socialism.

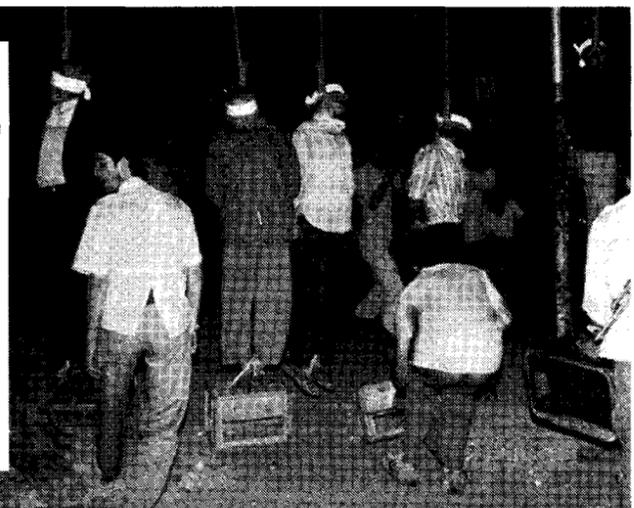
In an article titled “Comrades and Brothers”, published in *Middle East Report* (Spring 2007), Hossam El-Hamalawy, a self-described socialist journalist, boasts that the RS “pushed for close coordination” with the Brotherhood and praises its “brotherly spirit”. The RS joined with the Brotherhood to form the National Alliance for Change in 2005, organising joint demonstrations. El-Hamalawy notes: “The rapprochement between Islamists and the left continued when students from the Revolutionary Socialists’ Tendency, Muslim Brothers and some independents formed the Free Student Union (FSU) in November 2005, with the aim of acting as a parallel organization to the government-dominated student unions.”

The RS fatuously claims that the Brotherhood has “contradictions” that socialists can exploit. As our Canadian comrades wrote when the Cliffites used the same argument to support the intro-

duction of *sharia* courts (!) in Canada, “The contradiction in religion lies in the fact that human beings created religions, only to have their creations rule over them like a Frankenstein monster. It is obscene to have to debate with ostensible Marxists whether clerical reaction should



Left: Cliffite leader Chris Harman's 1994 paean to “anti-imperialist” Islamic reaction. Right: 1980 executions in Iran, as “revolutionary” Khomeini regime unleashed terror against workers, leftists, women, national minorities.



Karim/AI Akhbar

be supported. Marxists regard all modern religion as an instrument of bourgeois reaction that defends exploitation and befuddles the working people” (see “Sharia ‘Socialists’”, *Workers Vanguard* no 861, 6 January 2006).

In March 2006, the RS issued a pamphlet by the Center for Socialist Studies, *The Muslim Brothers: A Socialist Perspective*. The pamphlet opens with a denunciation of the Egyptian Stalinists for characterising the Brotherhood as “a political enemy of the left that must be fought at all levels”. El-Hamalawy's 2007 article echoes this theme, stating: “Most independent leftist organizations in the 1980s and 1990s hewed to a line on political Islam similar to that of the Egyptian Communist Party”, which translated into an alliance “with the Egyptian secular intelligentsia—and with Mubarak's regime”.

We Marxists reject this bankrupt reformist framework, which posits that the only two “choices” for the working class in Egypt are to capitulate either to the “secular”, military-backed bourgeois nationalist regime or to political Islam. In fact,

these are *alternative ways* of propping up capitalist class rule, the system which ensures vast wealth for its rulers and dire poverty for the urban and rural masses. We look instead to the revolutionary mobilisation of Egypt's proletariat, standing at the head of all the oppressed, in a fight for socialist revolution, which alone can address the fundamental problems facing the masses. We oppose the ban on the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamists, which bolsters their credibility and also fosters illusions in the “secular” credentials of the bourgeois nationalists while buttressing the repressive powers of the capitalist state.

The RS's criticisms of the Stalinists for reliance on the state are a cover for its accommodation to the Muslim Brotherhood. For our part, we understand that bourgeois rule in semicolonial countries like Egypt, which groan under abject poverty and subjugation to imperialism, reinforces social backwardness and the hold of the Brotherhood and other reactionary religious forces.

### Muslim Brotherhood: a reactionary mass movement

The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by Hassan al-Banna in 1928, when there was widespread disappointment at the fail-

ure of the weak secular nationalist parties to secure Egypt's independence from British colonialism following the 1919 uprising. Under the slogan: “The Koran is our constitution”, al-Banna preached a fundamentalist Islamism and aimed at establishing a theocratic state in Egypt. The organisation rapidly grew, branching across the Islamic world from Algeria and Jordan to Pakistan.

The Brotherhood became a tool for the monarchy against its political opponents, sponsoring assassinations and mass violence against Communists and the bourgeois-nationalist Wafd party and providing shock troops to break workers strikes. After the army seized power in 1952, Gamal Abdel Nasser briefly embraced the Brotherhood before ruthlessly suppressing it. Anwar el-Sadat and Hosni Mubarak alternately repressed and demonised the Brotherhood or tolerated it. Sadat released Islamists jailed by Nasser and funded, armed and trained them as an effective antidote to Communists and other leftists. Emboldened by the state, Islamists turned university campuses into

*continued on page 11*

## Capitalist austerity and anti-Muslim witch hunt

The following is translated from Spartakist no 185 (October 2010), published by our comrades of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany. The “Hartz IV” laws referred to in the article are a series of measures enacted in 2003-05 by the former Social Democratic (SPD)/Green coalition government that greatly reduced unemployment and social welfare benefits. This translation is reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 971, 7 January 2011.

### SPARTAKIST 4

More than 80 billion euros [£70 billion]: that is how much the “savings package” put forward by the Christian Democrat/Free Democrat (CDU/FDP) government intends to cut from the federal budget by 2014. There is already talk of further budget slashing of the same order for the following two years. The largest part of this, over a third, targets social welfare, ie, those receiving unemployment benefits under “Hartz IV” laws. Their number climbed to 6.7 million in April 2010, including 1.7 million children. Society’s poorest and weakest are being forced to pay for the crisis of capitalism. In a situation where there is massive popular rage directed at banks fattened up by the state and at the government’s “savings package”, former Bundesbank [federal bank] exec board member Thilo Sarrazin’s inflammatory anti-Muslim tract *Deutschland schafft sich ab* [Germany does itself in], which claims that Muslims have too many children and threaten to “take over” Germany by 2100, was like a gift from heaven.

The debate over Sarrazin speaks to an ominous new, brazen display of German imperialism that started to become apparent early in 2010 with the Greek economic crisis. Germany had hitherto played the paymaster whenever the European Union (EU) got into economic difficulty. But now German capital allowed Greece to slide more and more towards the very brink of insolvency, blocking EU rescue plans while interest rates on Greek bonds skyrocketed.

It was only when interest on Portugal’s government bonds also began to rise, in a scenario where Greek bankruptcy was going to be followed very shortly by the insolvency of Portugal, Spain and even Italy, that [German chancellor Angela] Merkel yielded, agreeing to an extortionate “rescue package”. Chauvinism of the vilest sort was unleashed against the Greeks over “aid” payments for liabilities held in large part by German banks. In other words, first and foremost the German banks were being aided, while the German state rakes in repayments with compound interest clawed out of the hides of the Greek populace. Such German imperial arrogance has not been seen for a long time indeed.

Demagogic incitement is neither new nor surprising for Sarrazin, a member of the SPD since 1973. Last year he was raving against Muslim immigrants in Berlin “continually producing new little head-



### Forge a multiethnic revolutionary workers party!



Top: IG Metall union rally demands equal pay for contract workers at Airbus in Hamburg, 18 August 2010. Bottom: Food line in Munich.

scarf girls” (*Lettre International*, September 2009). Demands were raised to increase the Hartz IV payments for children at the beginning of 2010 after the Federal Constitutional Court declared the rates unconstitutional (of course, not because they were far too meagre but solely for not being “transparent” enough). FDP foreign minister Guido Westerwelle rejected this as “late Roman decadence”, while promptly discerning “socialist features” in the discussion. Sarrazin criticised Westerwelle...and then went him one better. Hartz IV recipients, he opined, could save money on water: “Showering with cold water is really much healthier. No one who takes hot showers has ever gotten far in life” (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1 March 2010).

Sarrazin’s vile tract openly advances classic race “theories” whereby intelligence is inherited and genetic differences between ethnic groups exist. Immigrants’ inferior education is supposedly based on their genes, shifting attention away from the social causes of the wretched state of

education. The 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment study confirms once again “that in scarcely any other comparable industrial country is educational success so closely tied to social origins as in Germany”. The cutbacks following capitalist reunification of Germany [in 1990] have only increased this social discrimination: “Only six out of 100 working-class children commence university study, while 49 out of 100 high school students from top-earning families go on to attend university.... Between 1982 and 2003 the percentage of university students from the topmost social layer has risen steadily, from 17 to 37 percent, whereas the share of students from the lowest layer has decreased from 23 to 12 percent.”

