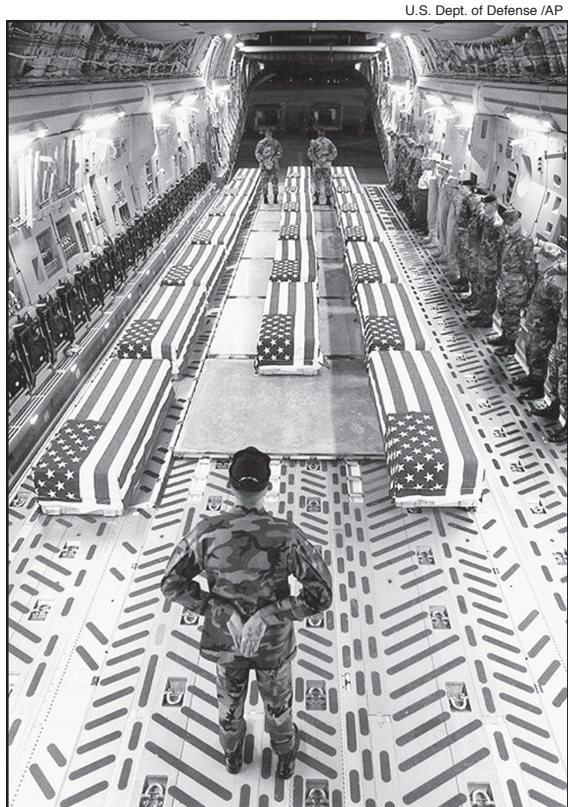


Obama says combat troops gone yet Iraq occupation continues



U.S. Dept. of Defense / AP

By GERRY FOLEY

Obama's much touted removal of U.S. "combat troops" from Iraq is pure word play. U.S. officials admit that 50,000 troops will remain, only now they are supposed to be "advisers" rather than fighters.

U.S. government spokespersons apparently hope that the American people have forgotten that the U.S. expeditionary force in Vietnam was initially called "advisers." It stretches credulity to claim that 50,000 soldiers are only "advisers." That is a considerable military force by anyone's estimation in a country of less than 30 million.

It is true that this number is far less than the U.S. forces in Iraq at their height. But this draw down has only been made possible by a reaction of local Sunni Iraq chiefs against the sectarianism and ruthlessness of al-Qaeda. It remains a precarious gain.

An effective U.S. client regime has been far from stabilized. The present government could collapse or fall into the arms of Iran. The Sunni insurgency could regenerate as the anti-al-Qaeda groups become disillusioned with the lack of solutions for their problems offered by the Iraqi government and the U.S. What would the 50,000 U.S. troops do then?

The *New York Times* reported Aug. 22: "U.S. troops will stay in Iraq in an 'advise-train-assist' role until the end of next year, Army General Raymond Odierno said in an interview aired Sunday on CNN's 'State of the Union' program. ... But they certainly have the ability to protect themselves and if necessary to conduct ... combat operations if it was required," said Odierno, chief architect of the 2007 troop surge in Iraq."

Moreover, it is not clear to what extent the mercenary forces used in combination with the regular U.S. mili-

(Photo) Some of the U.S. soldiers "returning" home: Coffins are unloaded in Dover, Del.



Tony Savino / Socialist Action

Momentum builds for the One Nation rally on Oct. 2

Momentum is building for the Oct. 2 One Nation Working Together rally in Washington, D.C. Organizers are expecting a huge showing on the Mall by trade unionists and social activists demanding jobs, justice, and peace.

The event has been spearheaded by the NAACP and SEIU Local 1199, the large hospital workers' union with branches in New York and other East Coast cities.

The AFL-CIO Executive Council endorsed the rally at its Aug. 4-5 meeting. They stated, "One Nation shares the labor movement's policy agenda: An economy that works for all; good jobs, fair jobs, safe jobs, and more jobs; reforming Wall Street; repairing our immigration system; quality education for every child; and ensuring that everyone in America has the opportunity to contribute to and strengthen our country. Restoring workers' rights to organize and bargain collectively is at the heart of the policy agenda."

(Above) Thousands rally in Washington, Aug. 28, to "take back" the spirit of M.L. King's "Dream" speech and the civil rights movement. A huge right-wing rally took place on the Mall the same day.

tary will be removed. They have been comparable in numbers to the regular military. Being private armies, the mercenaries are much harder to count than serving soldiers.

In an article entitled "The Fakest Withdrawal Imaginable," *Alternet* wrote Aug. 26: "Washington understands that it needs to deliver on some of Obama's many campaign promises before the November elections. ... But

Many East Coast and Midwest unions are ordering fleets of buses to carry members to the rally. As we go to press, it is reported that 1975 buses have been secured in New York state, with 500 in New York City alone.

The Oct. 2 event will also have an antiwar focus. The important United National Antiwar Conference (UNAC) in July voted to mobilize for the event. United for Peace and Justice and other antiwar groups are planning an antiwar contingent, perhaps with a march to the Mall.

It is evident that the major organizers of One Nation have their eye on the upcoming elections—and re-electing the very Democratic Party politicians who are responsible for prolonging the economic crisis. Statements by the AFL-CIO and NAACP leaderships are explicit in portraying the Oct. 2 rally as a method to "charge up" people to go "back to the voting booth."

Nevertheless, the event offers a tremendous opportunity for working people to loudly raise their demands in protest against a government that readily bails out the banks, but leaves countless U.S. workers jobless and with a diminishing standard of living. Money for jobs, not war! All out for Oct. 2! — THE EDITORS

since the current number of military personnel might not be enough to handle the deepening security chaos in the country, the new caretakers at the State Department are playing with numbers.

"State Department spokesman PJ Crowley said [a] plan would bring to some 7,000 the total security con-

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Dr. Siddiqui's case exposes 'war on terror'

By CHRISTOPHER TOWNE

Rhetoric and violence against innocent Muslims has reached hysterical levels. This scapegoating becomes a necessity for the ruling class as support declines for the endless U.S. wars in the Middle East and South Asia.

To justify the "war on terror," both the Bush and Obama administrations have relied on phony show-trials. Innocent Muslims like the Fort Dix Five have been followed by infiltrators and convicted of terrorism with no material evidence. The case of Dr. Aafia Siddiqui is especially egregious.

Aafia Siddiqui is a Pakistani neuroscientist who studied in the U.S. before earning her doctorate from Brandeis. At MIT she became active in the Muslim Student Association. The political climate following Sept. 11 prompted her to move with her family back to Pakistan. But when she and her husband divorced, she began looking for work in the U.S. again.

Dr. Siddiqui and her children's whereabouts were unknown between March 2003 and July 2008. The U.S. government insists that she was in hiding, but former prisoners at Bagram, Afghanistan, have stated that she was the "Grey Lady of Bagram," the sole female inmate whose nightly cries of pain inspired a hunger strike in her defense. Binyam Mohamed, an innocent Ethiopian man who spent seven years of detention and torture at the hands of the U.S., identified Dr. Siddiqui as the mysterious woman, "prisoner 650," he saw while being held in Bagram.

Aafia's oldest son claims that in March of 2003, some 15-20 people, including a "white lady," kidnapped his mother and two siblings while they were traveling via taxi to an airport in Pakistan.

In 2008, Dr. Siddiqui was found on the streets of Ghazni, Afghanistan, and arrested by Afghan forces. According to the U.S. government, she was captured while carrying instructions on building explosives, chemical weapons, and weapons "involving biological material and radiological agents." She was also supposedly carrying bottles of chemicals and handwritten notes listing "mass casualty" targets in the U.S.

Despite these allegations, Dr. Siddiqui is not facing a single terrorism charge. Instead, the U.S. brought Dr.

Siddiqui to New York City, charged with attempted murder. Their prosecution alleged that, while detained, she grabbed a soldier's M4 rifle and began indiscriminate shooting at close range.

Her own story is quite different. She states that she was in the detention facility in Ghazni, heard the Afghans speaking to Americans, and peered through a curtain. A startled soldier announced that she was loose. She was

shot twice and required a blood transfusion.

There was no forensic evidence to prove that she shot the gun—no fingerprints, casings on the floor, bullet holes in the walls, or injuries. The only casings found were from the revolver used to shoot her. Eyewitness stories contradict each other. Siddiqui refused to cooperate in the trial, insisting it was biased against her.

The peace and justice movement must stand with Dr. Siddiqui and all the victims of the show-trials. A rally is planned for the courthouse during her sentencing hearing: Sept. 23, 8:45 a.m., at 500 Pearl St., Manhattan. ■

Iowa flood relief: Politicians dine in while workers check out

Mari Araujo / Socialist Action



By MARION PIERRE-ANTOINE

CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa—On Aug. 30, Socialist Action members participated in an enthusiastic picket line of a Democratic Party fund-raising dinner in Northwest Cedar Rapids—a district hard hit by the 2008 floods that devastated the city. Over 30 protesters demanded a worker-centered reconstruction program in opposition to the Big Business favoritism and bureaucratic red tape that has prevailed in the "recovery" process.

Democratic Gov. Chet Culver, in a race for re-election, spent time among the protesters. He was accompanied by a host of Democrats running for election for state positions. The candidates flashed their politician smiles and assured the demonstrators that they are doing "everything they can" to assist the people of the devastated

neighborhoods. They insisted, of course, that a Republican victory would doom their efforts.

But most of the protesters had no time for this political double-talk, and were set on organizing actions independent of the ruling elite's twin parties. Activists interested in building an ongoing campaign for dignified flood recovery are organizing a coalition under the banner of CAVE People (Citizens Already Victimized Enough, People!).

Socialist Action supporters in Cedar Rapids are active in building the coalition and have suggested an action program that centers on the following demands:

- Rebuild workers' homes and apartments! Cut down the red tape; end the favoritism of Business District recovery!

- For a massive public works program to carry out reconstruction and provide meaningful employment for the city's growing ranks of unemployed, many of whom lost their jobs and their homes due to the flood. Reconstruction must be under the control of democratic, self-organized councils of the working people whose residences were destroyed or damaged, as well as the unions representing the reconstruction workers.

- No support for capitalist politicians! Organize independently to force the city and state governments to accede to our demands.

- No cuts, no austerity; tax the rich! No more Iowan tax dollars wasted on wars abroad—bring the money home to rebuild Cedar Rapids and rejuvenate our social services! Increase the tax burden on the elite to fund the reconstruction. ■

A WORKERS' ACTION PROGRAM TO FIGHT THE CRISIS

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

- 1) Bail out the people, not the bankers! Open the account books of the banks to full public inspection. Nationalize the banks to be supervised by workers' committees.
- 2) No foreclosures! No forced evictions! Cancel usurious debt payments, and reduce mortgage payments in proportion to their capitalist-caused decline in value.
- 3) Full employment at union wages! An emergency public works program to employ all jobless workers and youth! Employ people to build what we need — low-cost quality housing, efficient mass transportation, cheap and renewable sources of power, schools, clinics — and to conserve our water, forests, farmland, and open space.
- 4) Immediate and full withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq & Afghanistan! Close all U.S. bases abroad! No money for the military — use funds instead for public works! Convert the war industries to making products for people's needs and to combat global warming.
- 5) Reduce the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay, and cut the retirement age to

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOCIALIST ACTION. Closing news date: Sept. 1, 2010

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

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

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

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By ANDREW POLLACK

The United National Antiwar Conference, attended by over 800 people from July 23 to 25 in Albany, N.Y., marked a sea change in the attitude of the antiwar movement toward Palestine. For the first time a broadly representative, democratic national conference of peace activists adopted the demand "End all U.S. aid to Israel—military, diplomatic, and economic."

UNAC also endorsed the global movement for BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel), committed itself to joining Palestine solidarity efforts around future flotillas, emergency responses to Zionist attacks, etc., and expressed its opposition to the many-faceted complicity of the United States with Zionism's various crimes. All of these positions were adopted in near-unanimous votes after thorough discussion and debate.

This huge success follows on the heels of a similarly significant step forward at the U.S. Social Forum, held in Detroit in June. The resolutions passed at the USSF, which mirrored the positions adopted by UNAC, expressed the sentiment of the 15,000 activists in attendance from every social movement. But what is different about the UNAC votes is that they were taken on amendments to an omnibus Action Proposal calling for specific actions, foremost among them nationally-coordinated local antiwar actions in the fall, and national mobilizations in New York City and San Francisco on April 9, 2011. As such, UNAC has explicitly put Palestine at the center of those actions.

The victory for Palestine solidarity was made possible on the one hand by the organizing efforts of the conference's Palestine Solidarity Caucus. The caucus held numerous conference calls and e-mail exchanges before Albany to work out texts of the amendments to the Action Proposal and of a stand-alone Palestine resolution going into more detail on the context and goals of the struggle. On the first night of the conference the caucus held a meeting

National antiwar conference raises demand to end all U.S. aid to Israel



Maya Hiti / AP

(Left) E. Jerusalem protest against erecting houses for Israeli settlers.

of over 60 people who enthusiastically and unanimously approved the texts.

