

Baltimore Rises Up Over Police Murder of Freddie Gray – National Guard, State Police Impose Emergency Rule

Defend Black Baltimore *Cops and Troops Out!*

**For Labor / Black / Immigrant
Mobilization Against Police Killings
Stamp Out Racist Cop Terror –
Fight for Workers Revolution**

APRIL 30 – The nationwide outrage over the orgy of racist police murders has reached the flashpoint in Baltimore, Maryland. Every day last week there were protests over the cop killing of Freddie Gray, with over a thousand marching on the weekend. City authorities blamed “outside agitators” for clashes that evening. Then on Monday,

April 27 following the funeral service for Freddie, black youth were confronted by a wall of police and the frustration boiled over. As TV screens showed buildings in flames and the media screamed “riots,” the mayor declared a curfew. The governor imposed a state of emergency, ordering in the state police, 5,000 cops from other jurisdictions and the National Guard to put black Baltimore under military rule.

The response of the authorities to protests over the police murder of an unarmed black man is to bring down the boot of massive state repression on the African

As we go to press, the state’s attorney in Baltimore has announced that six police officers have been charged with a number of crimes including murder in the killing of Freddie Gray. Under pressure from the mass protests, the authorities decided they had to do something to cool things out. However, long experience shows that indicting police is no guarantee that they will be found guilty of anything at all. And it certainly won’t stop the killer cops from striking again, and again and again.

One need only recall the case of Amadou Diallo in 1999, where a police hit squad fired 41 shots at him as he stood on his doorstep. Four cops were charged with second-degree murder, but all went free. Or the case of Oscar Grant, in 2009, where the killer cop, Johannes Mehserle got only a slap-on-the-wrist conviction for involuntary manslaughter.

In this case, the absence of specifics about the cops’ actions other than neglect suggests that the murder charges are designed to be dropped or thrown out when protest dies down. Moreover, even though the killers have been charged there is no guarantee they will even be prosecuted. The *New York Times* (1 May) reports that, “Officials had cautioned that it could take considerable time for her office to complete its own investigation and decide whether to prosecute.”

There is no justice in the capitalist courts. Only revolution can bring justice.



Riot cops were sent against teenage protesters in Baltimore on April 27.

American population already under siege by the police. President Barack Obama, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Attorney General Loretta Lynch rail against “rioters” as “criminals” and “thugs.” As these black Democrats enforce racist “law and order” against those who rise up against injustice, they repeat the age-old refrains of Southern

segregationists. Where were the angry denunciations as the police in this Up South city killed at least 127 people from 1992 to 2012? The population of Baltimore is 64% black, last year 100% of the people killed by the cops were black.

They wring their hands about the
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May Day Oakland Port Shutdown Against Racist Cop Terror

On May 1, the international workers day, dock workers of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 shut down the Port of Oakland and led a march of 2,000 people on City Hall to demand an end to the epidemic of police killings. “Stop Police Terror!” read the ILWU banner that headed up the march along with another bearing the union’s watchword, “An Injury to One Is an Injury to All.” The historic May Day port shutdown has already inspired unions in Portland, Oregon to march against police killings.

The ruling class has dismissed the massive protests that swept the country against the cop murder of Eric Garner and Michael Brown. For the police it is still open season on black men, Latino workers, youth and people of all ages. When their victims rise up, as they did in Ferguson and Baltimore, the rulers’ response has been to throw military force against the protesters. The ILWU’s action

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Historic May Day port shutdown march by ILWU Local 10 against police killings.



ILWU Local 10 dock workers march in San Francisco on May Day 2008 in the first-ever strike action by U.S. workers against U.S. imperialist war. The work stoppage shut down all 29 West Coast ports demanding an end to the war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as support for immigrant rights.

Port Shutdown...

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was the first to mobilize workers' economic power, the key force to defeat the capitalist war on working people.

At a rally at the port before the march, Stacey Rodgers, the Local 10 member who put forward the resolution calling for the union action, said the police killing of Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina moved longshore workers in the Bay Area to action. Scott had several relatives who were members of the Charleston dock union, ILA Local 1422, with which Local 10 has long had close relations.