Immigrants brought here in the 1960s as “guest workers” for the most wretched jobs still predominantly belong, along with their German-born children and grandchildren, to the lowest social layers of this racist capitalist society. Situated primarily in the working class, they are

disproportionately affected by Hartz IV. This is also the case for East Germans — who, at a rate of more than 17 per cent, are twice as likely to be Hartz IV recipients as the nationwide average — and for single parents, ie, mainly women.

For immigrants, the language barrier compounds the effects of poverty, not only making it difficult to deal with government officials, doctors and the like, but also causing children to fail in school. Since in the west of Germany in particular there are too few day care facilities, where attendance also costs the parents money, these children fail to learn the language as toddlers and are unable to follow instruction conducted in German once they go to school. By the time they have halfway mastered the language, they are hopelessly behind in the subject matter and many do not succeed in getting any secondary school diploma. Without such a diploma these youth are then condemned to poorly paid, insecure jobs and are much more likely to be funnelled into Hartz IV. This, and not some sort of racist garbage about genes, explains the cause of immigrants’ inferior education.

Certain aspects of Sarrazin’s hate campaign that are harmful particularly from the standpoint of foreign policy have been condemned by the CDU/FDP government — eg, all his drivel about a “definite gene” that “all Jews share”. However, Sarrazin’s overall thrust of turning all Muslims into scapegoats, in classic divide-and-rule manner, is finding support. In this way, rage over injustice and poverty can be channelled away from the bourgeoisie and its state. According to Sarrazin’s vile “social-Darwinist” logic, any attempt to improve the desperate social situation of sections of the Muslims in Germany is condemned in advance to failure. And while he spews venom over the “Untergang” [decline] of Germany due to Muslims’ supposedly having too many children, the government is eliminating parental support money for Hartz IV recipients, thereby centrally targeting impoverished Muslim families, along with unmarried mothers.

Far from Sarrazin being ostracised, his garbage is being widely discussed, as if this race “theory” were utterly harmless. In a 4 September 2010 commentary, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* even springs to his defence: “His mention of a ‘Jewish gene’ in an interview was reflexively turned into a scandal — in reality, he had asserted that ‘Jews share more genetic material with each other than with surrounding non-Jewish areas,’ as researcher Gil Atzmon says. This is indeed a political event...not in Germany, however, but rather in the Near East. The wave of public support for Sarrazin...is not for his biased or incorrect theses. It is for his depiction of abuse of the welfare state and of a refusal to integrate, for which almost everyone can cite examples.”

The German bourgeoisie, which brought Hitler to power and bears the responsibility

for the Nazis' race mania that led to the industrial murder of six million Jews, is again publicly and sympathetically discussing race "theories" in its Frankfurt house organ. Racism and anti-Semitism are inseparably linked to the ruling capitalist class.

Widespread receptiveness to Sarrazin's filth is the bitter fruit of the racist "war on terror" proclaimed by the SPD/Green government in the footsteps of US president George W Bush after 11 September, 2001. Abroad, the political construct of a "war on terror" is utilised to deploy the Bundeswehr [army] in the colonial war in Afghanistan. Domestically, people with a Muslim background sit in the state's cross hairs: a racist dragnet was followed by raids on mosques, and thousands and thousands of immigrants were subjected to "checks without reason for suspicion" by the police. Open season was declared on German Muslims, who were kidnapped, tortured and incarcerated in prison hellholes like Guantánamo by the CIA, with the approval and support of the German government, as shown by the cases of Murat Kurnaz and Khaled el-Masri. Bourgeois reaction had thus once again created an internal and an external enemy in order to legitimise the demolition of democratic rights, after Communism had falsely been declared dead with the capitalist counterrevolution in the DDR [East Germany] and the Soviet Union.

The murder of the young Egyptian woman Marwa El Sherbini — before her three-year-old son's eyes — by an enraged anti-Muslim racist in a German courtroom in the summer of 2009 was a direct result of the state-led "war on terror". Sarrazin's baiting fuels a pogrom atmosphere against the Muslim minority and incites murderous racism. Recently, the police confiscated posters of the [fascist] NPD that claimed: "Sarrazin Is Right!" Sarrazin pressed charges against the fascists, but they are just the spirits he has called forth himself.

### Reformism whips up nationalism and racism

A few years ago the filth that is now being purveyed by Sarrazin was heard only from Nazi ideologues, and on 30 August 2010 the SPD Executive initiated an expulsion process against Sarrazin for "having transgressed a boundary line in his statements on the genetic identity of peoples, ethnic groupings or religious communities". The social democrats are polarised over this. Two Berlin SPD motions to expel Sarrazin for his racist interview in *Lettre Internationale* were rejected last year because, according to the party's arbitration commission, it could see "neither a party-damaging nor a dishonourable act". The SPD Executive was then deluged with hundreds of e-mails, letters and phone calls. The majority came from non-SPD members who defended Sarrazin; the letters from SPD members were split half and half.

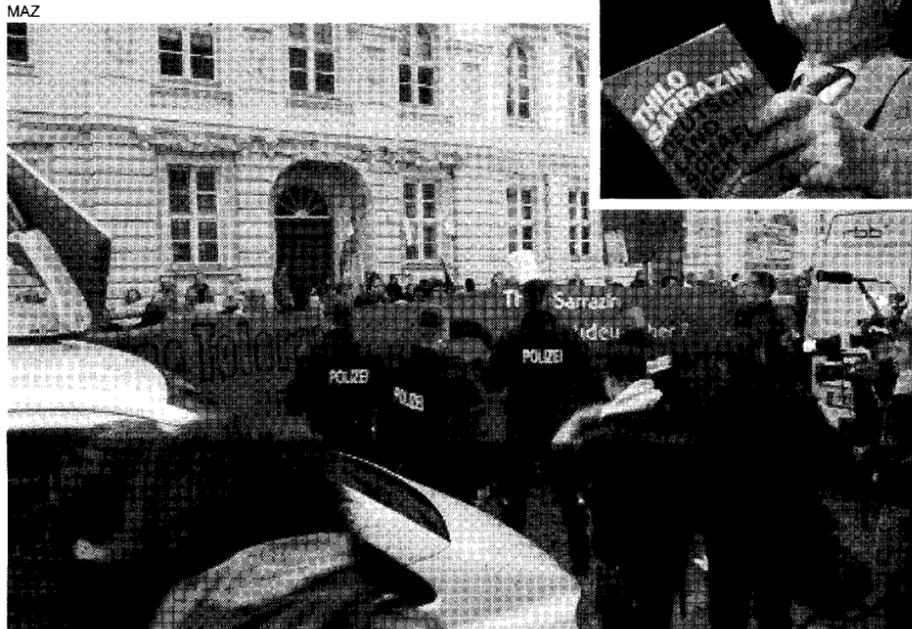
At the beginning of September, according to a survey by the Berlin Info Institute of 1024 registered voters, 36 per cent of the SPD voters and 43 per cent of the [reformist] Left Party voters thought Sarrazin was more or less right (47 per cent of SPD voters and 34 per cent of Left Party voters disagreed with him). Support for Sarrazin springs from the logic of social-democratic reformism, which functions as a doctor at the sickbed of capitalism. This means arbitrating the struggle of various groups of the needy for the ever scantier crumbs from the table of the capitalist rulers, who play off one against the others: "Ossis" [East Germans] against "Wessis", Turkish immigrants against East Germans and immigrants from the former Soviet Union, men against women, etc. All this necessarily promotes nationalism and racism.

Sarrazin is a prime example: In late January 1990 in the Ministry of Finance, he drafted the plan for the currency union between West and East Germany for [then-

chancellor] Helmut Kohl, an important contribution to driving capitalist counterrevolution forward. For his "services" he was made head of the Finance Ministry's technical oversight of the Treuhand [agency established to privatise DDR industry]. Almost 7000 state-owned companies were sold for a song to private investors, 3700 firms were "liquidated", 2.5 million DDR citizens were thrown onto the streets, and industrial capital estimated at 600 billion euros was transformed into a mountain of debt exceeding 200 billion euros. This was accompanied by a racist campaign against asylum seekers, leading to a state-organised pogrom in Rostock-Lichtenhagen in August 1992. At the same time, with its infamous Petersburg Resolutions, the SPD agreed to the de facto elimination of the right to asylum. There followed arson attacks in Mölln and Solingen, where Turkish women and girls were burned alive.