At the same time, the success in Albany was a reflection of the experience of folks coming from dozens and dozens of local antiwar groups which had previously dealt mostly with Iraq and Afghanistan but, since the Gaza and flotilla attacks, have all realized that Palestine can never again be relegated to second-class status as an issue, much less ignored, by the movement.

The depth and staying power of this

sentiment could be felt every time a speaker got up on the floor of the conference to call for solidarity with Palestine and was met with prolonged and repeated applause.

But even this shift among antiwar activists would not necessarily have found expression in Conference decisions were it not for the democratic nature of the conference. This is a product of years of careful organizing by the National Assembly. The Assembly was founded to unite a fractured antiwar

movement. Its conferences in 2008 and 2009 were open to all wings of the movement, and resolutions were approved on a one-person, one-vote basis.

This year the Conference was held under expanded auspices. A few months ago, the biggest U.S. antiwar coalition, United For Peace and Justice, voted to dissolve itself as a coalition and continue only as an informal network. As a result, the National Assembly called for a United National Antiwar Conference to involve as many former UFPJ affiliates as possible as well as all the forces that had operated outside UFPJ.

The over 800 people who came to Albany did so in the hope and belief that we need a revival and unification of the movement. Antiwar activists have face hard times in recent years, manifested on the one hand in widespread frustration that years of mobilizing have not yet ended Washington's wars, and on the other hand in illusions—only just now beginning to break down—that Obama would do the job for us.

In this context, the victory for Palestine at UNAC must be translated into hard, detailed, methodical work: to deepen the education of fellow antiwar activists about the issues, and to find clear and concrete ways to explain the issues to those only just now becoming antiwar activists.

Coming very soon is a huge but challenging opportunity to do just that—the Oct. 2 Washington, D.C., rally called by the NAACP, AFL-CIO and other major civil rights and labor forces for jobs, peace and justice. UNAC pledged to help mobilize people for the Oct. 2 and to use the event to educate about the links between our issues. ■

Friends of Leon Trotsky Museum launched in Mexico

The International Friends of the Leon Trotsky Museum, and the fund-raising campaign to ensure the preservation and expansion of the Trotsky house museum, received an important send-off with a series of public conferences last month in Coyoacán, Mexico.

The activities culminated on Aug. 20, with an indoor rally at the Foro Coyoacanense. The audience included activists from Trotskyist organizations from Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, and the United States, diplomatic officials from a number of countries, representatives of other Mexican museums and cultural institutions, and the media.

The event started with a 45-minute session dedicated to "stories told to Trotsky and Natalia" by the professional group of story-tellers Sol Azul-Río Abierto. Then came a 10-minute talk on Mexico's tradition of asylum by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, founder of the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) and son of President Lázaro Cárdenas, who granted political asylum to Trotsky and Natalia. He was followed by a 30-minute talk on "The right of asylum in Mexico" by Prof. Pablo Yankelevich, a historian on this subject.

A message was sent to the rally from Jeff Mackler, national secretary, Socialist Action, U.S. fraternal section of the Fourth International (founded by Leon Trotsky), and from Barry Weisleder, federal secretary, Socialist Action / Ligue pour l'Action socialiste, in solidarity with the Fourth International in the Canadian state. Their remarks follow:

Comrades and friends,

Please accept our deepest apologies for not being with you on this special weekend as we all join in the effort to preserve and expand the Leon Trotsky Institute and Museum.

We extend a loving embrace to Esteban Volkov, friend and comrade, and representative of the revolutionary tradition pioneered by his grandfather—a tradition that lives today everywhere human beings fight for freedom and dignity, against the ravages of the crisis-plagued world capitalist system.

Trotsky once said that his greatest contribution to humanity was ensuring the continuity of Marxism, of revolutionary socialism, after its degradation, betrayal and abandonment by the Joseph Stalin regime. His greatest achievement, Trotsky insisted, was the founding of the Fourth International. True enough! Our movement would have faltered without Trotsky's guidance, but we submit that his ideas would never have been lost.

We point to another contribution of Trotsky that rivals, if not exceeds, all others. There was a moment of truth in October 1917 that the world will never forget.

It was in fact on Oct. 11 [old style], the day that Lenin and the Bolshevik Party voted to prepare for an insurrection to challenge for power in the world's largest country—inside the empire that was called a prison house of nations and oppressed peoples, conquered by Tsarism. Russia was then the nation whose rulers insisted on sacrificing the people to pursue an imperialist war fought for the rich at the expense of the lives of the poor.

The sheer audacity of Lenin's proposal shook the Bolshevik ranks to their core, leading most to regard Lenin's direction as more a statement of intent than a deed that could be carried out immediately. The stakes were high. Failure meant certain death and the annihilation of a party that had spent decades in preparation.

Trotsky was assigned by the Petrograd Soviet and his party to take charge. He was chosen by Lenin, still in hiding, because Trotsky was the single leader who, above all others, understood the enormity of the task and would not falter. Trotsky took this assignment seriously, as he did all others. He never questioned its necessity, or pondered the consequence of failure.

Indeed, so ripe were the conditions for revolution and so prepared were the Bolshevik ranks that few believed that the deed had actually been done on Oct. 25. "A one-day coup!" the bourgeoisie prattled, as they sipped their drinks in the fine cafes on the Nevsky Prospect and published their denunciations via their still roaring newspaper presses.

Nothing had really happened they insisted. Kerensky would soon return with troops from the front, and the

Bolshevik scoundrels would be ousted in a matter of days.

But there were no troops to restore capitalist order. They had gone over to the side of the revolution, as had the urban working masses, the Navy, the Petrograd garrison, the mass of the peasantry—indeed all of the oppressed and exploited.

The revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky was achieved in a single day, but it was preceded by the theory and practice of Marx, Engels, and many other revolutionary fighters over the course of a lifetime. More than three-quarters of a century of struggle crystallized in that one day. The earth shook and the working class and peasant masses came to power.

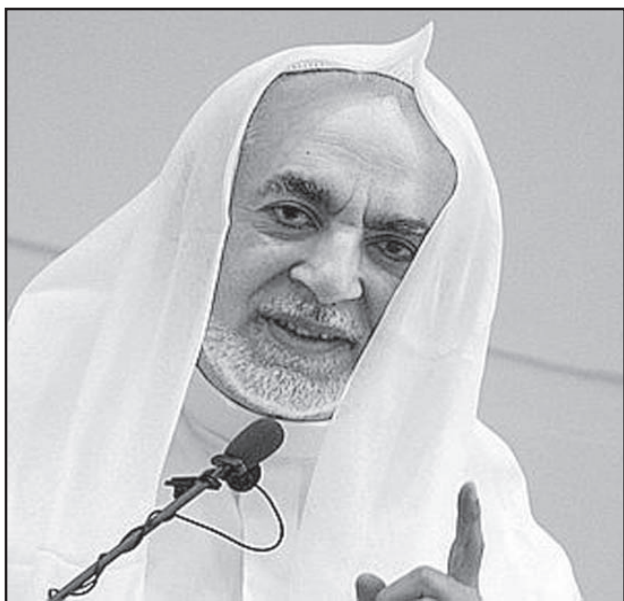
That precious moment when Lenin and Trotsky teamed up to lead in the seizure of power was perhaps humankind's most sacred achievement. It was the first time that the people, the producers of social wealth, ruled in their own name, through their own institutions and in their own interests.

Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin in that historic moment, resides in our hearts and minds today. Our collective effort in maintaining and improving the Museum and Institute is indispensable both to his legacy, and as a pledge to the future which must be cleansed of all oppression.

For this valiant effort, let us put aside differences. Let us preserve for all generations this precious ground and what Leon Trotsky contributed to humanity's bright future. He was no harmless icon. Capitalists of the world beware! His followers are on the march!

We greet you comrades in unity and solidarity. Let us restore this Museum and Institute and strengthen the ideas that made Trotsky's life an inspiration to us all. ■

To join the International Friends of the Leon Trotsky Museum or to donate to the preservation/renovation fund, please send checks, payable to Global Exchange, to International Friends of the Leon Trotsky Museum, P.O. Box 40009, San Francisco, CA 94140. Please write "Trotsky Museum" on memo line of your check. For more information: gall.museotrotsky@gmail.com.



Stop racist attacks on Muslims!

By ANDREW POLLACK

NEW YORK—"There has been an explosion of racist attacks, verbal and physical, on masjids (mosques), proposed masjids, and Islamic community centers around the US. Masjids have been picketed and vandalized and obscenities shouted at worshippers."

So read the opening words of an on-line petition initiated by Al-Awda NY: the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, and the Palestine Solidarity Caucus of the United National Antiwar Committee. It is a statement that aptly outlines the roots of this phenomenon and the required response by all movements for social change. To set the stage for a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon we quote excerpts from this document:

"On September 11th the Tea Party and its allies plan to demonstrate at the site of the proposed Islamic masjid and community center [called Park51, after its address] in lower Manhattan. On the same day, Christian fundamentalists plan a "Burn the Quran" day at a Florida masjid. ...

"After 9/11 the government and media launched a witch-hunt against Muslims and Arabs, encouraging individual violent attacks. Even before 9/11, demonization was used to justify support for Israel's wars and U.S. efforts to control Arab and Iranian oil. Since 9/11, as part of the bipartisan 'war on terror,' tens of thousands of Muslim men were fingerprinted, questioned and registered. Hundreds were detained with no regard to their constitutional rights, often abused and tortured, in a campaign of preemptive prosecution...

"Masjids have been subject to FBI and police surveillance, infiltration and intimidation. We are told that Muslims must be presumed guilty of 'terrorism' until proven innocent...

"The Obama administration claims to support the right of Park51 to build the lower Manhattan masjid/center but fuels Islamophobia with the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and a stepped-up campaign of extra-judicial assassinations. These attacks occur for one fundamental reason: To intimidate those who would oppose Washington's wars abroad and growing economic misery at home.

"Islamophobia also serves to split potential allies in the fight against the deepening economic crisis. ... The attacks on Muslims parallel the scapegoating of mostly Latin@ undocumented workers, whose labor is key to the economy but whose status is used to pit workers against each other." Statement signers pledged to "mobilize and speak out whenever there is an attack on any Muslim individual or institution, and calls on our allies in every social movement to do the same" (see www.petitiononline.com/nophobia/petition.html).

A Wave of Attacks

Protests against the proposed building of new masjids or expansion of existing ones have occurred in at least seven states and at several locations in New York City. Vandalized masjids and Islamic centers include those in Temecula, Calif., and Arlington, Tex. One was fire-bombed in Jacksonville, Fla. (see CAIR's website for detailed lists). Until recently, those opposing the building of masjids claimed their concerns were traffic and noise. Now they don't bother to hide their real motives.

In most communities, interfaith groups of clergy have come out in favor of the masjids, and on occasion activist-led coalitions have mounted counter-protests. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has stood on civil liberties grounds to support the Center, and has even maintained it should be built exactly where proposed.

On the other hand, the day after President Obama said he supported the right of the Center's builders to proceed, he stressed that he was not taking a side "on the wisdom of making the decision to put a mosque there"—in effect granting the right of the racists to declare Muslims unfit to be on "our sacred ground." This comes as Obama oversees a skyrocketing rate of deportations, encouraging Republicans to come forth with a new anti-immigrant demand: an end to the 14th Amendment guarantee of citizenship to anyone born in the US.

Obama's backtracking opened the door for fellow Democrat Harry Reid, the Senate majority leader, who said, "the masjid should be built someplace else," and for supposed ultraliberal Howard Dean to call the Center "a real affront to people who lost their lives" on Sept. 11.

The difference in approaches of Bloomberg and Obama and other Democrats represent a tactical debate in ruling circles as they try to balance the need to keep a domestic populace lined up behind failing wars abroad, and the risk of alienating potential Arab and Muslim allies abroad and at home.

Opponents of the Center include the Anti-Defamation League. Following up on years of racist anti-Palestinian statements, the ADL, while professing to support the rights of the Center's builders, claimed the admittedly "irrational" feelings of 9/11 victim survivors must take precedence.

A common theme at racist protests and in the right-wing media is that the centers or masjids are, in the words of Cal Thomas, "not about tolerance, but triumphalism. It isn't about honoring the dead, but celebrating their deaths." Of course, many right-wingers claim the masjids and centers will be "terrorist training grounds." And many of them claim Islam is not a religion but a cult not worthy of protection by the Constitution.

Organizers of an Aug. 22 protest at the Manhattan Islamic Center site gave out hundreds of signs with "SHARIA" printed in dripping, blood-red letters. Another common theme is that masjid proliferation is part of a devious plan to impose sharia law locally as a prelude to imposing it nationally. This allows right-wing zealots to revive the "take back our country" theme used recently to lambaste Obama's supposed imposition of "socialism" via his health-care and jobs bills. As we've pointed out in past articles, these bills are so brazenly pro-corporate that they've emboldened the ruling class and its right-wing shock troops to demand even more, and now we see they're moving on to other fronts.