The Local 10 resolution noted that the 1934 San Francisco General Strike was set off by the police murder of two striking workers on Bloody Thursday, July 5. The march and rally also highlighted several of the black victims of the police in the Bay Area, including **Richard "Pedie" Perez**, killed by Richmond cops; **Yvette Henderson**, shot down by Emeryville police; **Raheim Brown**, shot in his car by Oakland school district police; and **Alan Blueford**, killed by Oakland cops, whose case was taken up by the ILWU.

Local 10 has a long history of work stoppages to protest racial and other injustic-

es, including shutting down Bay Area ports in 2010 to protest the murder of Oscar Grant by a BART transit cop and the kid-glove treatment of the killer cop. Oscar's "Uncle Bobby" spoke at the rally at Oakland City Hall, pointing to the connection between racism and capitalism. Jack Heyman, a retired Local 10 member, noted how workers are being blamed for the capitalist economic crisis, and that workers need their own party.

The Internationalist Group has called for workers action against police terror, joining with the embattled black population and all those targeted by the cops. The Bay Area port shutdown was a small taste of what's needed. Precisely because capitalism spawns racism, we need to oust the bureaucratic misleaders who block workers' struggle, break with the Democrats and build a revolutionary workers party to lead the struggle to bring down the dictatorship of capital and replace it with workers rule.

We print below, slightly edited, the *Internationalist* article that announced the ILWU port shutdown in conjunction with an appeal for workers action by South Carolina labor.

Unions to Mobilize on May Day Against Racist Police Killings

APRIL 20 – Police murders of unarmed black and brown people continue without letup across the United States. Despite the national uproar this fall over the grand jury verdicts letting off the cops who chokehold Eric Garner to death in Staten Island, New York and shot 17-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, the forces of racist "law and order" are still on a deadly rampage. On April 4 in North Charleston, South Carolina, Walter Scott, a black worker, was shot eight times in the

back by a police officer in a traffic stop. The cold-blooded murder was caught in a bystander's cellphone video that has been seen by millions.

Working people across the country are outraged. Now key unions have decided they've had enough, ***the time has come to act***. In an April 16 statement, the South Carolina AFL-CIO announced it would "reach out to workers around the country to join with us on May 1st in actions to protest the continuing unjustified killings." The labor federation added, "We want to commend ILWU Local 10 for your courageous actions of solidarity." ***On May 1 the West Coast longshore local will hold a stop-work meeting, shutting down the Port of Oakland and marching on City Hall to demand "Stop Police Killings of Black and Brown People."***

This could be huge, which is why the bosses, bureaucrats and Democrats may try to block it – and why class-conscious workers and all opponents of racism should take it up and spread it. There have been numerous protests against police killings in recent months, but this is the first union appeal specifically for bringing out the power of *working-class action*. Organized labor together with millions of African American, Latino, poor and working people and all defenders of democratic rights are the social force that can bring the wheels of society to a stop in protest against the police murder machine. But we must use that power.

We urge workers across the country to ***mobilize on May 1 against racist police terror! With rallies, marches and strike action***, unions and labor supporters should bring our collective strength to bear, ***demanding these killings must stop!***

Police in the U.S. killed 1,100 people last year. So far in 2015, from January 1 to April 19, at least 350 civilians have been killed by cops. And that's just based on published accounts. Young and not so young black men are particularly at risk: in 2012, once a day a black man was killed by cops or vigilantes. Often under-reported, black women have also been in the crosshairs of police terror, including Rekia Boyd, Mirian Casey, Aiyana Jones and other black women and girls killed by cops. Immigrants, too, are prime targets, including Mexican workers like Antonio Zambrano Montes, killed in February by cops in Pasco, Washington. With or without papers, workers must rely on their own strength and demand ***full citizenship rights for all immigrants!***

Union workers and their families have felt the scourge of racist police terror. In New York City, Eric Garner's sister, mother and aunt were all transit workers, members of Transport Workers (TWU) Local 100. In South Carolina, the brother of Walter Scott, a fork-lift operator, and two other family members belong to International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422. Anti-union terror is rampant in this Lowcountry redoubt of the Old South. Recently the International Association of Machinists (IAM) called off a vote on union representation at the Boeing aircraft plant in North Charleston after organizers were threatened at gunpoint.