Following reunification, the bourgeoisie also saw no necessity for maintaining West Berlin as a display window to contrast with the DDR, and in 1991 Sarrazin came out for dismantling federal subsidies to West Berlin. Ten years later,

September 9, 2010: cops mobilise in Potsdam against anti-racist protesters outside "book reading" by Thilo Sarrazin (inset), author of vile racist tract *Germany does itself in*.



Berlin was bankrupt. Today, its share of Hartz IV recipients, at 18 per cent of its population, is higher than in any other federal state. Add to this the ruin of the Berliner Bankgesellschaft [one of Germany's ten largest banks] due to the corrupt cronyism of the SPD/CDU Senate. As Finance Senator, Sarrazin then became the whip for the SPD/Left Party Senate that took office in 2002 to "restructure" the city and its bank at the expense of the workers and poor. Here he also excelled in demagogic attacks on the Turkish-origin Muslim populace in Berlin, which was suffering massive unemployment due to industry having decamped from West Berlin. Sarrazin did well for himself, however. Having "voluntarily" quit the Executive Board of the Bundesbank, he now can claim a monthly pension of 10,000 euros.

That Left Party voters agree with Sarrazin is hideous but, alas, not surprising. The Left Party's Keynesian programme of using German capital to create more jobs in Germany is fundamentally nationalistic. The same is true of the "Ossi" [East German] nationalism that they court. And let us recall [Left Party leader Oskar] Lafontaine's infamous speech at Chemnitz in the summer of 2005, where he launched chauvinist attacks on workers from Poland and other East European countries, claiming that "fathers of families and women are losing their jobs because low-wage foreign workers are taking their jobs". If one accepts and strives for responsibility for administering capitalism on a national basis, what other solution is there to unemployment

than aiming to defend "German jobs" in competition against workers in other countries?

### Marx21 and the anti-Muslim witch hunt

The supporters of Tony Cliff in the Marx21 group have participated in various protests against anti-Muslim racism and opposed banning the headscarf in public service in Germany and the ban on wearing the *burqa* in France, which they rightly brand as racist. But in doing so they drop any opposition to the headscarf and/or veil as an instrument for the oppression of women. In contrast, we oppose the veil as part of our uncompromising struggle for the liberation of women. We understand that state bans promote racism, deepen women's social isolation and make it even harder for them to find jobs, strengthening their dependence on husband and family and reinforcing their oppression. We are for the separation of church, mosque and synagogue from the state. Religion is a private matter, and it is not the job of the state to decide who wears what. Simultaneously, as atheist Marxists, we fight

had been armed to the teeth by the CIA and were fighting against the Soviet Red Army after it rushed to the aid of the secular, modernising, left-nationalist PDPA regime. Even today, the Cliffites regurgitate the imperialists' war propaganda against those who fought for the most fundamental rights of women and against the big landowners: "For the left, the [Soviet] invasion was a catastrophe whose effects are felt even today. The leftists had sought to carry out a land reform and forcibly introduce the liberation of women. Hence, in the 1990s the terms 'feminism' and 'women's liberation' were equated by many Afghans with mass murder. Everyone knew somebody who had been slain in the name of socialism and feminism" (*marx21*, June 2008). For us Marxists, the Soviet military intervention opened up the possibility of the social liberation of the Afghan masses, in particular of women. This is why our call was "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Extend the gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!"

Following capitalist reunification, which the Cliffites had supported to the best of their ability, Linksruck, the predecessor organisation to Marx21, ardently contributed to the 1998 electoral triumph of the SPD, calling for years to vote for the SPD — which in 2001 proclaimed the anti-Muslim "war on terror". *Marx21* (21 October 2009) established the connection between Sarrazin's demagoguery and his role in the Berlin Senate:

"As Berlin Finance Senator he continued the line of Berlin mayor Klaus Wowereit (SPD), that it was necessary to carry out savings 'till things squeak.' The interplay at the time between the two recalls the grilling method 'soft cop, hard cop.' Sarrazin took on the role of the 'hard cop,' demanding in a consciously provocative way, sharp cuts in social benefits. This made it possible for Wowereit to slip into the role of the 'soft cop,' who puts a brake on the Finance Senator and institutes 'less harsh' cuts.

"The purpose of such politics is, however, not just to evade responsibility for such policies by pointing to scapegoats. It is also about splitting up resistance to social cuts and racism in line with the motto 'Divide and rule'."

But the Marx21 group says not a word about the Left Party's responsibility for carrying out these assaults in coalition with the SPD. (Like Wowereit, the Left Party plays the "soft cop" role and now rejects much of Sarrazin's filth.) No wonder: In 2006 it still called for re-electing the Left Party in Berlin, despite all the prior instances of the Senate's despicable attacks. Marx21 is deeply buried in the Left Party and has representatives on the party executive. It spreads the illusion that there can be parliamentary governing coalitions — via the Left Party — that serve the interests of the oppressed. In fact, the German state serves the capitalist class and, as Lenin explained in *The State and Revolution*, it is the strategic task of the working class to smash this capitalist state through socialist revolution and replace it with a workers state.

### Hartz IV: an assault on the entire working class

Sarrazin's hate campaign accompanies the government's attack on Hartz IV recipients, which constitutes an assault on the entire working class. Right now the Hartz IV "basic payment schedule" amounts to a pitiful 359 euros per month, from which all expenses except rent and heating must be met. For couples, each receives only 90 per cent of this amount, and children, depending on their age, get 80, 70 or as little as 60 per cent. (Money for child support is also subject to the Hartz IV payment schedule — ie, it disappears.) As Anne Ames observed in her 2007 study, "It's Not Something I Chose...":

"The payment schedule was supposedly based on the statistically calculated expenses of the poorest fifth of one-person households

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# Germany...

(Continued from page 7)

in the Federal Republic. In 2003, their expenses came to 828 euros, or to 526 euros after deducting the cost of rent and heating. Politicians managed to scale these expenditures down to a basic payment of 345 euros essentially by categorizing some types of expenses of the poorest fifth of one-person households as only partially 'relevant to the payment schedule'.

For foodstuffs, 4.36 euros per day are provided. In the case of children who, after all, are growing and need a balanced diet for healthy development, it is — believe it or not — 3.49 or as little as 2.62 euros per day! Even worse, since the estimates for many other necessary expenditures are much too low, Hartz IV recipients must make up for this out of their food money. A result of this is the rapid growth of charitable food pantries in Germany, which either sell food cheaply or give away food they get from supermarkets that cannot sell it (often because the sell-by date has expired). An article in the *trend* online newspaper (July/August 2010) reports: "In 1963 the first of such charitable food distributions was set up in the USA; in Berlin the first one was founded in 1993. By now there exist 800 pantries with more than 2000 distribution points used by a million people, approximately 30,000 mostly volunteer pantry activists and a few thousand temp workers with one-euro jobs [paying about one euro per hour in addition to unemployment benefits]."

Hunger and malnourishment have again become a mass phenomenon in Germany, the fourth-largest economy in the world. Seen as politically desirable, this situation was deliberately brought about by the "left" capitalist SPD/Green government under [Gerhard] Schröder and [Joschka] Fischer with their Agenda 2010 "reform" package. Ever more untrammelled lust for profits — this is how the bourgeoisie celebrates the destruction of the DDR and Soviet Union through capitalist counterrevolution. The CDU/FDP "savings package", which is denounced hypocritically and in lukewarm fashion by the SPD and Greens as "unsocial", is the linear continuation of their own Agenda 2010. The Left Party's declamations against the "savings package" and Hartz IV are no less hypocritical, although this is not obvious to many. All the Left Party's efforts are aimed at administering the capitalist state, and where it participates in governing individual states, as in Berlin and Brandenburg, it carries out and administers Hartz IV poverty for the capitalist class.

Hartz IV expresses the murderous contempt of the bourgeoisie and its political minions for those who generate no profits for the capitalists and whom they hence regard as "superfluous", profit-reducing "sources of expenses". Moreover, the situation of those impoverished under Hartz IV is to be made even more intolerable:

first to intimidate those who still have a job, so that they are thankful to the bosses and accept wage cuts and the worsening of working conditions, and also as motivation for Hartz IV recipients to accept even the most wretched jobs. In a form of de facto forced labour, Hartz IV recipients are threatened with having even these starvation payments slashed should they reject a job that the unemployment office considers "reasonable".