Ironically, the filth spewed against Islam is a convenient way to express racism against Obama himself—and through him to workers of color.

Connecticut Muslim leaders asked for police protection after the antiabortion group Operation Save America (formerly Operation Rescue) showed up outside a Bridgeport masjid chanting hate-filled slogans. Mongi Dhaouadi, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations-Connecticut, said protesters chanted, "Islam is a lie" and "Jesus hates Muslims."

(Photos clockwise):

• Imam Faisal Abdul Rauf speaks in Qatar, Aug. 27, on U.S. State Department tour to Middle East.

• July 25 march against attacks on Muslims, Albany, N.Y. (Foreground) UNAC organizer Joe Lombardo.

• Sign at site of Islamic Center in Murfreesboro, Tenn., where arson was committed.

One key anti-Islam group is Stop the Islamization of America (SIOA), whose leader, Pamela Geller, compared building the center two blocks away from Ground Zero to building a KKK "shrine" near a black church in Alabama.

The initiator of the Park51 project, Imam Faisal Abdul Rauf, has gone on repeated tours for the U.S. State Department to convince fellow Muslims that the US can be trusted. Despite this service to Washington, he has been accused, with no proof whatsoever, of getting funding for the center from Iran, the Saudis, and so on. And he has been attacked for his (correct) claims that 9/11 must be placed in the context of global Muslim and Arab resentment against imperialist policies.

This wave of Islamophobia and related racist trends is also engulfing Europe, with the French government banning wearing of the burqa or hiqab in public places, and trying to deport the Roma people. In the Netherlands, an openly anti-immigrant coalition came in second in national elections in May. Europe, of course, is experiencing the same economic crisis that allows politicians in the U.S. to launch their scapegoating campaigns.

The supposed "Mosque at Ground Zero" is not in fact a masjid, but rather a community center, modeled on a Manhattan YMHA to include a spa, swimming pool, community meeting rooms, a 9/11 memorial, auditorium, basketball court, classrooms—and rooms for prayers. It is located two blocks away and around a corner from Ground Zero and is not even visible from that site.

But contrary to the popular saying, in this case it is not all about "location, location, location." Ali Akram, a local doctor who supports the project, said: "The people who say the mosque is too close to Ground Zero, those are the same people that protest mosques in Brooklyn and Staten Island and Tennessee and Wisconsin and California. What radius will they go for? There's no end to it."

Just as mainstream politicians enable the open racists, so too Fox and other rightwing media get aid and comfort from more "respectable" outlets such as *The New York Times*, whose years-long coverage of the "radicalization of American Muslims," repeating FBI and CIA lies about victims of preemptive prosecution, reinforces the "guilty until proven innocent" mindset.

Counter-protests

But the racism has not gone unchallenged. With less than a week to organize, a rally to counter the Aug. 22 anti-Islamic protest at Park51 drew 300 people early on a rainy Sunday morning. The racists' rally was not much bigger—although it is expected a broader range of right-wing organizations will mobilize far greater numbers for their 9/11 rally.

Over 120—the majority Arab, South Asian, Black and Latin@—attended meetings of progressive groups the following week to plan a counter-protest to the racists' 9/11 event, and several dozen more, including local clergy and the 9/11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, met to plan events on 9/10.

Another successful counter-protest, this one of 500, occurred on July 14 in the Nashville suburb of Murfreesboro, Tenn. It was followed up with a program of ongoing

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Labor's stake in fighting racism, immigrant bashing

By ANDREW POLLACK

A handful of construction workers have announced they are organizing a boycott of construction jobs at the Islamic Center site in Manhattan. (The developers have pledged to use union labor.) But the dangers of falling into such racist traps is seen most dramatically in the building trades themselves.

In recent years the number of union construction jobs has dramatically shrunk, while nonunion subcontractors thrive by employing Latin@ and other immigrant workers at wages half or less of union scale (and no safety protections). This happened not because of "illegal" immigration, but because conservative union officials signed on to the bosses' "collaboration" program. They agreed to wage and benefit cuts allegedly to save jobs, but in the end saw those jobs go to nonunion firms, often set up by former "partners" in collaboration.

But in the meantime, construction workers' attention was diverted by politician, boss, and media rhetoric about "illegals." Now the bosses have a new diversionary tactic, that of Islamophobia—at the same time that they refuse to compensate Ground Zero first responders and cleanup crews dying every day from cancer!

Such tactics have been used every time the U.S. has been in economic crisis. The day after the Aug. 22 New York City anti-Islamic Center rally happened to be the anniversary of the execution of anarchist martyrs Sacco and Vanzetti, whose murders were the low point of a post-World War I wave of detention, surveillance, and deportations affecting hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers—mostly Eastern and Southern European. This wave was paralleled by murderous attacks on Black workers who had come north during the war to take jobs in expanding industries, and was soon followed by the mass deportations of workers of Mexican origin (including U.S. citizens).

By coincidence, on the anniversary of Sacco and Vanzetti's execution, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that the Califor-



Claudio Cruz / AP

nia legislature had passed a resolution expressing its "deepest regret" for another episode of persecution of Italian immigrants: the internment, curfews, confiscations and other indignities suffered during World War II by 600,000 Italian-Americans (a fate suffered by German-Americans as well, and exceeded in scale and criminality only by the detention of Japanese-Americans in concentration camps).

Note the motivation of the bill's sponsor, State Senator Joe Simitian, who said he saw "contemporary importance" in the effort: "We're at war on the other

side of the world, and I think it's important to remember that there are millions of Americans who are ethnic Arabs or Muslim by faith, and that they're good Americans."

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) has made the economic connection as well, citing the "millions in this nation living below poverty guidelines, many of them homeless" and calling for "a sustained effort to create jobs."

An alliance with the bosses predicated on echoing their scapegoating rhetoric will not bring back jobs. By the same to-

ken, jobs will not be found by "reducing dependence on foreign oil,"—a slogan which reinforces Islamophobia—nor in "eliminating unfair competition from auto and steel imports," or other protectionist "solutions" relying on racist logic that separates workers here and abroad. Instead, we need a united fight for public works jobs in expanded education, housing, child and health care programs, etc.—as well as aid and reparations to workers whose countries have been devastated by U.S. aggression.

Some of the most eloquent arguments for unity, for seeing the connection between the struggles of Arabs and Muslims and workers everywhere, were made by Palestinian-American Suheir Hammad in interviews about the new film in which she stars, "Salt of This Sea": "Did you see in the paper about the riot that happened yesterday in Atlanta where people shows up for federal housing assistance? ... Thousands of people came out for federal assistance because they hadn't offered this assistance since 2002."

Linking their cause with the struggle of Palestinians to reclaim their homes in all of historic Palestine—a theme of the film—Hammad said, "No matter who takes your home away ... when a home is foreclosed on or an occupation occurs, if you have no access to your ancestral home, there's something we can all relate to."

In this period when, she said, "people are more and more trying to figure out how to get what is theirs," they need to look for inspiration to struggles like that of Republic Windows in Chicago, when "workers not only struck, but they took over their factory."

In response to a question about the racist and sexist portrayal of Arab women by Hollywood, Hammad answered that to portray the "ferocity, determination, and individuality" of Soraya, her character in the film, she drew on her awareness of "the economic reality so many working women face in the U.S." That's the spirit we need to defeat Islamophobia and forge a unified, worldwide workers' fightback! ■

(continued from page 4)

ing education, and was done in close collaboration with the local Arab and Muslim communities.

In July, 800 people meeting at the UNAC national antiwar conference in Albany, N.Y., took a strong stand against the attacks. A prominent plenary session was devoted to them and to the preemptive prosecutions of Muslims by the government. The conference ended with a march to a local masjid, cosponsored with Albany's Project Salam and Muslim Solidarity Committee, where accounts of harassment and frame-ups were shared.

Witnesses at the Aug. 22 racist rally in Manhattan reported being stunned and even scared by the expressions of hatred. A Black union carpenter who works at Ground Zero was surrounded and threatened by the crowd, which assumed him to be a Muslim because of his cap (apparently a soft painters' cap). Taunts included "he musta voted for Obama," and "Mohammed's a pig."

Days later, a man yelling insults about Islam slashed the throat of a Muslim cab driver. The next day a drunk entered a masjid in Queens and urinated on prayer rugs, shouting anti-Muslim epithets and calling worshippers terrorists.

We can expect more such attacks, whether by individual thugs or even actual lynch mobs, as long as the racists feel emboldened to act with impunity. Asked Glenn Greenwald of Salon.com, "Does anyone believe that their [the protesters'] real agenda is simply to have Park51 move a few blocks away to less Sacred ground?"

Greenwald concluded: "If Park51 ends up moving or if opponents otherwise succeed in defeating it, it will seriously bolster and validate the ugly premises at the heart of this campaign: that Muslims generally are responsible for 9/11, terrorism justifies and even compels our restricting the equals rights and access of Americans Muslims. ... If the project does fail, the message that will be sent is that bigotry and fear of Muslims is not just permitted, it is effective."

Leaders of SIOA and other Islamophobic groups have been among the most explicitly racist in their support for Zionism. Israel has from its founding relied on anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism to garner support for its ethnic cleansing, land theft, and discrimination. Palestine solidarity activists, seeing these connections, have been at the center of today's fight against Islamophobia.

Stepping up the fight for Palestinian and Arab rights, here and abroad, is an integral part of fighting anti-Islamic bigotry.

The link was made tragically clear in the Aug. 26 attack by Zionist settlers on a masjid in Jerusalem's Silwan neighborhood. Such attacks have become increasingly common in recent years. Of course, they are just the continuation of the wholesale destruction of masjids that was part of the ethnic cleansing and land theft leading to the creation of Israel in 1948. This followed the centuries-old tradition of Western powers using anti-Muslim and anti-Arab racism as an excuse to seize Arab lands. ■

... Iraq troops

(continued from page 1)

tractors employed by the government in Iraq, where since the 2003 U.S. invasion private security firms have often been accused of acting above the law,' according to Reuters."

Moreover, there is no reason to assume that the U.S. strategic turn to more covert war (see back-page article on Afghanistan) is not going to apply to Iraq. How much of a role will assassination teams, killer drones, and special ops play in the continuing pursuit of U.S. aims in a war without borders?

The U.S. invasion and occupation has left Iraq in chaos. Up to 50 percent of the economically active population is unemployed. According to a recently released report on the state of world cities by UN-Habitat, the percentage of the population living in slums has increased from 20 percent before the war to 53 percent today.

Nearly a decade after the U.S. occupation, and after billions of dollars were poured into the pockets of American corporations charged with "reconstructing" the country, an adequate supply of electricity and potable water remains lacking. The country is seething with bitterness and discontent.

The most genuine U.S. withdrawal, in fact, is the withdrawal of American corporations that are taking the money and running. An AP analysis posted Aug. 28 pointed out: "A \$165 million children's hospital goes unused in the south. A \$100 million waste water treatment system in

Fallujah has cost three times more than projected, yet sewage still runs through the streets.

"As the U.S. draws down in Iraq, it is leaving behind hundreds of abandoned or incomplete projects. More than \$5 billion in American taxpayer funds has been wasted—more than 10 percent of the some \$50 billion the U.S. has spent on reconstruction in Iraq, according to audits from a U.S. watchdog agency. That amount is likely an underestimate, based on an analysis of more than 300 reports by auditors with the inspector general for Iraq reconstruction. And it does not take into account security costs, which have run almost 17 percent for some projects."

This accounting makes clear who really profited from a war and occupation that has already cost the American people nearly a trillion dollars and over 4000 deaths. But it is also an indication of what is necessary for a genuine disengagement from Iraq. It has to be a large-scale operation involving the removal of all U.S. forces, covert and overt, and reparations for the ruin the U.S. military and U.S. corporate pirates inflicted on the Iraqi people.

In order to impose a change of direction on this scale, there needs to be a vast movement of the American people condemning the war. People in the United States will continue to lose more and more if they let the Obama administration confuse the issue by tactical retreats. The American people need to be as ruthless in condemning this war and its effects as the warmakers and profiteers were in waging it. The October demonstrations must be a starting place for such a campaign. ■

Gulf fisheries reopen despite dangers of oil contamination

By CHRISTINE FRANK

According to President Obama, who took a PR swim on the Florida coast this summer, the Gulf of Mexico is squeaky clean and “open for business!” We wonder how many tourists are actually swallowing his line.

At a press conference in mid-August, National Incident Commander Adm. Thad Allen announced that he expects the well in the Macondo Prospect (the name of the oil reservoir, 18,000 feet below the ocean surface) to be finally sealed but warned that it would take an uninterrupted flow of successes in order to happen soon. Of course, stuff happens, especially when one is flying by the seat of one’s pants as BP has from the get-go.

Said Allen, “We are not done. Nobody’s declared ‘mission complete.’” Of course, we were promised that the project would be completed a long time ago, and are now told the well will not be permanently sealed until the second week of September. The horror of it is that, after this well is plugged and abandoned, BP still plans to drill in the same reservoir. After all, they paid for the lease. They own the oil and natural gas—and profits are profits.