And the police kill with impunity: even after massive protests, despite calls for special prosecutors and federal investigations, nothing has stopped – or even slowed – the wanton police violence. When a bystander records the cold-blooded murder on a cellphone, as Ramsey Orta did on Staten Island, it is the witness who is jailed, while

the killer cops go free. It's not a matter of a few "bad cops," it's a whole system of racist repression. The system is capitalism, and since the days of chattel slavery it has been based on the brutal exploitation, oppression and repression of black people.

Wanton police murder goes hand in hand with military repression of demonstrators. The U.S.' endless "war on terror" abroad is directly linked to the unending police killing spree that is terrorizing African American, Latino and immigrant populations "at home." Taking action on the burning question of state repression can and must also spur labor to use its muscle to ***unionize low-wage workers***. On April 15, over 60,000 marched in union-sponsored protests demanding a \$15/hour minimum wage. But even that minimal increase won't be won by looking to Obama's Democratic Party of imperialist war, racist repression and poverty pay.

Last summer following the choke-hold killing of Eric Garner we said that the TWU should strike to shut down the mass transit system which is vital to the world center of finance capital. After the police murder of Michael Brown we wrote, "The fight to put a stop to racist cop terror must mobilize the force that has the power to bring the capitalist system to a grinding halt: the millions-strong multiracial working class." Calling for "Labor/Black/Immigrant Mobilization Now!" we urged: "Mobilize Across U.S. Against Racist Police Terror in Missouri" (*The Internationalist*, August 2014).

In the face of mass outrage, some unions did protest then. In New York City, the United Federation of Teachers, 1199 hospital workers and 32BJ janitors of SEIU, nurses, PSC university faculty and staff joined a "March for Justice" on Staten Island. Calling to "Mobilize NYC Unions' Power Against Racist Police Terror!" and denouncing the Democratic and Republican parties of war and repression, the Internationalist Group, CUNY Internationalist Clubs and Class Struggle Education Workers organized a contingent.

Many unions have issued statements against trigger-happy police, but declarations will not stop this deadly plague. It is high time for labor *action*. The South Carolina AFL-CIO appeal and ILWU Local 10 action in Oakland, California point towards what needs to be done. In Portland, Oregon, Painters Local 10 and IATSE Local 28 have passed resolutions of solidarity with immigrant workers facing police repression in Pasco, Washington, and have voted to march against police killings on May 1. Class Struggle Workers Portland and the Internationalist Group urge other unions and all workers to take up this struggle.

San Francisco/Oakland dock workers of ILWU Local 10 have shown the world what labor solidarity *action* means. Time and again they have put into practice the union's slogan, "An Injury to One Is an Injury to All." They shut down the port to demand freedom for class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. They boycotted ships to protest South African apartheid and Zionist Israel's wars. On May Day 2008 they spearheaded the shutdown of all Pacific Coast ports to stop the U.S. war on Iraq and Afghanistan, the first strike by U.S. workers against a U.S. imperialist war. Today they're targeting racist police terror. Their action speaks for us all!

The May 1 action by ILWU port workers should be taken up by Bay Area

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The Internationalist

**A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism
for the Reforging of the Fourth International**

**Publication of the Internationalist Group,
section of the League for the Fourth International**

EDITORIAL BOARD: Jan Norden (editor), Abram Negrete, Mark Lazarus, Marjorie Salzburg

The Internationalist (ISSN 1091-2843) is published bimonthly, skipping July-August, by Mundial Publications, P.O. Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.
Telephone: (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711 E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com
Subscriptions: US\$10 for five issues.

No. 39



INTERNATIONALIST GROUP
1162-M



April-May 2015

For Workers Mobilization to Stop Racist Cop Terror

Outrage Over Police Murder of Mexican Worker in Washington State

PORTLAND, OR – The racist police killing of unarmed victims, particularly from oppressed population groups, continues unabated. Last year furious demonstrations broke out nationwide over the wanton cop murders of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Akai Gurley and Tamir Rice, all African American. Now protesters have flooded the streets of Pasco, Washington over the police shooting of Mexican worker Antonio Zambrano Montes on February 10. Zambrano was killed by multiple shots from three officers firing on him while the unarmed man had his arms raised. This was a cold-blooded execution, as millions could see in a video circulated on the Internet.