Every year more than 700,000 people are shuttled through one-euro jobs, destroying regular jobs and driving wages down. According to the June 2010 report of the Institute for Work, Skills and Training, currently 17.9 per cent of all employed persons in the West and **39.3 per cent** in the East are working in low-wage jobs. As with Hartz IV, those hardest hit are above all immigrants and their descendants, along with East Germans and women. Almost one in three working women is in a low-wage job and women constitute 70 per cent of the low-wage sector. From the start of the SPD/Green government in 1998 up to 2008, the low-wage sector grew by 50 per cent, to 6.55 million, while these low wages themselves sank. Thus the German bourgeoisie has succeeded in constructing one of Europe's largest low-wage sectors.

## For class struggle against the "savings package" and Hartz IV!

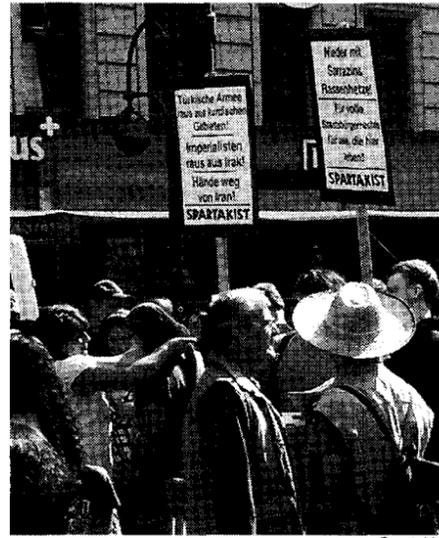
The DGB trade union federation's leadership is now lamenting the fact that since the introduction of Hartz IV, the number of full-time workers whose wages have to be "supplemented" by the state has risen sevenfold to 355,000. Since 2005 the state, they say, has had to ante up 50 billion euros because of "wage-dumping by unscrupulous employers". This again sheds light on the goal of the Hartz "reforms", whose main purpose was not to save money. Essentially, they play workers and the unemployed against each other and act as a battering ram to destroy the unions and drive down the wages and working conditions of the working class, with a corresponding rise in capitalist profits. In 1867, Karl Marx had already analysed this question in Volume One of *Capital* and roughly delineated the necessary response by the working class:

"If its [capital's] accumulation, on the one hand, increases the demand for labour, it increases on the other the supply of labourers by the 'setting free' of them whilst at the same time the pressure of the unemployed compels those that are employed to furnish more labour, and therefore makes the supply of labour, to a certain extent, independent of the supply of labourers. The action of the law of supply and demand of labour on this basis completes the despotism of capital. As soon, therefore, as the labourers learn the secret, how it comes to pass that in the same measure as they work more, as they produce more wealth for others, and as the productive power of their labour increases, so in the same measure even their function as a means of the self-expansion of capital becomes more and more precarious for them, as soon as they discover that the degree of intensity of the competition among themselves depends wholly on the pressure of the relative surplus population; as soon as, by Trades' Unions, etc., they try to organise a regular co-operation between employed and unemployed in order to destroy or to weaken the ruinous effects of this natural law of capitalistic production on their class, so soon capital and its sycophant, political economy, cry out at the infringement of the 'eternal' and so to say 'sacred' law of supply and demand."

Instead of uniting workers and the unemployed in the struggle for a decent life, the union bureaucracy supported the SPD/Green government's Hartz "reforms" and throttled protests against them. Committed to capitalism, it attempts to reconcile the interests of the working class with those of the capitalists. In the name of its nationalist bourgeois programme for "Standort Deutschland" [Germany: the place for industry and investment], the union bureaucracy pressures the workers

to make concessions so as not to endanger German capital's competitiveness.

Not only has the labour bureaucracy allowed the low-wage sector to expand massively through the Hartz laws, but countless sell-outs have caused the wage level of the working class as a whole to sink: while in the last decade gross wages in Germany increased 21.8 per cent, in the EU as a whole they rose 35.5 per cent; for fringe benefits, the increase in Germany was a scant 9.3 per cent versus 38.5 per cent in the EU. This treacherous class collaboration has not only brought about an explosion in profits for the German bourgeoisie, but has also put massive pressure on workers' wages and conditions in other European countries, causing a downward spiral of wages.



Trotskyists at 12 September 2010 Berlin protest against racist anti-Muslim campaign.

The DGB bureaucracy is organically linked to the SPD and Left Party, which are, as Lenin aptly put it, bourgeois workers parties — ie, while they have a base in the working class, they have a bourgeois programme. For revolutionaries, the strategic task is to break the working-class ranks from the bourgeois workers parties through intervention to drive forward the class struggle, aiming to build a revolutionary multiethnic workers party. It was precisely the SPD's ties to the trade unions that made it so useful to the bourgeoisie as a governing party, serving to minimise proletarian resistance to the assaults. But the increasing anger in the working class over the attacks by the SPD-led government plunged the SPD into a crisis and made support to the government by the trade union tops increasingly difficult. Part of the union bureaucracy broke with the SPD in 2003 to found the social-democratic WASG, which later fused with the ex-Stalinist PDS to form the Left Party, whose programme does not differ qualitatively from that of the SPD. Basically, the Left Party is dreaming of a return to the SPD of the "good old welfare state" before Schröder.

To stop Hartz IV's worst excesses, the union tops are demanding a legal minimum wage. But instead of mobilising their rank and file, they want the SPD and Left Party to push this through parliament. The IG Metall union, whose wage negotiations with the steel industry will set a pattern for other unions, has raised the important demand that contract workers receive the same wage as permanent employees. This de facto call for "equal pay for equal work" is not just long overdue. Holding to this basic union principle would have required the most determined class struggle against the introduction of the Hartz laws.

Whether it is the minimum wage or equality for contract workers, what is necessary is a fight to organise the unorganised. Talk about equal wages must not mean silently accepting the firing of contract workers. Rather, contract workers must be mobilised side by side with permanent workers in a battle for equal pay for equal

work and for the complete integration of contract workers into the workforce. This struggle must be linked to one for full citizenship rights for all who live here. Only in this way can the struggle for equal working conditions be extended to those driven into illegality by racist immigration laws. A class-struggle union leadership must be built.

To counter the discrimination against women and immigrants in the labour market, it is necessary to wage a struggle for union control of hiring according to the principle of first come, first served, so that no one can be turned down on the basis of sex or a "wrong" name. At the same time, special programmes are necessary to compensate for the frequently inferior or non-existent professional training women and immigrants receive. It is necessary to fight for the special needs of women and immigrants.

We are resolute opponents of chauvinist forced assimilation, fighting instead for revolutionary integration. Therefore, we oppose making German the exclusive official language in government offices and in schools, etc. However, it is clear that mastering German is a prerequisite for obtaining a job, and that without it, integration is impossible. For this, free language courses must be made available to all.

An adequate number of free, round-the-clock kindergartens is needed so that women can go to work. In 2008, a programme was announced to make childcare facilities available for 35 per cent of all children under the age of three by 2013. In and of itself, this was way too limited. In any case, hardly any deeds have followed the announcement. Also, sending your kids to day care costs money that poor parents often lack. The crying need for additional kindergartens, particularly in the West, drives many single mothers into Hartz IV or keeps the married ones economically dependent on their husbands. Day care centres as well as schools must, where needed, have instruction in more than one language, so that immigrants' children can fully comprehend what they are being taught from the beginning.

It is necessary to break with the union leadership's "Standort Deutschland" ideology and, in internationalist solidarity with the working classes of other countries, wage an unyielding struggle for the interests of the workers, unemployed and Hartz IV recipients. In the 1938 Transitional Programme of the Fourth International, Leon Trotsky elaborated a system of transitional demands linking the struggle for the workers' daily demands, which conflict with the ever more constricted bounds of decaying capitalism, to the urgently necessary battle for socialist revolution. He wrote:

"Trade unions and other mass organizations should bind the workers and the unemployed together in the solidarity of mutual responsibility. On this basis all the work on hand would then be divided among all existing workers in accordance with how the extent of the working week is defined. The average wage of every worker remains the same as it was under the old working week. Wages, with a strictly guaranteed *minimum*, would follow the movement of prices. It is impossible to accept any other program for the present catastrophic period...."

"If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. 'Realizability' or 'unrealizability' is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery."

We are fighting to break the most politically advanced workers and youth from illusions in the SPD and, more particularly, the Left Party and to win them to the task of building a revolutionary, multiethnic workers party committed to the struggle for new October Revolutions. ■

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# Egypt...

(Continued from page 4)

and by law a woman is subordinate to her father or husband. Egyptian law treats adultery by a man and by a woman as two very different things, the latter being far graver.