Meanwhile, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries re-opened three shrimping grounds on Aug. 16 in zones severely affected by the oil spill, maintaining that they are safe. But skeptical shrimpers are calling government claims “a load of shit” since they have seen more oil in the bays than there ever has been.

Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour, who has strong ties to the tobacco industry, has also given the all clear. Despite reports of tar balls, oil, and dispersants in the waters, the state’s Department of Marine Resources has opened up shrimping and oyster grounds.

An order was issued for all local coastal governments to halt ongoing oil disaster work funded by BP and granted to the state. Of \$25 million, only \$500,000 has been invoiced for oil response work even though there have been massive fish kills near Cat Island.

Fisherfolk with a conscience are saying its too early to allow fishing to resume, and they see the move as another attempt to create good PR for BP, the criminal put in charge of cleaning up the crime scene.

Has the oil “disappeared”?

Last month, three weeks after BP applied a containment cap to check the massive flow of crude spewing from its broken wellhead, we were told that surface slicks in the Gulf of Mexico have supposedly disappeared. In an attempt to put the disaster in the administration’s rearview mirror, White House Energy Advisor Carol Browner proclaimed that “the vast majority of the oil is gone.”

However, most Gulf Coast residents aren’t buying it. They know their environment, and they know crude oil and toxic dispersants when they see and smell them in the air, water, and sand.

To reassure the public, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Commission (NOAA) announced that 74% of the estimated 4.9 billion barrels of released oil is gone. On Aug. 4, the industry-friendly agency said that the oil had either evaporated or it had been burned, skimmed, recovered, or dispersed.

The dubious report stated that less than half of the petroleum remains in the environment, with about

BP’s scientific integrity questioned

Students at UC Berkeley recently protested the university’s \$500 million, 10-year partnership with BP, waving signs reading “Berkeley Petroleum.” A university spokeswoman claimed BP’s influence on the Biosciences Program at Berkeley Livermore Lab is minimal. The lab was formerly headed by the current Energy Secretary Stephen Chu, who was the beneficiary of BP funding. No conflict of interests there! — C.F.



Saul Loeb / AFP / Getty Images

(Left) Oil-covered brown pelicans await cleaning in Buras, La.

The White House claims ‘the vast majority of the oil is gone.’ But most Gulf Coast residents aren’t buying it.

only 26% still on the surface as sheen or tarballs, 16% dispersed naturally, and 8% dispersed by chemicals. NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchencko stated, “Much of the dispersed oil is in the process of relatively rapid degradation.”

However, independent scientists questioned the report’s dodgy methodology, saying there is a lot of uncertainty in the figures. For instance, it didn’t explain how they determined what had been naturally versus chemically dispersed or how they estimated the evaporation rate of the hydrocarbons, which is difficult to do over large areas of seawater because of temperatures, wind and wave action, etc.

Five scientists with the University of Georgia and the Georgia Sea Grant criticized the government’s figures and analysis, saying instead that the amount of petroleum remaining is more like 79%! The Georgia team said that the federal estimates, which are based on very limited data, offer a far too rosy picture.

They tossed out the 800,000 barrels BP supposedly collected (17% of the flow) because it had never actually spilled and reduced the estimated evaporation total, cutting it to 7-12% as compared with the fed’s 25%. The latter is merely an industry standard for light sweet crude in warm Gulf waters.

The oil hasn’t gone anywhere and is still lurking at depth in the water and on the seafloor and will take years to degrade. Charles Hopkinson, one of the team members, said that much of the oil remains trapped beneath the surface under dense temperature and salinity layers that will limit evaporation. Cold temperatures will keep the oil at depths for a long time to come.

A satellite image of Aug. 2 shows a trail of oil heading southeast away from the spill area. The Georgia

researchers ridiculed the government’s ludicrous claims by pointing out that the oil could not have realistically vanished as “sugar dissolves in water.” A child could tell them the sugar is still there. That’s why the water tastes sweet. It’s merely in solution.

They also accused the feds of being irresponsible for not thoroughly testing marine life before reopening the Gulf to fishing. This goes beyond pompous proclamations and phony PR campaigns by putting the public’s health and safety at risk.

The 22-mile-long monster

In June, a team of scientists from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution made a Gulf voyage and found a continuous, unbroken plume of hydrocarbons 3300 feet down, stretching southwest from the wellhead for 22 miles at a thickness of 650 feet and a width of 1.2 miles. They suspect it is even larger, but had to abort their 10-day mission because of Hurricane Alex. The cloud of oil seemed to be maintaining its structural integrity and holding at constant depth, travelling at four miles per day.

Using the autonomous robot submarine *Sentry*, the scientists took 3500 measurements over 140 miles, moving in a zigzag pattern at different depths. They used a mass spectrometer tethered to a cable to sample the water for oil and methane. The density of hydrocarbons (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylenes) was 50 micrograms per liter of seawater, which is equivalent to a half cup in an Olympic pool,

whereas the government estimates only four to seven micrograms/liter. If all the thousands of compounds in petroleum were included, the density would be even greater.

The plume has “persisted for months without substantial biodegradation,” the team reported last month in the journal *Science*. In other words, they found no dead zones from oxygen depletion that would indicate microbes are busily doing their job. To the contrary, microbes seem to be insufficient to biodegrade the oil at a significant rate, and the plume is expected to persist for many months.

The volume of oil in the plumes clearly dwarfs the amount coming from natural seeps from vents in the seafloor. Natural seeps release 14 barrels daily while the BP spill released 60,000-104,000 a day, depending on which estimate one goes by. Nonetheless, only the tiniest fraction of the gusher was sufficient to form the massive plume. BP has been absurdly claiming that its spill, compared with the volume of natural seeps, will not have much of an impact on Gulf ecosystems.

University of South Florida researchers on the vessel *Weatherbird II* just completed a 10-day cruise and have released their preliminary findings. They found evidence of dispersed oil droplets spreading eastward along the continental shelf and settling into the De Soto Canyon, in shallower waters. There are toxic levels of oil in seafloor sediments of the canyon, a vital fish-spawning area located 40 miles off the Florida Panhandle.

Shining ultraviolet light on the sediment samples, (taken from depths of 215 to 900-feet) they viewed tiny dots in the form of oil droplets that sparkled like a constellation of stars. They found toxic contamination in damaged bacteria and phytoplankton, which will undoubtedly make its way through the marine food web.

The team delivered additional bad news for the Florida coast. Right now cold water is upwelling across the continental shelf and headed toward the coast and will eventually hit the western beaches of the state, carrying with it oil and dispersants. Obama and Sasha took their swim from a Florida beach just in time.

Dangers of dispersant spraying

Whistleblowers in Mississippi have revealed to independent investigative journalists of *TruthOut* the

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rampant use of toxic dispersants by out-of-state private contractors. Massive quantities of dispersants are being sprayed by Carolina skiffs, equipped with tanks, as well as planes, over land and water that includes recently reopened fishing grounds. They move in the dead of night.

Lockheed Martin has reported on its website that its C-130 Hercules & P-3 aircraft have been deployed to monitor, map, and spray dispersants under the direction of President Obama and the secretary of defense. The spraying is being conducted as far east as the Florida coast, according to eyewitness accounts from residents and commercial fishermen there.

"Clean-up" is left to private contractors operating under the cloak of darkness. They are not accountable to the Coast Guard, which is complicit and has been lying about the widespread practice, claiming dispersants are being used only directly over the wellhead. Once the oily sheen, which can be three inches thick, disappears from the surface, no further action is taken. Instead, divers are seeing oil on the seabed and resurface with their wetsuits covered with it.

Corexit enhances the lethal impacts of oil on shorebirds. It penetrates the eggshell and shell membrane, causing the embryo to fuse onto it and die within 24 hours. Dispersed oil is still arriving at the shoreline as sunken clouds, affecting all life in the sediments—worms, microbes and decomposers. Dolphins are hemorrhaging from Corexit in their systems.

Rep. Edward Markey has documentation that two to three times the amount of the dispersant was spread over the floating oil than previously reported by the EPA. It's safe to say that around 2 million gallons have already been sprayed. Corexit's actual effectiveness in degrading oil is also doubtful. The EPA claims that the biodegradation of oil is 50% faster when dispersants are used even though the experience of the Amoco Cadiz spill in France, 1978, was to the contrary. Oil there has still not broken down. Clearly, its only real purpose is to remove the sheen from the surface, along with BP's liability.

According to marine toxicologist Dr. Riki Ott, the solvents in chemical dispersants are made up of petroleum distillates and 2-Butoxyethanol, which is so powerful it can dissolve oil, grease, and rubber. The hard rubber impellers in engines and the soft rubber bushings on the outboard motors of responder vessels are falling apart. Divers have had to replace the soft rubber O-rings on their gear. The oil/chemical stew is strong enough to eat into Hazmat dive suits.

Corexit 9500 & 9527, which have been banned in the UK and EU, is a fetal toxin that breaks down blood cells, causing blood and kidney disorders. It can also cross the placental barrier into the fetus. Needless to



U.S. Coast Guard

(Left) Deepwater Horizon oil-platform fire on April 21.

Nov. 30 even though the \$1 billion Emergency Response Network proposed by the industry won't be operational for another year. But the White House is beginning to respond to pressure from the oil industry, which is pushing for an end to the moratorium for reasons of "jobs"—and greed, we might add.

Of course, we have zero faith in their ability to control deepwater oil disasters. Likewise, we put no value in the administration's recent promise to require full environmental reviews on all deepwater drilling and end all exemptions. We must call for an immediate halt to all offshore drilling of oil and natural gas, and all fossil fuel extraction—conventional and unconventional—across the board.

It is time to give the poor Gulf of Mexico ecosystem a rest. After decades of abuse it is suffering from every form of pollution imaginable. It has 4000 offshore oil and gas platforms and tens of thousands of miles of pipeline constituting 90% of U.S. offshore production.

Prior to the Deepwater Horizon Rig Explosion, over half a million barrels of oil had already been released from 324 spills since 1964. The seafloor is littered with bombs, chemical weapons and ordnance haphazardly dumped in the middle of the last century. In addition, tons of agricultural run-off have created a vast dead zone at the mouth of the Mississippi River.

As a result of its gross criminal negligence, BP is now subject to 300 civil lawsuits, and investigations by the Department of Justice, a Presidential Commission, the Securities & Exchange Commission, the U.S. Chemical Safety Hazard Investigation Board, Congress, the Coast Guard, and the Bureau of Ocean & Energy Management, Regulation & Enforcement.

We have no illusions that anything will come of these legal actions seeing as how Exxon got off with little more than a slap on the wrist.

BP is hardly suffering since it reported second-quarter revenues of \$75.9 billion. The company is selling \$30 billion in assets to ensure it has the money to pay liability claims, which will no doubt be whittled down by industry-friendly courts.

Doug Suttles has replaced the disgraced Tony Hayward as the company's new CEO. Although now exiled to Siberia, geologist Hayward has been duly rewarded for his faithful service in protecting BP's profits with a \$1.6 million severance package, a \$930,000 pension, and the right to retain shares worth several million. If only Gulf Coast residents victimized by BP had it so good!

say, pregnant women living on the coast and their offspring are at high risk.

Long-term ecological impact

While the media is touting a quick recovery for the Gulf marine and coastal ecosystems, independent scientists are deeply concerned over their fate. The Exxon Valdez impacts are still being felt after 21 years. In Prince William Sound, abnormally high numbers of fish embryos and fingerlings were found with deformities, which affected productivity for years.

Gulf oysters were severely affected by Mexico's Ixtoc-1 blowout of 1979. They still have not recovered in the bays of the Yucatan Peninsula, 31 years later. If the oil is on the marsh grass, it's in the oysters. Tiny oil globules are being absorbed by the oysters, which are filter feeders that take in particles ranging from 3-12 millionths of a meter. Clusters of dead oysters have been spotted on the barrier islands of Louisiana.

Massive fish kills have been seen on the Mississippi coast. Oil-soaked crabs, which have orange droplets in their tissue, provide further evidence of marine contamination.

According to biologists at the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast Research Lab, crabs accumulate hydrocarbons that harm reproduction. They are a keystone species that play a crucial role in coastal and marine ecosystems as both predators and prey.

Many of the young are eaten by predators, with only a handful surviving to adulthood. If large numbers of blue crab larvae are tainted, the entire population will take a hit next season and whatever oil is consumed with them will bioaccumulate up the food chain.

Lift of drilling ban?

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar's moratorium on deepwater drilling was to have stayed in effect until

By CHRISTINE FRANK

Gulf fishing families: 'Obama has let us down'

With 30,000 commercial fishing and related jobs lost, there is a desperate need for employment among idled workers. They have accused BP of unfair hiring practices in its Vessels of Opportunity program and a severe lack of jobs. In August, BP decreased the number of response workers from 45,000 down to 35,000.