Antonio was a small man, barely five feet, one inch tall. Police accused the 35-year-old agricultural worker of throwing rocks at them, although he had recently broken both wrists after falling off a ladder picking apples. The video of the incident shows Montes running in terror as officers chase him across a busy intersection, then he turns with his hands outstretched as they fire on him. Moreover, the shooting took place at around 5 p.m., yet police left Zambrano's body lying in the street all night, as a gruesome warning. His anguished cousin Maria Madrigal said, "To me, it's like just leaving a dead animal out there" (KUOW Seattle, 13 February).

By all accounts, Zambrano was in bad shape. His wife had left him, moving with their two daughters to California. Injured, he was out of work and seemed disoriented. In January he was trapped in a house fire and his belongings burned. He stayed for awhile in a homeless shelter. More to the point, the police were out to get Antonio. He had been charged with throwing rocks at cops a year ago, and was arrested the week before, apparently for missing a court date. "He was released on Monday," the *Seattle Times* (11 February) reported. The next day the police cut him down in a volley of bullets. Charge: throwing rocks at police. Trial: none. Sentence: death.

The cop murder of Antonio Zambrano was no isolated incident but part of a pattern. Police in Pasco gunned down four people over the last six months, which is more than in all of Great Britain (population 60 million) over the last three years. None of the Pasco killer cops was indicted for anything. One of them was the subject of a 2012 lawsuit for use of excessive force against a Latina mother picking up her children from child care. The overwhelmingly white police force rides roughshod over the majority Hispanic population. There is one

labor and unions across the country. The Internationalist Group calls upon workers everywhere to unite with the African American, Latino and immigrant population in a massive show of our strength. We have the power, the working-class power, to send the bosses and their hired guns packing. Now is the time to use it! **Turn May Day 2015 into a clarion call for working-class action against racist police terror.** Join together to stop the killer cops! Turn the watchword into reality: **Asian, Latin, Black and White – Workers of the World, Unite!** ■

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Latino city councilor, no Latino on the board of education, although 70% of students are Hispanic.

Who could miss the parallels? This was the Michael Brown killing in Ferguson, Missouri, only this time with video. Black or Latino population, white police and power structure. "Hands up, don't shoot?" Bang, you're dead. The *New York Times* (17 February) headlined: "Killing in Washington State Offers 'Ferguson' Moment for Hispanics." And as a demonstrator cried out in Ferguson last August, "Is this the Gaza Strip?" (see "Mobilize Across U.S. Against Racist Police Terror in Missouri," *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014). In Hispanic Pasco as in Zionist besieged Palestine, police take a rock in the hand as a license to kill.

Meanwhile, the Mexican government and Mexican president Enrique Peña Nieto have denounced the killing of Mexican agricultural worker Zambrano in Pasco as a "disproportionate use of lethal force." They call for a thorough investigation and punishment of those responsible for the homicide. Their purpose is to take the heat off themselves over the Mexican police massacre and kidnapping of some 50 students from the Ayotzinapa teachers college last September. As for the "investigation" of the police murder in Pasco, it is being done by a police agency, just as in Mexico the attorney general "investigated," in order to cover up the role of the state.

The murder of Antonio Zambrano has galvanized the area's working-class Latino population, pushed to their limit by racist police terror. One woman remarked, "It's like having the badge gives you the right to take the life of a Mexican." Family and co-workers called a rally at Pasco City Hall the following day. As word of the shooting spread, a rally on Saturday, February 14 swelled to 1,000. Protesters demand "justice," but justice will not be forthcoming from this racist capitalist system. After the outcry over police shootings in Ferguson, Cleveland and New York, Pasco has become a new flashpoint in protests against deadly cop brutality and impunity.

Pasco is a segregated Latino city in the Tri-Cities metropolitan area together with Kennewick and Richland, WA which are over 80% white. Most media accounts cite 2010 census statistics listing Pasco's population at under 60,000 and 56% Hispanic, but the 2014 Washington state population estimate lists Pasco's actual residents at almost 68,000, and the percentage of Latinos



Demonstrators march in Pasco, Washington on February 14 to protest police killing of Antonio Zambrano Montes (shown in photo with his daughter.)

is likely closer to two-thirds. The difference is the large number of undocumented immigrants in Pasco, like Antonio Zambrano, who don't respond to the census out of fear of deportation. It's no accident that Pasco police act as if they are dealing with a population with no rights.