“Honour killings” and female genital mutilation are common practices, especially in the rural areas where some 60 per cent of the population lives. This is the case in both Muslim and Christian communities. While female genital mutilation is supposedly illegal, and the mosque authorities have pronounced a *fatwa* against its practice, according to the United Nations 96 per cent of women in Egypt between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone this barbaric operation. Egyptian socialist and feminist writer Nawal El-Saadawi begins her book “The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World” with an anguished description:

“I did not know what they had cut off from my body, and I did not try to find out. I just wept, and called out to my mother for help. But the worst shock of all was when I looked around and found her standing by my side. Yes, it was her, I could not be mistaken, in flesh and blood, right in the midst of these strangers, talking to them and smiling at them, as though they had not participated in slaughtering her daughter just a few minutes ago.”

Women’s oppression is rooted in the institution of the family and in class society. It can be eradicated only after a revolutionary workers state has collectivised the economy and laid the material basis for replacing the family through the socialisation of child-rearing and education. The fight for women’s emancipation will play a vital role in the struggle for socialist revolution in Egypt.

Women are increasingly a crucial part of the working class, where they have played a leading role in the strikes over the last decade, especially in the textile industry. The Egyptian woman may be the slave of slaves, but she is also a vital part of the very class that will lay the material basis for her liberation by breaking the chains of social backwardness and religious obscurantism through socialist revolution.

A Leninist party would also defend the rights of the Coptic Christian minority, which suffers discrimination and persecution at the hands of the state, abetted by pogromist Islamic fundamentalists. In December two Copts were shot dead by riot police after protesting against a decision that forbade them to set up a church in Cairo. This brutal repression by Mubarak’s thugs gave a green light to the bombing of an Alexandria church on New Year’s Eve that killed 23 people.

## For permanent revolution!

A regional power in its own right, Egypt is nonetheless a neocolony whose brutal and murderous bourgeoisie is

tied — and cannot but be tied — by a million strings to world imperialism, which benefits from the exploitation, oppression and degradation of its masses. For decades, the main prop of the Mubarak regime was US imperialism, for which Egypt is a linchpin for its domination of the oil-rich Near East. Every year Washington pumps \$1.3 billion in military aid into Egypt — more than anywhere except Israel. Beginning with Sadat’s rule, Egypt has been a strategic ally of Zionist Israel and in recent years has aided in the starvation blockade of the Palestinians in Gaza, including by sealing the border in Sinai.

Egypt is a country of combined and uneven development. Alongside modern industry there is a vast landless peasantry

desperately hoping that a new Egyptian regime would ease their starvation. Prior to 11 February, both Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank had laboured to suppress any solidarity demonstrations. A socialist revolution in Egypt would open a vista of national and social liberation for the oppressed Palestinian masses, and, extending a hand of working-class solidarity to the Hebrew-speaking proletariat of Israel, would help lay the basis for shattering the Zionist garrison state of Israel from within through Arab/Hebrew workers revolution.

Crucially, a proletarian revolution in Egypt would immediately face the need to extend to the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and North America, which would lay the basis for the elimination of scarcity by establishing an international planned socialist economy. In the advanced capitalist countries too the proletariat is facing the effects of the worst capitalist economic crisis since WWII. The proletariat in Western Europe and North America includes large numbers of immigrants from North Africa and the Near East, who are a human bridge to the workers in their countries of origin.

In fighting for working-class power, a Marxist party in Egypt could not simply reject the bourgeois-democratic programme. After decades of brutal dictatorship, there are deep-going illusions in bourgeois democracy. Revolutionary Marxists, applying Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution, must put forward transitional demands linking the masses’ democratic aspirations to the struggle for proletarian power and its international extension.

Marxists must fight for mass, inclusive working-class organisations as embryonic organs of proletarian state power. Our purpose is to win the oppressed and down-trodden to the side of the working class, counterposing its social power and leadership to all wings of the Egyptian national bourgeoisie and struggling to break the masses from illusions in bourgeois democracy.

In recent strikes, workers broke free from the corrupt control of the corporatist union leaders. In the course of their struggles they formed strike committees and demanded trade unions independent of the capitalist state. There is a palpable basis to build broader organisations of the working class, such as strike committees, workers defence guards, popular committees to run food distribution etc. The emergence of such organisations, culminating in workers councils poses the question of which class shall rule. Soviets would be organs of dual power, vying for power with the bourgeoisie.

## The myth of the “Arab revolution”

Reformist leftist groups have taken up cheering for the “Arab revolution”. In fact the “Arab revolution” is an empty phrase. The slogan was popular on the left when Nasser and Qaddafi were posturing as “anti-imperialists”. But the “Arab revolution” by definition was not a class revolution of the workers in the Arab countries against their bourgeois rulers. Instead it was directed against the Zionist bourgeois ruling class in Israel.

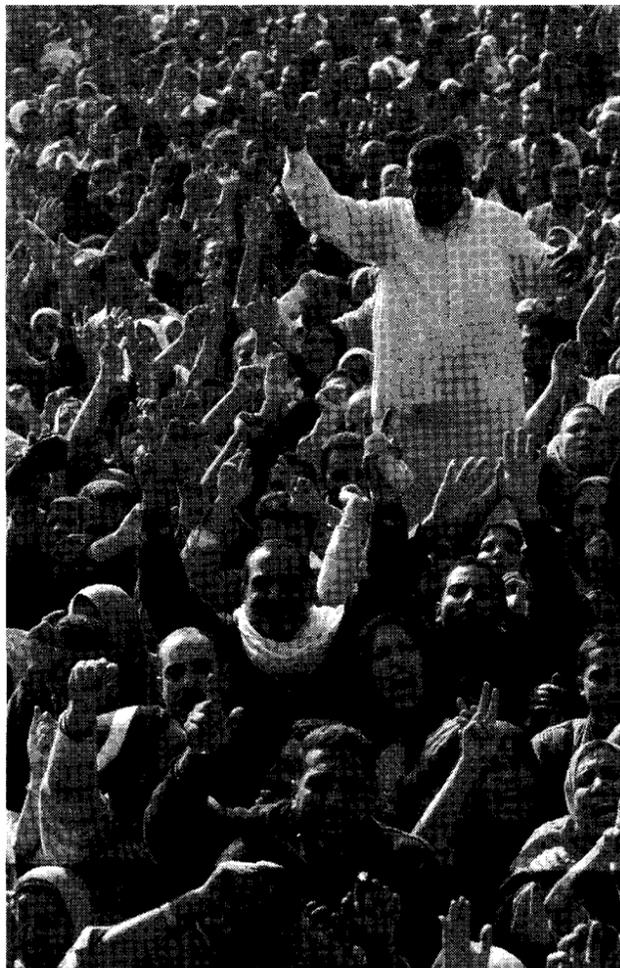
Nasser’s aura as an “anti-imperialist” is undeserved. He was once a bogeyman for the imperialists, but at a time when the existence of the Soviet Union as a counterweight to US imperialism allowed extraordinary latitude for bourgeois-nationalists such as Nasser to manoeuvre between the imperialists on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other. Having been rebuffed by the Americans, Nasser formed an alliance with the Soviet Union. That alliance was treacherous from the side of the Soviet Stalinists, who politically supported Nasser’s bourgeois regime. Nasser later turned on the Soviets and his successor Anwar el-Sadat kicked out the Soviet advisors.

The Stalinist Communist Parties throughout the whole region sacrificed their proletarian bases on the altar of bourgeois nationalism and betrayed opportunities for socialist revolution. This has opened the door to reactionary Islamic fundamentalists like the Muslim Brotherhood to posture as the only firm opponents of the regime. The Muslim Brotherhood represents a deadly threat to the working class, to the left, to the Coptic Christians who make up a large minority of the population, to homosexuals and especially to women. While it plays little role in the workers movement, it is entrenched in the lumpenproletariat of the slums and among petty-bourgeois layers. The Muslim Brotherhood could get a hearing among desperate masses, especially because its charitable works — hospitals etc — provide basic services that the capitalist government does not.

The bankruptcy of Arab nationalism shows the correctness of our programme of permanent revolution, based on an internationalist, proletarian perspective. We have always defended the Palestinian people against Zionist terror and likewise against the Arab rulers who no less than the Zionists are merciless enemies of Palestinian national emancipation. We say: Not Arab against Jew but class against class! That means sweeping away not only the reactionary Zionist state through joint Arab/Hebrew workers struggle, but all the reactionary sheikhs, colonels and kings throughout the region. For a socialist federation of North Africa and a socialist federation of the Near East!

The kind of party that we seek to build to lead the working class to power is modelled on the Bolshevik party that led the working class of Russia to power in the 1917 October Revolution. Led by the Bolshevik party, the working class of Russia overthrew bourgeois rule, freeing the country from the imperialist yoke, abolishing private ownership of land and freeing the myriad oppressed nations and peoples of the former tsarist empire. The achievement of these democratic tasks was combined with the expropriation of the means of production by the workers state, laying the basis for the development of a collectivised planned economy.