In addition, many clean-up workers have not received the pay they have coming to them and are being cheated out of wages. There is widespread illness and demoralization among their ranks due to equipment failures such as gaping gaps in useless boom, general disorganization and other frustrations on the job.

As reported by *The Nation*, BP is using free labor from the Prison/Industrial Complex in another one of its infamous cost-cutting measures. This explains why fisherfolk were not being hired to the degree of their availability.

Instead, BP has been using inmates from Louisiana correctional institutions to shovel crude off of the state's beaches. At first, they were wearing scarlet pants and white tees with "Inmate Labor" printed on them in bold. The sight apparently outraged the locals so the uniforms were changed to BP shirts, jeans, and rubber boots with no prison markings.

Although the inmates are not getting paid as part of their sentences, BP is fi-



Sean Gardner/Getty Images

(Left) Disgraced CEO Tony Hayward. Fishing families call him & BP "thugs."

receiving remuneration for exploiting them. Through the work opportunity tax credit, it receives \$2440 per week for each released inmate they "hire."

In addition, Jim Hightower reports on CommonDreams.org that BP told its investors it expects to receive \$10 billion in subsidies from "Uncle Sugar" to help cover the costs of the oil spill. Big Polluters like BP can get up to 35% of their business losses deducted from their taxes. So once, again, it'll be the taxpayers footing the bill for clean-up.

On Aug. 7, at a news conference in Ocean Springs, Miss., members of the commercial fishing community of four Gulf states complained that they are being forced by the premature opening of inland and Gulf waters to choose between a clean Gulf or their livelihood.

They demanded that local fishing people be given first and full employment in the clean-up operation. "Fishermen would rather work cleaning the severely damaged Gulf than selling tainted seafood," said Karen Savage.

Fishing families from the Gulf held a news conference in Panama City, Fla., on Aug. 15, stating, "BP are liars and thugs," and "Obama has let us down."

"Fishermen do not want to lose our credibility or deliver contaminated seafood to market and make people sick," said Kathy Birren.

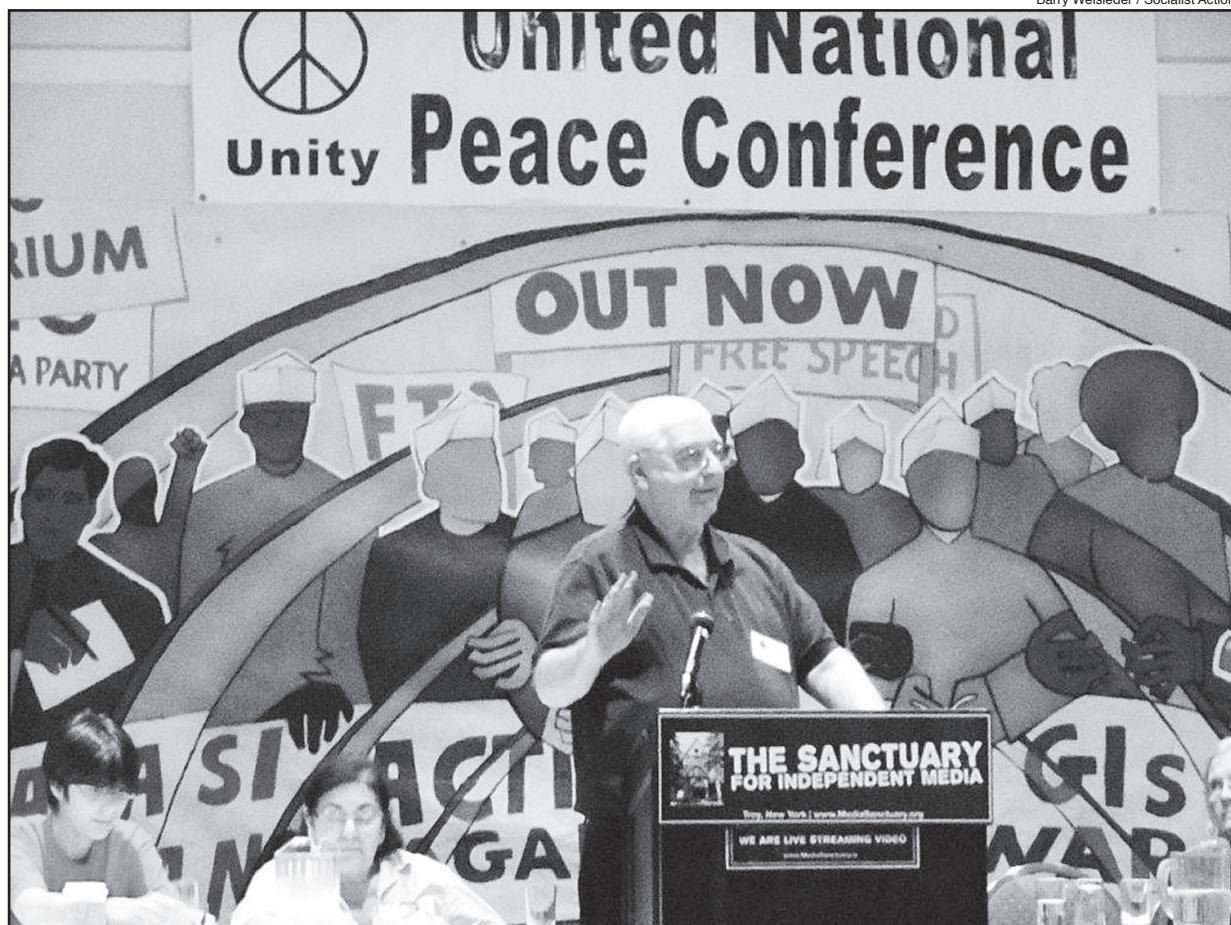
"While President Obama and state officials claim that the Gulf is 'open for business,' these fishermen say the spraying of dispersants in the Gulf of Mexico is ongoing and they're concerned that seafood pulled from im-

pected waters is unsafe for eating."

"It's outrageous," said Acy Cooper, vice president of the Louisiana Shrimp Association. "We don't think these waters are safe for shrimping, yet they open them anyway. BP is laying off fishermen from the cleanup, so a lot of them won't have a choice. But we all know what will happen if contaminated shrimp gets into the market. And the fishermen will get the blame."

Workers in the fishing industry have put forward the following demands:

- The closure of all fishing waters until harvests go through oil and chemical dispersant testing.
- An immediate halt to all use of chemical dispersants.
- The microbiological testing of all seafood and fisheries with updated testing protocols.
- The hiring and training of commercial fishermen for hazardous testing initiatives and clean-up work in a culturally competent manner.
- The development of community-based health centers by federal, state, and local agencies to service the at-risk seafood-industry population.
- Blood tests administered for those who are exposed to oil and dispersant while engaged in clean-up.



(Left) The United National Antiwar Conference brought 800 participants to Albany, N.Y., in July. At the podium is Jeff Mackler, a national co-ordinator of UNAC.

Reagan, inveterate Cold Warrior, and vocal opponent of women's abortion rights—has had no trouble in identifying Raimondo with the right. Buchanan called Raimondo's book, "Reclaiming the American Right: The Lost Legacy of the Conservative Movement" (Center for Libertarian Studies, June 1993, reprinted 2008), "a veritable Iliad of the American Right," and wrote the introduction to the second edition of the volume.

Raimondo writes for a number of ultra-right websites and blogs. For example, he is listed on the homepage of *Chronicles* magazine.org as a regular columnist, as is Pat Buchanan. *Chronicles* is published by the Rockford Institute, which in its own words, "has worked to preserve the institutions of the Christian West: the family, the Church, the rule of law; private property, free enterprise, and moral discipline..."

To be sure, in his Aug. 13 hit piece on the antiwar movement, Raimondo backed down slightly from his earlier claims that the UNAC conference was *completely* dominated by leftists. As he put it: "Although I'm sure the intrepid Socialist Actioneers tried to pack the meeting with as many of their 'cadre' as possible, the mere fact that there was a debate over the question of a left-right alliance against the war ... proves that the conference was more than just Socialist Action's Potemkin village."

Is Socialist Action in league with the Democrats?

Raimondo (a former Republican Party congressional candidate) devoted a major chunk of his article to attempting to prove that Socialist Action is actually "oriented toward the left-wing of the Democratic Party."

He stated, "By spiking the creation of a truly broad antiwar movement with their belligerent sectarian rhetoric, these Trotskyite wreckers perform a service to the [Obama] administration while still maintaining an open line to what White House press secretary Robert Gibbs calls 'the professional left.'"

He even claimed that Socialist Action "hailed the election of Obama ... as a victory, albeit a limited one, for the 'working class.'"

How could he possibly try to prove such nonsense, since everything Socialist Action has written on the subject states the opposite? Only through trickery. He found an article by the editors of *Socialist Action* newspaper about the 2008 presidential election (<http://www.socialistaction.org/editors12.htm>), extracted a few sentences from it that report on the groundswell of support for Obama at that time, and "interpreted" the sentence as signifying that Socialist Action was "enthused" for Obama.

In this, he ignored the major point of the article, which explains why Socialist Action did *not* support Obama in the election—and on principle never supports the campaigns of ruling-class candidates.

Here are some sentences from the *Socialist Action* editorial that Raimondo chose to omit: "We see Obama as the chief representative of the Democratic Party wing of capitalist America's bipartisan attacks on all working people. We do not wish him well. We stand in solidarity with the oppressed and exploited of this nation who voted for Obama in the vain hope that his promise of change would be fulfilled. But we did not join them at the voting booth or lend credence to their illusions."

But dishonest arguments are what Raimondo and others of the right-wing media thrive upon. Neither facts nor rational analysis matter half so much as scandal, innuendo, and screeching denunciations. (Raimondo could not refrain from adding the quip that Chris Gauvreau "talks like a butcher Rachel Maddow," a journalist who is open as a lesbian.)

Gays and lesbians, immigrants, "welfare cheats," the unions, and Muslims are the problem in America, say the rightists. They hope their rhetoric and lies will divert the anger of working people away from the real source of responsibility for this country's severe social problems and the worldwide economic crisis—the capitalist system.

Now these charlatans want to bring their forces into the antiwar movement. As in the days of the old America First Committee, some right-wingers believe that the current war effort is too expensive and too divisive—and that it runs counter to the isolationist "Republic" they hold as their model. But on other crucial social issues, they line up squarely with the most reactionary of this country's rulers against the interests of working people and the oppressed.

For that reason, a pact between the antiwar movement and Justin Raimondo, Ron Paul, Pat Buchanan, and their ilk would do nothing to build the movement into a powerful mass-based force. It would instead place the continuation of the movement in great jeopardy. ■

A longer version of this article can be found at <http://socialistaction.blogspot.com/>.

Answer to Raimondo's red-baiting attacks against the antiwar mov't

By MICHAEL SCHREIBER

Justin Raimondo, a contributor to numerous ultra-right media outlets and editorial director of the misnamed "Antiwar.com," has chosen a new target for his diatribes. At the end of July and early August, for two weeks running, he concentrated his fire on the organized antiwar movement in the United States—claiming that it is dominated by the socialist left.

Raimondo singled out Socialist Action as a major culprit, accusing the organization of trying to "pack" the United National Antiwar Conference (UNAC), held July 23-25 in Albany, N.Y.

In his first article, "Why is the Antiwar Movement Stalled? In Two Words: the Left" (posted July 28, 2010), Raimondo railed against the UNAC conference, which brought 800 activists—representing major national antiwar organizations and grassroots committees alike—to Albany to discuss and approve an ambitious agenda of activities for the coming months.

Instead of recognizing the conference as a tremendous achievement, instead of seeing it as an important stepping stone toward rebuilding a broadly based national antiwar coalition, Raimondo lashed out at it as "sectarian." "The antiwar movement remains a leftist sandbox," Raimondo exclaimed, "where sectarians get to pontificate—and do little else..."

"He wrote, 'One has only to look at the conference program to see why the antiwar movement remains marginal, at best: a keynote address by perennial leftist icon Noam Chomsky, who was paired with [South Carolina AFL-CIO President] Donna DeWitt, a left-wing labor official...'"

What really got Raimondo's dander up was a workshop (one of 33 workshops at the UNAC conference) in which a multi-sided discussion took place on the topic, "The Rise of Right Wing Populism & the Tea Party: Do We Need a Right-Left Coalition?" Raimondo, an admirer of the America First Committee that was organized for a brief time before World War II, was ticked off that anyone could even put into question the effort to cobble together a similar alliance between progressive social activists and leaders of the ultra-right today.

America First?

He brought up an article by Christine Marie in the May 2010 edition of *Socialist Action* newspaper, which had argued against the idea of building a "Left-Right Alliance" in the antiwar movement (<http://www.socialistaction.org/marie6.htm>). The article dealt in part with the America First Committee.

Raimondo alleged, without foundation, that the *Socialist Action* article had stated that the America First Committee was "anti-Semitic" and "pro-Hitler." While we did not make those characterizations of the committee, our article did point out that it had never served as a principled vehicle for antiwar activity. The corporation heads and others who founded and funded America First believed that the opportunity had not yet arrived to join the effort towards World War II. Raimondo did not try to refute these facts.