The Tri-Cities area boomed when the Hanford Nuclear Site was established during World War II. Richland was a government-owned housing complex for workers there. Pasco was home to the agricultural workforce in the Yakima Valley (apples, pears and wineries) and in the Columbia River Basin. Completion of the Grand Coulee Dam in 1941 turned a semi-arid region into one of the richest agricultural areas in the country, producing just about every major crop. Family farms were quickly replaced by giant agribusiness corporations. Today the countryside is dotted with crop circles irrigated by government-subsidized water from the Columbia River.

Even before this, the Yakima Valley in southeastern Washington was a farming and trade hub with a strong labor history. During the 1930s, the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) organized pickets demanding better working conditions and wages, while growers bragged to the local press of their special relationship with the police who acted as strikebreakers and enforcers for their draconian labor practices. In the 1940s, the government brought in Mexican agricultural laborers and railroad workers under the *bracero* program. In the 1960s there were a number of strikes by Latino farm workers, aided by Chicano students.

Today, growers in Washington push for beefed-up "guest worker" programs, in order to obtain an efficient and steady stream of low-paid, disposable workers with almost no accessible rights. And when the

"carrot" of dreams of getting ahead through hard work and determination no longer works, the cops supply the stick to keep the "wage slaves" in line. In a city where a huge percentage of the population works in the fields or in related industries, many of them long-time residents, police are empowered to callously use deadly force against immigrants, with little fear of accountability as long as they feel they can keep restless workers isolated and in check.

So a thousand protesters marching through Pasco, WA must have a sobering affect on the good ol' boys in the local police department. Yet this is no assurance that the routine police murder and brutal treatment of the Latino population will stop. A measure of how deeply this has been ingrained was the gut-wrenching sign carried in the February 14 protest: "Shoot Me on the Leg, But Don't Kill Me." Calls for justice from the thoroughly unjust capitalist state not only fall on deaf ears, the police, prisons and politicians who serve the interests of the agribusiness bosses make up a machine of racist repression which it will take a revolution to bring down.

Calls for a federal investigation will do nothing, as Ferguson showed. Liberal talk of "police accountability," civilian review boards and the like are a cruel hoax. Justice for those who toil in the fields can only come from the working class itself, through an all-out war against racism, injustice and the ruling class that creates it. From Ayotzinapa to Ferguson and Pasco, it's one fight. The Internationalist Group calls for massive mobilization of the multi-ethnic working class to stop the killer cops in their tracks. For that we need to build a revolutionary workers party battling every form of oppression in the fight for a society in which those who labor rule. ■

Black Baltimore...

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“looting” of a CVS convenience store, because it affected private property. Who are the criminals here, the residents of West Baltimore who take home basic necessities like a couple of packs of toilet paper, diapers and bottled water (as photos show), or the multi-billion-dollar corporation that gouges the black poor with high prices? The president and the media screech about rioters “burning down their own neighborhoods,” and blame it on the population – absent fathers, drugs, etc. But where were their laments as the capitalists and their government destroyed jobs, disinvested in poor neighborhoods and sent huge numbers of black men to prison (including Freddie Gray) with their viciously discriminatory drug laws?

That’s the logic of capitalism for you. And it is that logic that guarantees that the ruling class will back the cops to the hilt, for they understand full well that *the police are the armed fist of capital*. All the talk about “accountability” and the need to “build community trust” (Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing) is nothing but PR hype. Cops are the guard dogs of Wall Street, and the would-be masters of the world stand by their snarling Rottweilers. The ruling class labels anyone who resists “thugs.” That’s what plutocrat NYC mayor Bloomberg called the transit workers when they went on strike in 2005. The real thugs and criminals, who murder people with abandon and savagely beat (or shoot) grandmothers, are the cops.

The Baltimore Police Department is a terrorist gang that terrorizes the communities it patrols. Its killer cops are not “out of control,” they are doing their job for the bosses.

U.S. rulers would repeat the 1992 military occupation of Los Angeles that suppressed protest after a court let off the racist cops who beat motorist Rodney King. Today, ***black Baltimore must not stand alone!*** Across the country, police unleash their pathological violence against the black, Latino and immigrant poor and working people in order to intimidate. To defeat the forces of repression, we need to bring out a more powerful force, that of the organized working class leading all the oppressed.