Facing the military and economic pressure of world imperialism, the young Soviet workers state succumbed to a political counterrevolution, beginning in 1924. A parasitic bureaucracy, led by Stalin, usurped political power from the working class and abandoned the internationalist programme of the October Revolution in favour of building a mythical “socialism in one country”. The Stalinist bureaucracy severely weakened the Soviet workers state so that it finally succumbed to capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. Despite the subsequent disaster of capitalist counterrevolution the Soviet Union under Lenin and Trotsky showed that workers revolution is possible and necessary. It represented a beacon for the world’s working people in their struggle to throw off capitalist exploitation and oppression. Uniquely today it is the International Communist League that fights for new October Revolutions. Join us! ■



Nasser Nouri

December 2006: Strike by thousands of workers in Ghazl el-Mahalla, part of wave of labour struggle in Egypt in recent years.

under the thumb of ruthless landlords. The country has a small layer of highly educated youth who are technologically savvy. But the country’s literacy rate is only 71 per cent, and only 59 per cent for women.

Authentic national and social liberation requires mobilising the proletariat in revolutionary struggle against the imperialists and the domestic bourgeoisie. A proletarian revolution in Egypt would have an electrifying impact on workers and the oppressed throughout North Africa, the Near East and beyond. In Gaza, thousands mobilised after Mubarak’s resignation, waving Palestinian and Egyptian flags and

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من أجل جزائر عاقبة ثورية

## Egypt: Mass upheaval challenges dictatorship

Translated from Workers Vanguard no 973 (4 February 2011)

10p (4 pages)

# Libya...

(Continued from page 3)

parties as part of a genuine Trotskyist Fourth International, which would link the fight for socialist federations of North Africa and of the Near East to the struggle for proletarian revolution in the imperialist centers."

## Imperialism's "human rights" canard

Many commentators hark back to the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia, carried out under the pretext of protecting the Albanian Kosovars from "genocide", which terrorised and slaughtered Serbians, destroying a hospital, power grids and other infrastructure. The bombing of Serbia was a signal act of the New Labour government of Tony Blair that was elected in 1997. Internationally led by Democratic US president Bill Clinton, the bombing of Serbia exemplified the imperialists' ruse of carrying out their mass terror with a veneer of "human rights".

The notion of "humanitarian" military interventions by the imperialist powers, which became discredited by the bloody occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, is now being refurbished over Libya. Liberal deputy prime minister Nick Clegg was gung-ho for the attack on Libya which he described as "liberal interventionism". On the left, the Alliance for Workers Liberty (AWL) expresses the social-imperialist line of support for the bombing in a leaflet declaiming that: "To oppose—that is, demonstrate against, and make a serious effort to prevent—the limited military action against Qaddafi, is to tell the rebels in Benghazi 'you're on your own'". Describing the imperialist bombing as "the one thing that might prevent untold slaughter" the AWL statement is a "humanitarian" cover for imperialist subjugation of neo-colonial Libya.

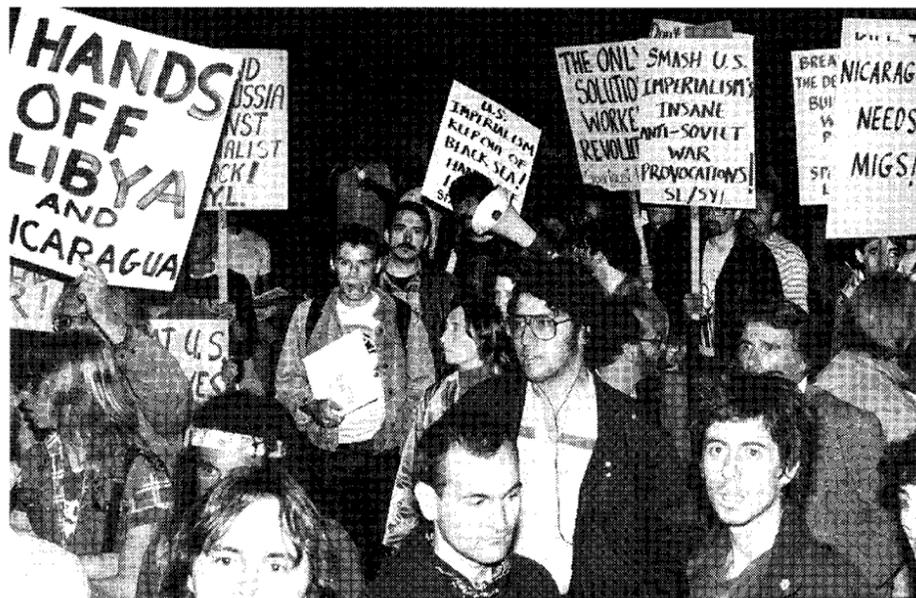
With British and US forces already stretched thin by their murderous occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, bourgeois critics of the Cameron coalition government are voicing concern over getting involved in another endless quagmire. Britain's military chief of the defence staff, General Sir David Richards, has publicly disagreed with Cameron over whether or not the UN resolution allows for Qaddafi's removal. However, the simple fact is that what the imperialist powers are up to is mass terror under the UN banner.

The value that the imperialists place on Libya has mainly to do with its enormous reserves of high-grade oil and natural gas. For example, Italy, Libya's former colonial slave master, depends on Libyan oil for a quarter of its petroleum needs. Calculating its own interests, German imperialism under Christian Democratic chancellor Angela Merkel abstained on the UN Security Council's war resolution, prompting Joschka Fischer, leader of the bourgeois Green Party, to declare: "Germany has lost its credibility in the United Nations and the Middle East." Nevertheless, Germany, along with other European Union members, has called for an embargo on all oil



Reuters

Top: Tripoli, April 1986. Libyan rescue workers sift through rubble of an apartment building after US bombing attack. Bottom: March 1986 Berkeley protest against Reagan administration's war provocations.



Young Spartacus

from Libya. For Libya, a country that imports 75 per cent of its food and pays for it with oil revenues, this could mean mass starvation. Meanwhile, the US has made very clear that there will be no such sanctions against the opposition, which, soon after taking oil production and shipping facilities in and around the town of Brega, announced that they were open for business.

## Imperialism's social-democratic drummer boys

Defence of Libya against imperialist bombardment should be elementary, not only for proletarian opponents of capitalist rule but for anyone repulsed by capitalist powers imposing their diktat on Third World countries through overwhelming military might. Yet the bulk of the "socialist" left internationally has worked to line up workers and youth behind the imperialist murderers by championing the opposition that is acting as their ground troops. They have done this in the name of the so-called "Libyan revolution". But what kind of "revolutionary" appeals to the imperialists to impose a "no-fly zone", launch air strikes or otherwise intervene militarily in their country, as opposition leaders did?

The French New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) early on pledged its "total support to the insurgents". Over Libya, this

social-democratic group—established two years ago by the French section of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec)—achieved convergence with French president Sarkozy, who welcomed key anti-Qaddafi leaders in the Elysée Palace on 10 March and declared the opposition National Council to be Libya's legitimate government. The day after the UN Security Council voted to authorise the "use of force in Libya", the NPA chimed in with an 18 March statement declaring that "the Libyan people...should be given the means to defend themselves and the weapons they need to throw out the dictator". The NPA endorsed the call for a rally held the next day in support of the imperialists' stooges in Libya, which took place as the bombing started.

While the NPA statement muttered that "military intervention is not the solution", Gilbert Achcar, a London-based leftist who associates himself with the USec and the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), had no such reservations. Echoing the imperialists' lying pretext of "protecting civilians" from the vengeance of Qaddafi's forces, Achcar declared in a 19 March ZNet article that "no one can reasonably oppose" the UN resolution authorising the air attacks.

Britain's David Cameron was backed by Labour behind which stands the house-trained reformists, the SWP, who counselled: "Instead of bombing Libya, Western governments could hand all the assets they have seized from Gaddafi's regime to the revolutionary forces" (*Socialist Worker*, 22 March). In other words, the imperialist gangsters who have ripped off the assets of a sovereign country should hand them over to their flunkies.

The SWP's line of "No to intervention in Libya!" but "Victory to Arab revolutions!" is laughable given that the imperialists are intervening *on the side of* the SWP's Libyan "revolutionaries". *Socialist Worker* has carried deluded

articles describing rebel-held Benghazi as though soviets might have sprung up there—gushing about "revolutionary councils" which "offer the possibility of deepening the revolution" (*Socialist Worker*, 5 March). *Socialist Worker* website published a 20 March statement by the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) of Egypt the day after the UN approved the bombing, which says: "The Security Council has chosen military intervention as its first step, without even preceding it by attempts to provide humanitarian aid or weapons to the rebels." The imperialist powers in Washington and London *are* publicly discussing arming the rebels, and both US and British undercover troops are operating in Libya. The RS statement expresses the political bankruptcy of reformism—a touching faith in the imperialist ruling classes as a force for humanitarianism.