He went on to quote another passage from the May

2010 *Socialist Action*: "To involve the great majority of the working people of the United States today, the antiwar movement must be a safe place for the most militant and combative components of the unions and of community struggles. It must seem relevant to those whose first waking thought is how to find a job or keep their house. It must be welcoming to the 200,000 LGBT activists who recently marched on DC."

"A united front with the anti-interventionist far right, on the other hand, would require that our movement drop its demand for 'Money for Jobs, Not War!' ... It would naturally draw in the openly racist Tea Party elements. Such a 'united front' would make the antiwar movement uninhabitable by those most crucial to its success."

This strategy should be elementary to anyone with experience in political and community organizing. But Raimondo didn't get it—or pretended not to. Here is his "translation" of *Socialist Action* newspaper's conclusions: "a left-right coalition would make the antiwar movement uninhabitable by the inveterate sectarians of the ultra-left, whose only concern is to recruit naïve young people into their dying little sects."

He continued: "'The unity that we need in the antiwar movement today,' the Trots proclaim at the end of their piece, 'is the kind of unity exemplified by the United National Antiwar Conference to be held in Albany, NY, on July 23, 2010.' No. What is needed is *not* another leftist-dominated 'coalition,' which puts on conferences that address the faithful, reasserts their well-worn dogmas, and sponsors marches of a few thousand (at most)."

Raimondo's second barrage

Chris Gauvreau wrote a reply to Raimondo's attack on the antiwar movement, which was printed by *Socialist Action* and other websites. The main theme of her article appeared in its title: "The Antiwar Movement is not Stalled but Reawakening" (<http://socialistaction.blogspot.com>). She made clear that the antiwar movement shows promise of broad unity and strength for the future.

Gauvreau described "the vitality and momentum" that was seen in the UNAC proceedings and outlined the long calendar of activities approved by the conference—which will culminate in mass national demonstrations in New York City and San Francisco on April 9, 2011. And she contrasted this reality to Raimondo's allegations that the movement is snared in the trap of Obama-worship, and that revival can be achieved only under the terms of an alliance with the ultra-right.

But Raimondo, in replying to Gauvreau, "Folly Left and Right" (posted on Antiwar.com, Aug. 13, 2010), failed to hear her main arguments. Instead, he declaimed on his usual topic—himself and the narrow niche he has tried to carve for himself in political affairs: "Am I really a 'right-wing ideologue'? Libertarianism is neither right nor left: we reject these arbitrary, archaic, and obfuscating categories..."

It would be useless to spend time trying to pinpoint Raimondo's exact place on the political spectrum. But Pat Buchanan—a former advisor to Nixon, Ford, and

By CLAY WADENA
and JOE AUCIELLO

Jack Barnes, "Malcolm X, Black Liberation, & the Road to Workers Power," (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2009), 413 pp., \$20.

The deadly shotgun pellets that silenced Malcolm X did nothing to silence the controversy about the meaning of his life and his political legacy. Since his assassination in 1965, conflicting and incompatible interpretations have emerged as a wide layer of supporters—or ostensible supporters—have laid claim to his heritage.

The man whose likeness has now appeared on a U.S. postage stamp has been embraced by some conservatives who turn him into an African-American Horatio Alger figure. Liberals praise what they see as his evolution into a moderate integrationist. Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam (NOI), has tried to reconcile with the family of his former mentor. Orthodox Muslims celebrate the Malcolm X who became El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz.

Left-wing organizations in the United States have had to reckon with the legacy of Malcolm X and work out a position on the relationship between Black nationalism and socialism. Most organizations essentially proclaim some version of the old slogan, "Black and white, unite and fight!"

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), at least in its best years, developed a position on Black nationalism and socialist revolution that transcended the inadequacies of the "unite and fight" strategy. The old SWP's programmatic tradition is defended today by Socialist Action (SA). Essential to this position is the conviction that Black nationalism is a progressive and potentially revolutionary force that, in its own right, deserves the support of socialists and the entire working class.

While no one can deny the need for white and Black working people to collaborate in the class struggle, the wide chasm that racism has opened between them must first be overcome. In the meantime, Black people need to organize themselves and wage their own fight for freedom.

It was in this spirit that the SWP supported Malcolm X—printing his speeches in its newspaper and giving him favorable press coverage *before* he even split with the NOI. While the majority of the left in America either ignored or attacked Malcolm X (sometimes using the same shallow epithets common in the mainstream media), the SWP was able to grasp his potential and importance. Moreover, it set up a working relationship with Malcolm X after the split with the NOI in an attempt to advance the struggle.

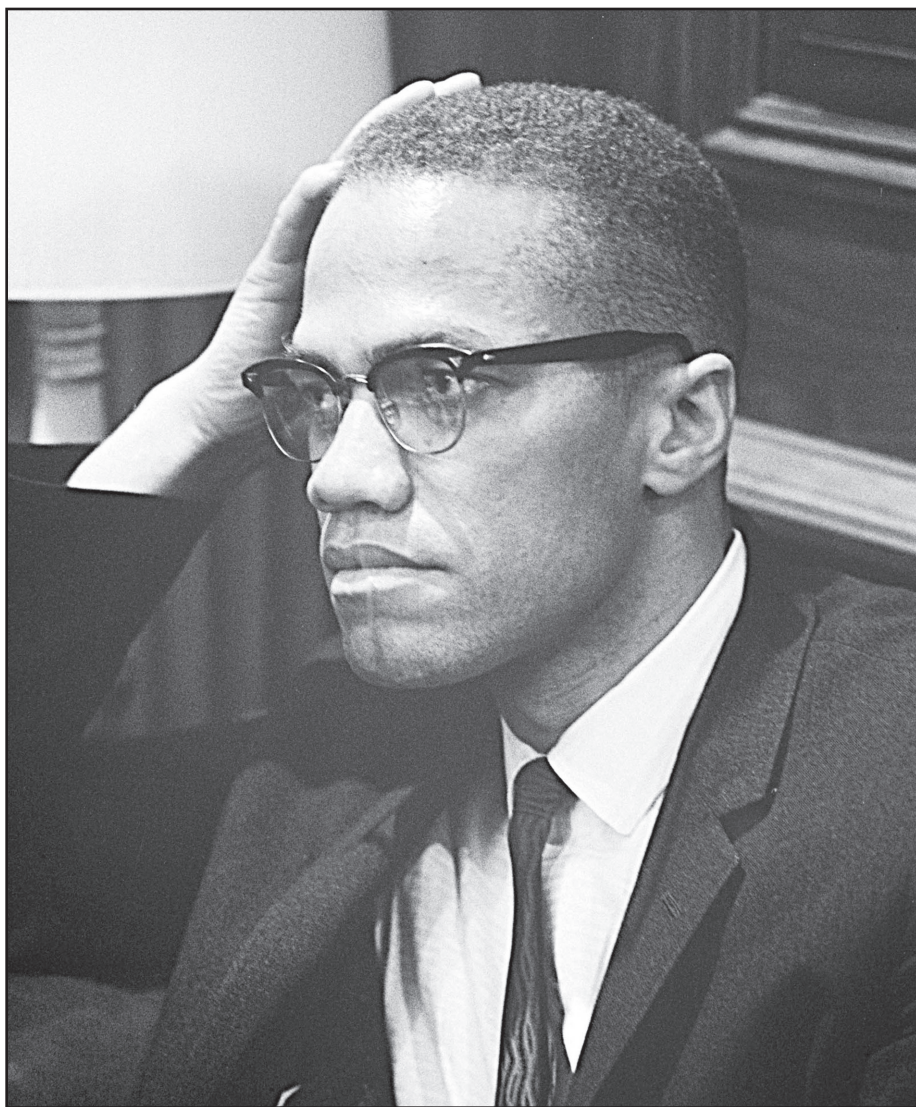
The SWP's insight was based on analysis and discussions by many revolutionaries—notably Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, and CLR James—concerning the struggles for self-determination by oppressed nationalities.

The SWP showed that although capitalists extract profit from the exploitation of the entire working class (of which most Blacks are a part) they are able to extract even higher profits through the special oppression of minorities such as Blacks. In short, capitalists profit greatly from racism.

From this, the SWP concluded that any future American revolution would be a *combined* revolution; it would be a struggle by oppressed minorities for basic democratic rights that have been routinely denied to them, and not just a working-class struggle against capitalism.

The SWP in the 1960s likened the struggle for Black liberation in America to the anti-colonial struggles erupting around the world at the time. They argued that consistent Black nationalists would clash with the capitalists, opening up opportunities for working-class alliances that could one day pose a

New book distorts the legacy of Malcolm X and Black nationalism



threat to capitalism itself.

It was the job of revolutionaries, they maintained, to give unconditional support to the rights of self-determination, self-organization, and self-leadership by Blacks in the United States. This could mean working with Black nationalists in common campaigns, supporting candidates of an all-Black political party, or defending the right of Blacks to separate from the ruling nation and form an independent nation.

This advanced and unique position on the struggle for Black liberation was once proudly defended by the SWP—and still is by Socialist Action today. But it seems that with the publication of this book, Jack Barnes (longtime main leader of the SWP) is signaling a retreat.

While the book is mostly a collection of Barnes's writings and speeches related to Black liberation, it also includes the text of discussions held between Leon Trotsky and SWP leaders in the 1930s on the same topic. In addition, there is an interview conducted with Malcolm X by the *Young Socialist* (the newspaper of the SWP's former youth group).

Since the interview with Malcolm X and the discussions with Leon Trotsky found in this book (both of which are highly recommended) were already available, the only new thing this book has to offer is Barnes's contribution. Barnes spends the bulk of his space detailing the struggles by Blacks from Reconstruction all the way up to the times of Malcolm X. He gives major focus to Malcolm X's period of radicalization after he broke with the NOI.

To the extent that this information is new to some readers, Barnes is providing an educational service. Along the way, however, Barnes revises not only the SWP's historical assessment of Malcolm X but also its assessment of the nature of Black nationalism.

At the same time, Barnes finds time to justify the path the SWP took in expelling a large part of its membership (or as Barnes would put it, "preserving the proletarian character of the party") and to also throw some last parting shots toward at least one of his former comrades.

Barnes states that he felt it was among

his highest editorial priorities since at least 2006 to reprint the discussions Leon Trotsky had with SWP leaders in the 1930s on the struggle for Black liberation (which had previously been published under the title "Leon Trotsky On Black Nationalism And Self-Determination") in a *new* book that "does justice to their content" (p. 304).

Barnes writes that "much about how that [earlier] book was prepared and edited ... hinders rather than helps the reader listen to and understand what Trotsky was saying ... it is *not* a book about Black nationalism" (p. 303, emphasis in original).

"Black nationalism," Barnes declares, "has no political trajectory that advances the interests of working people whatever their skin color... To the degree Black nationalism has a class character... it can only be bourgeois" (p. 318).

But how can Barnes attack Black nationalism—retreating from the historic SWP position—when so much of the book is spent praising the most famous Black nationalist that ever lived, Malcolm X? Barnes solves this problem by reevaluating the SWP's position on how far Malcolm X had evolved politically after his split with the NOI. In that effort, he tries to put as much distance between Malcolm X and Black nationalism as possible.

The position long held by the SWP—laid out in the excellent book, "Last Year Of Malcolm X: Evolution of a Revolutionary," by George Breitman—was that

Malcolm was quickly evolving away from a basic or "pure-and-simple" Black nationalism to an anti-capitalist and revolutionary point of view, but that he was still a Black nationalist in many significant ways. That is not meant to discredit or devalue Malcolm X's tremendous legacy in any way, only to reiterate that Malcolm X's primary concern up until his assassination was the condition of Black people—not necessarily the working class as a whole.

Without knowing that Barnes had been instrumental in having George Breitman expelled from the SWP in 1984, the reader might be surprised at the confrontational and dishonest way in which Barnes treats Breitman in this book. According to Barnes, Breitman concluded that "right up until his assassination, Malcolm considered the revolutionary transformation of society in the United States (and the world) to be the 'white man's problem'" (p. 333). But any reader who checks Breitman's book will clearly see that Breitman was referring to the "pure-and-simple" variety of Black nationalists who Malcolm had moved beyond in the last year of his life.

Barnes later writes mockingly, "Did Breitman think proletarian revolutionaries who were Black made an error in joining the SWP?" None of Breitman's work over his entire life suggests that he held such a belief, but Barnes is apparently very comfortable bashing Breitman to his heart's content.

On a more substantial level, Barnes lays heavy criticism on Breitman's contention that Malcolm X was "on the way to a synthesis of Black nationalism and socialism that would be fitting for the American scene and acceptable to the masses in the Black ghetto," and that Malcolm X was "Black nationalist plus revolutionary." Barnes claims instead that Malcolm was on the way to "something more dialectical, inclusive, internationalist, and socialist" (p. 336). For Barnes, the new classification for Malcolm X is "revolutionary leader of the working class" (p. 59).