The SWP's estranged American cousins in the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which initially embraced the CIA-funded National Salvation Front with open arms, now claims to have discovered that some pretty reactionary forces are in the leadership of the anti-Qaddafi opposition. The ISO spares a few words, on paper, to express opposition to the bombing. But that does not prevent it from continuing to embrace the opposition forces, no matter what atrocities the imperialists carry out on their behalf. At a 20 March forum in New York City, ISO honcho Ahmed Shawki declared: "Today, the West is bombing Libya as its way of getting a foothold back into the Middle East. But we should have no truck whatsoever to do with the Libyan regime or a defense of it, and join all of those involved in the Middle East people getting rid of its dictators."

In Canada, where Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper has contributed half a dozen fighter-bombers to the imperialist assault force, the International Socialists (IS), affiliated to the British SWP, also hailed Qaddafi's imperialist-backed opponents while claiming to oppose the bombing. The utter hypocrisy of this stance was exposed at a 19 March demonstration in Toronto called by the IS's creation, the Toronto Arab Solidarity Campaign, where the IS stood shoulder to shoulder with people carrying huge French and Canadian flags and chanting "Kill Qaddafi!" A Trotskyist League of Canada comrade reported: "Once we saw the vile character of the demo, we increased the size of our team: not to be part of it, but to make our opposition to this pro-imperialist carnival clearer and give it more impact. We stood to the side,

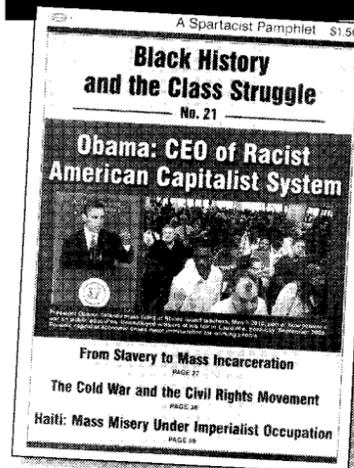
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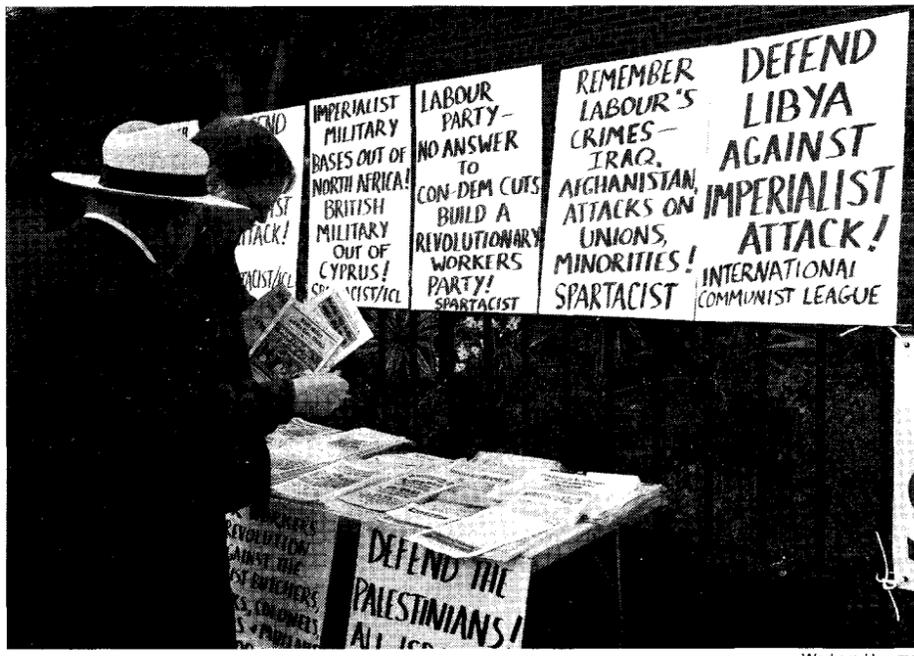
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with placards and chants, declaring 'Imperialists Hands Off Libya'."

The destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92 emboldened the imperialists, centrally the US, to carry out a series of bombings, wars and occupations against weaker countries. Capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union removed what had been the main impediment to imperialist depredations, today exemplified by the slaughter of Afghans and Iraqis by US-led occupation forces.

The social-democratic "left" helped pave the way for these atrocities by hailing the counterrevolutionary forces, from Polish Solidarność to Boris Yeltsin's Russian "democrats". Having discarded even the pretence of advocating proletarian socialism, the reformists increasingly and all the more openly march under the banner of bourgeois "democracy". The USec, among others, promoted imperialist military intervention against the Serbs in 1995 under the guise of providing humanitarian aid for workers in Bosnia. Four years later, the same characters were calling for a European imperialist expeditionary force in Kosovo.

It is noteworthy that a 22 March "Joint Statement" by various Communist Parties around the world—including the Greek KKE, the Portuguese CP and the



Workers Hammer

Spartacist literature table at London TUC demonstration, 26 March.

Indian CPI and CPI(M)—condemns the imperialist intervention against Libya and does not support the pro-imperialist opposition (which it simply avoids mentioning). However, the statement fails to call for military defence of neocolonial Libya, pushing instead a pacifistic appeal for "the peoples" to demand an end to

the imperialist intervention.

The US Workers World Party (WWP) and Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) voice similar opposition to the attack on Libya, mainly driven by their longstanding political support for bourgeois and petty-bourgeois forces in Third World countries that make a pretence of

being "anti-imperialist". The ANSWER coalition, founded by the WWP and now controlled by the PSL, recently staged a series of demonstrations calling to "stop the bombing of Libya" and raising the reformist-pacifist demand that the imperialist rulers spend money on jobs and education, not war. This is the timeworn formula the WWP, PSL and others have used to build class-collaborationist "anti-war movements" that unite "the people" behind a supposedly more benign wing of the blood-soaked, profit-bloated capitalist ruling class.

Imperialist wars, occupations and terror-bombing campaigns are inherent to the system of capitalism in its decay. The quest for cheap labour, raw materials and exclusive markets that compels the imperialist rulers to wage military adventures abroad is accompanied by incessant attacks on the wages and conditions of workers on the home front. The current worldwide capitalist economic crisis has brought massive unemployment accompanied by wage-slashing, elimination of social services and a full-bore assault on trade unions. The only way out is through a fight for proletarian revolutions against the decaying capitalist order. This requires building revolutionary workers parties like Lenin's Bolsheviks—in the US, Europe, North Africa and around the world. ■

## Cliffites...

(Continued from page 5)

*terra islamica*. "They banned, clubs in hand, anything that fell foul of their norms", writes Gilles Kepel in *The Prophet and the Pharaoh* (1993). "Couples were physically attacked for violations of upright Islamic morals; films could not be shown; concerts and evening dances could not be held."

In 1992, fundamentalists shot dead Egyptian intellectual Farag Foda, a secular opponent of Islamic reaction. "The killing of Farag Foda was in fact the implementation of the punishment against an apostate which the imam [referring to the president] has failed to undertake", declared the government-sponsored religious body Al Azhar to justify this heinous crime. Renowned novelist Naguib Mahfouz, whose books were deemed "blasphemous" by fundamentalists, was stabbed in 1994, five years after a leading Islamic cleric had said he deserved to die. In 2000, Islamic fundamentalists ignited riots in Cairo in opposition to the publication of a novel that they considered "heretical" (see "Banquet for Seaweed", *Workers Vanguard* no 770, 7 December 2001).

### From Iran to Afghanistan

The RS portrayed the Muslim Brotherhood as necessary allies in the struggle to bring down the Mubarak regime. The lesson to be drawn from subordinating the class interests of the toilers for the sake of maintaining an alliance with religious reactionaries has been written in blood by history. The International Communist League (then known as the international Spartacist tendency) warned from the outset of the 1978-79 Iranian upheaval that, absent a decisive break by the working class from the Islamic forces, the struggle would have a disastrous outcome.

In sharp contrast to the rest of the left's capitulation to mullah-led reaction, our programme was summed up in the slogans: "Down with the Shah! No support to Khomeini! For workers revolution in Iran!" We warned that Khomeini in power would reimpose the veil, suppress national minorities and seek to crush the left and the workers movement as ruthlessly as did the Shah. Tragically, the Iranian masses paid the price. Khomeini's seizure and consolidation of power led to the execution of thousands of leftists, Kurds, women,

homosexuals and opponents of theocratic rule in what was a historic defeat for the powerful Iranian proletariat.