Readers should not, however, get caught up in the debate over semantics that Barnes launches into. It is better to focus on the contending ideas put forward here. The old SWP position—and the position held by Socialist Action today—on Black nationalism is an affirmation of revolutionary socialists' support for the rights to self-determination of oppressed minorities.

This position is still very relevant as the dual oppression of Black people in this country has not ended (and will not end until capitalism is overthrown). For the working class to take power, though, it will have to be united across the lines of race and nationality. The solidarity necessary to achieve that unity can only come about by supporting oppressed minorities in their struggle for democratic rights, and recognizing and respecting the nationalism of the oppressed as a progressive and potentially revolutionary force. ■

... Afghanistan

(continued from page 12)

seem to be only two rational policies for the United States, either withdrawal for a vastly expanded war to subdue the entire region. The second possibility would be rational, in the sense of being logical. But it would be the logic of madmen, because the costs and dangers would be incalculable.

In fact, the only rational and reason-

able alternative is total withdrawal. If the Obama government continues to press the war in Afghanistan it can only be because it has become entrapped in a perverse logic of imperialism.

The rational interest of the American people is to mobilize to demand withdrawal from Afghanistan and to reject emphatically any arguments for remaining entangled in this web of intrigue and double dealing that is only fattening a myriad of mafias at the expense of American and Afghan lives. ■

Northern Lights

News and views from SA Canada



Letteris Pitarakis / AP

Labour should probe G-20 crimes, dispel anarchist illusions

By BARRY WEISLEDER

On Aug. 23, seventy-three of the 304 people facing charges at the Ontario Court of Justice in connection with the G20 summit protests had their cases either settled or dismissed. It appears that many of the other charges will be dropped, simply because the cops have no case—proving they never did have a legal basis for detaining more than 1000 people and stuffing them into wire cages for much of the weekend of June 26 and 27.

The agenda of the police and their political overlords was to paralyze and criminalize dissent against the glob-

al corporate agenda. For that reason, socialists demand that all the charges be dropped, including against the 17 alleged 'ringleaders' of the vandalism that occurred on the fringes of the locked-down core of Toronto. But there is more to be said and done about this situation.

In the first place, a broad, independent, public enquiry is still needed. It should look into the decision to turn the city into an armed camp, into police actions that ranged from passively watching (and perhaps covertly instigating) property damage to sudden mass arrests, and most importantly, look into the harmful G20 agenda itself.

The labour movement is the social force that can and should conduct such an open enquiry. It would be foolish to rely on Ottawa, Queen's Park or the police to investigate themselves and tell the truth. At least unions can be held accountable to their members, who constitute a large section of the working class, the progressive majority class in society.

A labour probe into G20 crimes against civil liberties, against working people and the global environment, will not only have the power to put the spotlight on the

(Left) Demonstrators sit in street during G-20 protest in Toronto, June 26.

most important issues; it will dispel the delusions of anarchist sympathizers.

Spokespersons for the Toronto Community Mobilization Network, the body that endorsed the opportunist 'diversity of tactics' that shielded the vandals of the Black Bloc, told a public meeting of 160 on Aug. 17 that "we showed we could shut down the city".

"The resistance is now stronger than ever" said the TCMN's Syed Hussan. The truth is that 'the resistance' is now burdened with enormously debilitating legal expenses. Opposition to the global capitalist agenda has largely been diverted into a defence of liberal democracy. And the corporate elite is proceeding with attacks on working people and the environment at full speed.

'Propaganda of the deed' by a self-appointed group of privileged, mostly white male youths did not electrify the masses into anti-capitalist action. It did temporarily hike the popularity of the police, and it provided an apparent, albeit false, justification for Stephen Harper's obscene expenditure of over \$1.5 billion for 'security', preparing the ground for more repressive measures to come.

The Tamil community's non-violent occupation of a downtown Toronto expressway in May 2009, and the year-long miners' strike at Vale S.A. in Sudbury, did more to disrupt the capitalist economy than the actions of the anarcho-vanguardist Black Bloc could ever do.

The real power to shut down the city was demonstrated on Oct. 25, 1996. That's when a general strike by unions protesting the Mike Harris Ontario Conservative government kept a million workers at home or on picket lines, and mobilized over a quarter million people who marched and swarmed the Legislature at Queen's Park the next day. (Even then, black-clad youths tried unsuccessfully to split off a segment of the huge protest march.)

The second, equally important task facing the workers' movement today is to re-focus and step up the fight against the bosses' austerity drive. A good place to start is the battle against Ontario Liberal Finance Minister Dwight Duncan's attempt to impose a two-year wage freeze on over a million public service workers. Punitive legislation should be met with mass job action. But we have yet to see any resolve from the labour leadership to move in that direction.

The widely read leftist monthly magazine *Canadian Dimension* summarized the post-G20 situation aptly with these words in its September-October 2010 editorial: "While the Black Bloc eschews mass organization and accountability, organized labour is abdicating any leadership role in political struggle. That will change only by building mass organizations inside and outside the unions that can exert pressure on them and provide ideological leadership." We agree. ■

Make Potash Public!

By JOHN ORRETT
and BARRY WEISLEDER

In the future, if the human race survives, it will look back at the concept of individual ownership of natural resources that took nature millions of years to form as an absurdity. It will seem only sensible that the richest potash deposit in the world would be owned and controlled by the people who work in the mine and who are affected by its operation.

Totally unacceptable will be the idea that a stock-holding CEO like Bill Doyle could make over \$400 million if he sold his shares in Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan. Such a bonanza from flipping shares in a resource so valuable to a growing, increasingly hungry world population, would be anathema.

It will be obvious that the fate of the massive reserve of potassium and phosphorous, the two key ingredients of fertilizer that reside in the prairie province (23 per cent of the world supply), should be determined democratically, and that the revenue derived from its sale should be put to social purposes for the good of agriculture and the working people of Canada and the world.

But commercial media 'experts' and editorialists seem to be wearing blinders, unable to see beyond the priorities of the capitalist profit system. A *Toronto Star* editorial of Aug. 22 cannot envision the Bank of Canada coming up with the investment capital needed to retain and develop an extremely lucrative resource industry, should such capital be lacking.

The Star's business commentator Da-

vid Crane cries that the sale of the company to foreign interests may have adverse effects on the Canadian economy. Crane's customary mission is the defense of Canadian Capital, as if our business elite is in some way more progressive and deserving of mega-plunder. The last decade of Canadian resource sell-offs (Westcoast, Inco, Falconbridge, Alcan, LionOre, and by increments, the Alberta oil sands), not to mention the sale of major steel companies Dofasco, Stelco, Algoma and Ipsco, show that the allegiance of Canadian capitalists is first and foremost to their pocket books.

The real story of Potash Corporation is hidden by recent media coverage, but it goes something like this: In the 1970s the New Democratic Party provincial government of Allan Blakeney nationalized much of the potash industry in Saskatchewan. The company grew.

But in the mid-1980s the price of potash declined significantly. The company ran up a debt of around \$800 million. Keep these figures in mind. Anyone paying attention would have known, given growing worldwide agricultural demand for the fertilizer, and given its limited supply, that the price would rebound in a big way.

When the Grant Devine Conservatives were elected to govern Saskatchewan in the late 1980s they privatized the Potash Corporation. They got \$1.5 billion (i.e. \$630 million for the shares and \$800 million in debt relief). It was one of the biggest give aways of a public resource in Canadian history.

The price of potash took off almost immediately following the sale. The profits

from just the first three years of operation completely paid for its purchase. Yes, the Conservatives know how to treat their friends.

Now, a little over 20 years later, the company is subject to a hostile takeover bid by BHP Billiton of Australia for \$38 billion. Most analysts think the final price will top \$40 billion. This represents an increase in value of more than 2600 per cent. Did your wages rise 2600 per cent over 20 years; did the value of your home? Did the cost of running a mine rise that much?

This \$40 billion is a sum representing assets that should be publicly owned. Imagine how many schools, hospitals, rapid transit systems, and social housing units could be funded by a fraction of that sum.

How can this abysmal situation be

rectified? First all, major resource industries like nickel, iron, aluminum, oil, and gas should come under public ownership. So should the steel industry. The responsible, democratic management of those assets is far too important to the environment, far too important to the rational planning of the economy to meet human needs, to be left to the tender mercies of the corporate elite, foreign or domestic.

For public ownership to become a live alternative it is crucial that the NDP be won to this policy. And that would entail an abrupt, but indispensable turn to the left for the party, and the unions on which it is based. Without a struggle for socialist policies, nature and labour will continue to be squeezed dry by the pirates of private profit—leaving the world destitute. ■

CP 'Recovery Plan'

The Communist Party of Canada distributed a tabloid at the G20 Summit protests titled "United to demand a People's Recovery". The question arises, if the CPC is a radical workers' party, and given that working people constitute the vast majority of society, why doesn't it propose a "Workers' Recovery"? The answer is simple: The CPC advocates a multi-class strategy of alliance with the liberal or 'patriotic' Canadian bourgeoisie.

While this is completely contrary to socialism, which strives for independent working-class political action against the capitalists and their system, it is an old story for this party that broke with revolutionary politics

over 80 years ago.

The CPC statement goes on to call for a "People's Coalition of labour and democratic forces which can press for even more substantial social and economic transformation". This signals the CPC commitment to a government coalition with bourgeois Liberals, Greens, so-called Red Tories, and other representatives of the putative 'progressive' wing of the Canadian business class. Such a coalition would be a death trap for the working-class movement.

We invite activists to take the revolutionary path forward—the fight for socialism and working-class independence from the parties of capital. See: www.socialistaction-canada.blogspot.com. — B.W.

By GAETANA CALDWELL-SMITH

"Peepli Live" is an Indian film, but not in the popular Bollywood style like "Slumdog Millionaire." "Peepli" concerns the spate of farmers' suicides. An endnote from the film states that since 2001, 8 million farmers have taken their life because of crop failures and bank foreclosures, although government reports put the number much lower.

In the film, brothers Natha (Omkar Das) and Budhia (Raquvir Yadav), who are farmers, sit in a field and complain of being pushed to extremes by being restricted to using American seeds and American fertilizer—which costs much, much more than what they had paid in the past for local goods. Plus the fact that the return on cotton is half of what it had been. They talk about the possibility of losing their land because their scant crops didn't bring in enough money to repay a loan.

Their home is in Peepli, a small village of one-room clay or stone buildings reached by meandering dirt paths, through colorful but sparse vegetation. The brothers live with Natha's ever-complaining wife, Daniya (Shalina Vatsa), their kids, and their bedridden, yet shrewish, voluble, mother, Amma (Farukh Jaffar), and suffer Amma and Daniya's constant wrath for not providing for them and their children.

They're accused of being lazy and doing nothing but sitting around smoking hashish and drinking beer. Natha discovers that the government has kept secret the fact that it pays 20,000 rupees (about US\$429,000) to families of suicides. Since he has a wife, a mother, and kids, he decides he, not Budhia, should commit suicide, unless he can borrow more money. But he is already in debt to the local politician—an aviator-sunglasses wearing, self-important decider of fates. Natha sees only one way out.

Word gets to the local newspaper about his decision. Later, a TV reporter picks it up and casually announces the fact as a throw-away, human-interest closing bit. Alerted, angry government officials threaten to shut down media. Like a lighted match on dry straw soaked with gasoline (which actually happens towards the end of the film), the story catches fire and news teams from all over, with their antennae-sprouting vans, cameras, cameramen, reporters, anchors, and staff, descend on Peepli.

People flock to the village, which literally becomes a carnival, with rides, entertainment, refreshments, and songs about Natha, even games of chance.

The lead media team is headed by Nadita (Mailaka Shenoy) and her crew; they vie with and hassle other news teams. Reporters interview everyone even the children about their father and their life in general, take cute pictures of them cradling kids (baby goats). The issue becomes a sensation. Soon, politicians running for office in the upcoming election try to outdo

PEEPLI LIVE: NO LAUGHING MATTER



each other with promises to help Natha and his family with everything but what he needs: money to pay his loan and save his farm. One truck in a cast-iron water pump, useless, since there is no water and no money to have it installed.

Speeches are made. The head of the party for the protection of the poor, or some such moniker, some spiritual leader, dressed in silks and followed by an entourage, works to gain leverage over a rival. Interior scenes of men in business suits in lavishly appointed offices drink tea while passing the buck over who exactly is responsible for helping these poor farmers. Nothing is resolved.

All speculate on when he will commit suicide. When Natha goes into the field for a bathroom break, he disappears, causing a heightened media frenzy, resembling a Keystone Kops' bit.

CNN's George Lerner quoted noted Indian activist Vandana Shiva, saying to reporter Christiane Amanpour, "The farmer suicides started in 1997. That's when the corporate seed control started. And it's directly related to indebtedness, and indebtedness created by two factors linked to globalization." Lerner went on to say that, for Shiva, who works with farming communities across India, those two factors were the

ceding of control of the seed supply to the corporate chemical industry—leading to increased production costs for already-struggling farmers—as well as falling food prices in a global agricultural economy.