During the renewed anti-Soviet Cold War of the 1980s, the US imperialists massively armed and organised the Afghan *mujahedin* "holy warriors" against the Soviet Union, using as a pretext the 1979 Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. We hailed the Red Army, whose intervention opened the way to the liberation of the Afghan peoples, especially the miserably oppressed women. We called to extend the gains of the 1917 October Revolution to the Afghan peoples. In the first war in modern history in which women's emancipation was a central issue, the Red Army battled the murderous imperialist-armed and -financed Islamic fundamentalists, who threw acid in the faces of unveiled women and killed schoolteachers who taught young girls to read (see "The Russian Question Point Blank", *Spartacist* [English-language edition] no 29, Summer 1980). We denounced the Kremlin Stalinists' 1989 withdrawal of Soviet troops as a betrayal of women and the oppressed Afghan peoples.

From their inception as a political tendency in Britain in the 1950s, the trademark of Tony Cliff and his followers was pro-imperialist anti-Sovietism, encapsulated in their slogan "Neither Washington nor Moscow". In Afghanistan in the 1980s, this merged with their tailing of Islamic fundamentalist forces. They lusted for the bloodying of the Soviet Army and prettified the *mujahedin* cut-throats as fighters against imperialism. The US Cliffites of the International Socialist Organization declared: "Just as socialists welcomed the defeat of the U.S. in Vietnam, we welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in Eastern Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs" (*Socialist Worker* [US], May 1988). The Soviet pullout was indeed the precursor to the final collapse of the USSR itself. And, to be sure, the Cliffites cheered the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state—a historic defeat not only for the peoples of the former Soviet Union but also for the international working class.

### Myth of Islamists' anti-imperialism

Keeping pace with the rise of political Islam in the wake of counterrevolu-

tion in the Soviet Union, in 1994 the British SWP published a major article in *International Socialism* titled "The Prophet and the Proletariat" by the late Chris Harman, a leading Cliffite theoretician. Harman coined the opportunistic slogan "With the Islamists sometimes, with the state never" and treated Islamic fundamentalist "mass movements" as radical petty-bourgeois nationalist formations which "have taken up anti-imperialist slogans and some anti-imperialist actions".

The notion that the Islamists are anti-imperialist flies in the face of history. During the Cold War, the American imperialists consciously sought to harness the deeply anti-Communist Islamic reactionaries as a force against the Soviet Union as well as secular nationalist regimes. In Egypt, Islamic reactionaries worked hand in hand with the imperialists and the Saudi monarchy to destabilise the pro-Moscow nationalist regime of Nasser. Muslim Brothers were put on the CIA payroll. And for the anti-Soviet operation in Afghanistan, the CIA's largest covert operation ever, the Brotherhood provided a major contingent of the *mujahedin*, led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, now a high-ranking leader of Al Qaeda. Today, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has made clear that US imperialism can do business with the Brotherhood in post-Mubarak Egypt.

Tailing the Muslim Brotherhood today certainly does not prevent the Cliffites from keeping open the option of capitulating to "secular" Arab nationalism. An article in *Socialist Worker* (5 February) notes that "Nasser's brand of secular Arab nationalism still has many supporters inside Egypt" and eulogises the bourgeois strongman Nasser as an anti-imperialist, writing: "As president between 1956 and 1970 he stood firm against imperialism and transformed Egypt."

Here the Cliffites are retailing the illusions in Nasser and the mythical "Arab Revolution" that the Stalinists fostered for decades. In reality, Nasser came to power largely with the aim of crushing the struggles of the combative working class. Neither the "secular" nationalism of Nasser nor Islamism can overcome the depredations of imperialism or provide solutions to any of the fundamental problems besetting the working class and oppressed in Egypt today. What's needed is a revolutionary workers party to lead the proletariat in a struggle for socialist revolution against the military bonapartists, the religious fundamentalists and all bourgeois political forces, opening the road to the emancipation of women and the liberation of all the oppressed and exploited. ■

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# WORKERS HAMMER

Craven trade union leaders offer Labour cuts as “alternative” to Tory cuts

## For class struggle to defend public sector jobs!

On 26 March, a massive turnout of up to half a million trade unionists demonstrated in London against the savage budget cuts announced by David Cameron’s government. The demonstration consisted of a sea of trade union banners, representing local council workers, teachers and lecturers, health workers and firefighters — in a show of anger against the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government’s assault on healthcare, social services, pensions and much more. The public sector jobs massacre saw 132,000 jobs lost in 2010, while the overall unemployment figure stands officially at 2.5 million, the highest for 20 years.

Low-paid public sector workers, a high proportion of whom are women and minorities, are the core of the trade union movement today. But rather than a strategy to mobilise that social power for a class-struggle fight to defend jobs, the TUC’s “March for the Alternative” was intended to channel this anger into supporting another Labour government. For the first time in over a dozen years, a trade union demonstration in Britain was addressed by the Labour Party leader. Ed Miliband, who was elected leader last September with the support of the trade unions, intoned on the platform that “there is an alternative”, adding that “there is a need for difficult choices, and some cuts” to reduce the budget deficit, but this government “is going too far and too fast”. For a clue as to what Miliband’s “alternative” might be, one only has to recall that before the last election Labour promised cuts deeper and tougher than under Thatcher.

Deep cuts, fast or slow cuts: these are the “choices” being offered to the working class by the servile trade union bureaucracy. Throughout Europe — from Greece to Ireland and Spain — every capitalist government is trying to force the working class to pay for the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression — a crisis that was caused by the capitalist system itself. An effective defence of jobs today requires hard *class struggle* — strike action across the public sector. But the trade union leadership is an obstacle to the kind of fight that is necessary because they too share the political framework expressed by Miliband, that the alternative to “Tory cuts” are Labour government cuts.

The ground for the present devastating public sector cuts was prepared by 13 years of Labour governments that relentlessly attacked jobs, pensions, health and education services; froze pay below inflation and slashed tens of thousands of civil service jobs. And all the while, the union



Hundred of thousands of trade unionists on TUC march against Tory cuts (above) addressed by Labour leader Ed Miliband (right) proposing Labour cuts instead.

leaderships stood by and refused to lead battles against the Labour government. Recall then FBU leader Andy Gilchrist calling off the firefighters strike in 2002 when it threatened to “hinder” the armed forces preparing to invade Iraq.

Visit any of the public sector unions’ websites and find “alternatives”, *not* for a fight to beat back the rapacious bourgeoisie *but for solving British capitalism’s budget deficit*. Unison’s recipe calls for “a 50 per cent tax on bankers’ bonuses” and a “Robin Hood Tax” on bank transactions. The Public and Com-

mmercial Services union, which organises civil servants, offers similar counsel to the bourgeois rulers including “We could free up billions of pounds by not renewing Trident.”

The “socialist” outfits who ride Labour’s coattails look to none other than the bold class warriors of the TUC to call a general strike, while cravenly rebuilding illusions in the election of a Labour government. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) runs the National Right to Work coalition, whose slogan is “Break the Con-Dem Coalition!” (read: and replace it with

a Labour government). When Ed Miliband won the Labour leadership contest last year, they enthused that his win was “another avenue to bring pressure to bear on Labour to fight” (*Socialist Worker*, 25 September 2010). In the meantime a poster on their website lists their own recommendations to the capitalist rulers, “Why There’s No Need to Slash Spending”. Cuts can be avoided by taxing the rich, clamping down on tax evaders, and cutting defence spending — the tired, hopeless call of reformists everywhere to reorder the priorities of the capitalists in favour of the working class.

The Socialist Party, after calling for a one-day public sector strike and a 24-hour general strike, go on to showcase their abiding faith in the capitalist state, and Labour, approvingly quoting an article from Labourlist.org: “A cascade of ‘no cuts’ budget decisions by local authorities could be the most effective resistance to the cuts so far”. The Socialist Party continues, “By using their reserves and borrowing powers to avoid making cuts, councils can gain time to build a mass movement in their support”, and “Ed Miliband could promise that an incoming Labour government would write off all local authority debts incurred from avoiding cuts” (*Socialism Today*, March 2011).

What is necessary to fight against the massacre of public sector jobs and social services is to mobilise the multiethnic working class in a fight for *jobs for all*, through a shorter work week with no loss in pay, and to undertake union organising to draw into their ranks all of the working class, including its minority and immigrant components. In the course of class struggle, workers must replace the Labourite cringers atop the unions with workers’ leaders who aim to win battles on the picket lines. Striving to forge such a *class-struggle* leadership of the unions is an integral part of the fight for a multiethnic revolutionary workers party whose aim is no less than doing away with the entire system of capitalist wage slavery through socialist revolution. ■