"The combination is unpayable debt, and it's the day the farmer is going to lose his land for chemicals and seeds, that is the day the farmer drinks pesticide," Shiva said. "And it's totally related to a negative economy, of an agriculture that costs more in production than the farmer can ever earn."

Americans and other audiences from so-called developed countries uneducated in aspects of Indian social traditions and culture will see much of "Peepli" as a comedy. In fact, some in the audience of the theater I was in laughed at certain points, as when Natha is brow-beaten by his wife and or when his decrepit mother screams at him, calls him names, and refers to his wife as a slut. The brothers were seen as a comedy team like The Three Stooges.

Still, as the film progressed, laughter towards the family ceased, but picked up during scenes of pompous bumbling bureaucrats and politicians playing hot-potato with Natha's dilemma. Inept politicians are obviously people that Americans can readily identify from our own culture. ■

Socialist Action congressional candidate Chris Hutchinson wins ballot line

By DANIEL ADAM

HARTFORD, Conn.—On Aug. 24 the Connecticut Secretary of State's office announced that Socialist Action's candidate for U.S. Congress, Chris Hutchinson, has filed enough valid signatures to qualify for ballot status. Socialist Action will be the first party since 1960 with the word "socialist" in its name to successfully place a candidate on the ballot for U.S. House of Representatives in Connecticut.

The petition drive spanned about four months. Volunteers collected about 5750 signatures, distributed thousands of campaign brochures, and made new allies who are now working on the campaign.

The final stretch of the petition drive took place while campaign activists were also organizing for the United National Antiwar Conference in Albany, N.Y. The campaign helped build the conference—a demonstration of how a working-class electoral campaign can act to mobilize its participants in wider social movements.

The primary purpose of Chris Hutchinson's run for Congress is to foster independent working-class struggle. What is holding back this struggle today? As South African Black Power leader Steve Biko said, "The most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." The American capitalist class possesses the most sophisticated machine of psychological manipulation in human history, and the electoral spectacle is its crown jewel.

As the assaults on working and oppressed people grow to unprecedented extremes, the election drama attempts to renew confidence in the capitalist

system, break down workers' self-confidence, and otherwise disorient growing struggles of the oppressed to liberate themselves. Without such manufactured confusion, workers could end their oppression with little more than a shrug.

Combating this confusion is the central task of Hutchinson's campaign. It aims to expose the servants of big business and their ideology. It seeks to advance the confidence of working people and to help build a vision that can unite our struggles.

Right now the parties and media of big business are pushing the line that the government has overspent itself, and that even to maintain public spending at its current level would mean either dramatic deficit spending or taxing working people at much higher rates. This lends credibility to their campaigns against every public service—from education to food stamps to roads, street lights, fire departments, and Social Security.

However, using the funds allocated to the military budget alone could not only maintain present services for the entire country but expand them beyond all precedent—while creating full employment (for more on this, see votesocialistaction.org, category: War). But eliminating the most destructive war machine ever known is completely unthinkable to the bosses and their parties.

Just as sacred is the private property of the banks and mega-corporations. Both owe their very existence to massive public expenditures and support, yet the notion that either could be forced to invest in the public good or have their assets seized is simply sacrilegious.

Is this love of war and private profit held



in the same regard by working people? Hardly. In gathering signatures to place Chris Hutchinson on the ballot, campaign volunteers were able to gain a sense of the political perspectives held by working people in Connecticut. People commonly responded positively to the demand of a massive public works program to end unemployment, but sometimes viewed it as financially unrealistic. Yet this skepticism often disappeared when it was pointed out that military spending could serve as the source of funds for the program.

Many were deeply angry over the incoming cuts in education. Although some had become resigned to cuts in services, many grew more confident in their opposition to these cuts upon hearing that spending for prisons and the military are both increasing while everything in their lives is slashed. A surprising number of people either held no hostility towards socialism, were curious about it, or were

downright ecstatic to find someone running for Congress as a socialist. Most people approached didn't know much about socialism, but loved the demands advanced by the campaign. Support for the campaign's program and socialism in general was strongest in the cities and among working Latinos and African Americans. In Hartford, the biggest hurdle to winning a signature usually came about because many people were enraged and disillusioned with politicians and politics in general.

Hutchinson is running against Democratic incumbent John Larson, who is the fourth ranking Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is also contending with Republican Ann Brickley and Green Party candidate Ken Krayske. Hutchinson will fight to win a place in upcoming public debates. He will speak next at the September New England Trans United rally in Springfield, Mass. ■

U.S. Afghan entanglement follows distorted logic

Justin Sullivan / Getty Images



(Left) U.S. soldier wounded by IED blast near Kandahar on June 25.

By GERRY FOLEY

In view of the increasingly undeniable failure of its “counterinsurgency” campaign in Afghanistan—that is, the U.S. attempt to secure political and military control of all of Afghanistan on behalf of its client Afghan government—journalists have begun to pick up signals that the U.S. is shifting toward a policy of “counterterrorism”—that is, a policy of covert war against target groups by killer drones, assassinations, and commando raids.

There is an argument of political expediency for such a shift, since the polls now show a majority of Americans oppose continuing occupation of Afghanistan. Thus, a “counterterrorist” policy could seem to be less costly and more focused in suppressing concrete threats to the United States. However, a covert war without borders would threaten to lead to far wider entanglements and political conflicts than conventional counterinsurgency warfare.

Among other things, once the U.S. military and CIA build such operations, there is no reason to think that they will remain limited to al-Qaida and allied fanatical terrorist groups. They would be likely to be expanded to include any activists and leaders that the U.S. ruling circles think threaten their interests.

For example, in an article in the Aug. 24 on-line journal *Alternet*, Fred Barnfman noted that one person assassinated in this covert war was an “armed robber” in Paraguay. Barnfman also pointed to the appearance of assassination squads in Latin America subsequent to the CIA-aided overthrow of the Arbenz regime in Guatemala at the outset of the Cold War, which murdered thousands.

Barnfman summed the new turn as follows: “The U.S. has conducted assassination programs in the Third World for decades, but the actual killing—though directed and financed by the C.I.A.—has been largely left to local paramilitary and police forces. This has now changed dramatically.

“What is unprecedented today is the vast number of Americans directly assassinating Muslims—through greatly expanded U.S. military Special Operations teams, U.S. drone strikes and private espionage networks run by former CIA assassins and torturers. Most significant is the expanding geographic scope of their killing. While CENTCOM Commander from October 2008 until July 2010, General Petraeus received secret and unprecedented permission to unilaterally engage in operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Iran, former Russian Republics, Yemen, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, the Horn of Africa, and wherever else he deems necessary.”

There is abundant evidence that this program is not effective and even strengthening anti-American forces in Pakistan. Barnfman wrote: “Bruce Reidel, a counterinsurgency expert who coordinated the Afghan review for President Obama, said: ‘The pressure we’ve put on ... in the past year has also drawn them together, meaning that the network of alliances is growing stronger not weaker.’

“Reidel’s striking conclusion that jihadi forces in Pakistan are stronger after six years of drone air-strikes the CIA claims are weakening them, is echoed by numerous other reports indicating that General Petraeus’ strategy of using military force against Al Qa-

More and more, covert operations are carried out by private murder-for-hire corporations.

eda, Afghan and local insurgent forces in Pakistan has pushed them further east from isolated northwest areas into major cities like Karachi, where they operate freely and work together far more closely than before. The general’s miscalculations regarding Pakistan are reason enough for him to be replaced.”

Barnfman cited General McCrystal as saying that every innocent person killed in these strikes meant 10 more enemies for the U.S. And according to the testimony of at least one military expert before Congress, the U.S. has made a lot of enemies. Barnfman reported: “A particularly significant indication of the drone strikes’ military ineffectiveness has come from Colonel David Kilcullen, a key Petraeus advisor in Iraq, who testified to the House Foreign Affairs Committee on May 23, 2009, that ‘since 2006, we’ve killed 14 senior Al Qaeda leaders using drone strikes; in the same time period, we’ve killed 700 Pakistani civilians in the same area. We need to call off the drones.’”

The same article noted a poll that showed only 9 percent of Pakistanis approved of the drone attacks. That amounts to 91 percent of 160 million people who are hostile to the United States, although the Islamist radicals have been a relatively marginal force in Pakistan as a whole.

Politically, the effect of these targeted strikes can be compared to kicking a hornet’s nest. Eventually, the kickers are liable to be badly stung. The regular Army soldiers have always hated the covert operators because they learned that they mainly created messes that the regular forces had to clean up. Eventually, the targeted strikes can lead to wider wars in which the cost in money and lives will be much greater than the disasters suffered up until now in Afghanistan and Iraq. But the social and political blowback cannot be confined to areas where the targeted strikes are carried out.

More and more, the covert operations are being carried out by private murder-for-hire corporations. The mercenary groups offer advantages for this type of warfare. They are not under any direct political supervision and thus provide deniability. Their operatives are life-long case-hardened professionals untroubled by any stirrings of conscience—ruthless killers.

But they also have corresponding disadvantages. They tend to be adventurers and thus reckless and arrogant, provocative. They arouse virulent hatred among the populations in which they work. They are not inhibited by political control but they are also not harnessed to political objectives.

Eric Prince, the founder of the most notorious of these groups, Blackwater (now renamed Xe), has decided to move to Dubai to be even more out of control of the U.S. government. The mercenary forces have been a major part of the U.S. military effort in both

Iraq and Afghanistan and their numbers are comparable to the numbers of troops, to such an extent that U.S. officers claim that they cannot maintain their operations without them.

Thus, while there are growing scandals about these groups and some sanctions against them, they continue to get contracts from the U.S. government and the turn in the U.S. strategy suggests that they will be more used rather than less.

The U.S. client ruler of Afghanistan himself has now sounded an alarm about the mercenary groups. *The New York Times* reported Aug. 22: “Karzai, who last week decreed that foreign security contractors must disband in the next four months, said on ABC’s ‘This Week’ program that these workers are obstructing the development of Afghan police and security forces. ‘I am appealing to the U.S. taxpayer not to allow their hard-earned money to be wasted on groups that are not only providing lots of inconveniences to the Afghan people but actually are, God knows, in contact with Mafia-like groups and perhaps also funding militants and insurgents and terrorists through those funds,’ Karzai said.”

The Afghan chief argued that the mercenary forces were undermining the regular military and security forces that are the central pillars of the state. In fact, they are undermining the state itself. But that is true not only in Afghanistan but in the United States as well, as the use of foreign mercenaries for security in Katrina-struck New Orleans indicated most dramatically. Ultimately, if the armed forces of the state become a network of mafias, they can become less and less useful as the instrument of any rational political policy.

Moreover, it is not the mercenary groups alone that are undermining the Afghan state. It is also the very traditional CIA. *The New York Times* reported Aug. 26: “The aide to President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan at the center of a politically sensitive corruption investigation is being paid by the Central Intelligence Agency, according to Afghan and American officials.” The aide in question was Mohammad Zia Salehi, chief of administration of the Afghan National Security Council. The article commented: “Mr. Salehi’s relationship with the C.I.A. underscores deep contradictions at the heart of the Obama administration’s policy in Afghanistan, with American officials simultaneously demanding that Mr. Karzai root out the corruption that pervades his government while sometimes subsidizing the very people suspected of perpetrating it.”

The following day *The New York Times* picked up on a Reuters dispatch reporting that a “significant number” of officials in the Karzai regime are on the payroll of the CIA. Bribing officials is a strange way of opposing corruption.

In this web of intrigue, the double game being played by Pakistani officials is hardly exceptional. In its Aug. 23 issue, *The New York Times* was able to offer a concrete account of the Pakistani military’s covert support for the Taliban and opposition to any peace agreement with the Taliban that does not suit Pakistani interests. The paper learned the true story behind the arrest of Taliban leaders in Pakistan, which at the time the U.S. hailed as evidence of good work by its Pakistani ally:

“Now, seven months later, Pakistani officials are telling a very different story. They say they set out to capture Mr. Baradar, and used the C.I.A. to help them do it, because they wanted to shut down secret peace talks that Mr. Baradar had been conducting with the Afghan government that excluded Pakistan, the Taliban’s longtime backer.

“In the weeks after Mr. Baradar’s capture, Pakistani security officials detained as many as 23 Taliban leaders, many of whom had been enjoying the protection of the Pakistani government for years. The talks came to an end.”

The article went on to quote an anonymous Pakistani security official as follows: “We picked up Baradar and the others because they were trying to make a deal without us,” said a Pakistani security official, who, like numerous people interviewed about the operation, spoke anonymously because of the delicacy of relations between Pakistan, Afghanistan and the United States. “We protect the Taliban. They are dependent on us. We are not going to allow them to make a deal with Karzai and the Indians.”

Facing the growing hostility of the majority of Afghans and of 160 million Pakistanis and the covert hostility of the Pakistani security forces, there would

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