In the protests in Baltimore over the last week and a half, a number of unions have been present, including UNITE HERE, SEIU32BJ and SEIU1199. What’s needed now is to bring out labor’s power to ***shut the city down***. In California, the ILWU dock workers in the Bay Area are stopping work on May 1, ***shutting down the port of Oakland*** and marching on City Hall to demand “Stop Police Terror!” If the East Coast ILA likewise shut the port of Baltimore on May Day, the reverberations would be felt around the country and the world.

On April 29, thousands marched in Baltimore in the largest protest yet, demanding answers about the death of Freddie Gray and calling to “put killer cops in cell blocks.” In New York over 5,000 demonstrated in solidarity with the besieged population of Baltimore, chanting “All night, all day, we will fight for Freddie Gray.” Mayor de Blasio’s police arrested more than 120 people, arbitrarily snatching them out of the crowd to charge them with the “crime” of being in the street. In Washington, D.C., Oakland, Minneapolis and elsewhere there were also large marches.

Over 200 people were arrested in Bal-



Robocops impose curfew following May Day protests in Baltimore.

timore as a result of the police crackdown, 100 of them held in jail for two full days before being charged. The Internationalist Group calls to ***drop all charges*** and ***free all those arrested*** during the upheaval. We demand ***cops and National Guard out of black Baltimore***. And across the U.S. we call for ***labor/black/immigrant mobilization against racist cop terror!***

Police Murder Machine Grinds Relentlessly On

Last summer it was Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri: unarmed black men set upon and murdered by the police as they were walking along the street. In the fall came the cases of Akai Gurley, gunned down in the stairwell of a Brooklyn housing project; 12-year-old Tamir Rice, shot by a cop in a playground in Cleveland, Ohio; and lesser-known cases like the father bringing home dinner from McDonald’s to his family in Phoenix, Arizona. All unarmed, all killed with impunity, no charges brought against the cops.

These blatantly racist cop murders set off a furious reaction. Ferguson rose up and faced down an army of police and National Guard. Around the country, thousands marched in protest. When the grand jury verdicts came in and predictably no cops were charged for the murder of Garner or Brown, tens of thousands hit the streets, night after night, shutting down highways, tunnels and city centers. America’s capitalist rulers were worried: all the weaponry they had been stockpiling to handle domestic “unrest” didn’t work. ***But the plague of cop terror goes on.***

In January there was 17-year-old Jessica Hernandez shot to death by police in Denver, Colorado as she was driving a car with four other teenagers. In February, Antonio Zambrano, cut down by 17 police bullets in Pasco, Washington, followed by Ruben Garcia in Grapevine, Texas and Ernesto Canepa in Santa Ana, California – all Mexican workers, all unarmed. In March, two more unarmed black men: Charly Leundeun Keunang, a homeless African immigrant from Cameroon on Skid Row in Los Angeles, and 19-year-old Tony Robinson in Madison, Wisconsin.

On April 2, Ed Harris was chased down and executed by a 73-year-old “reserve deputy” sheriff in Tulsa, Oklahoma, who said he mistook his revolver for a Taser. The killer is a wealthy donor and friend of the sheriff who in exchange for his bucks gets to put on a badge and gun to play cop. Two

days later, Walter Scott, a 50-year-old black worker in North Charleston, South Carolina, pulled over in a traffic stop (supposedly for a broken tail light) while driving a Mercedes-Benz, was cut down by eight shots to the back as he tried to escape the murderous cop.

Then came the murder of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland. Freddie was riding a bike when police for no reason decided to chase him down. Screaming and limp as he was tossed into a police van, by the time they got to the station house Freddie’s voice box was crushed, his neck broken and spinal cord nearly severed. Two weeks later the authorities still say they don’t know what happened in the van and have given no reason for the arrest.

After days of saying the BPD was “investigating,” Baltimore police chief Anthony Batts now says the results will not be made public. This is just stonewalling. Whatever happened to Freddie in the van or during his arrest, an unarmed, handcuffed man was killed in police custody. Was he tossed around banging his head in a careening van? Baltimore is the home of the “rough ride.”¹ Or was the fatal injury due to a cop putting his knee on Freddie’s neck during the arrest, as witnesses report? While the police maintain their “blue wall of silence,” the fact is that ***all the cops involved are guilty of murder.***

Then there is the absent reason for an arrest. The police only say that Gray fled after making “eye contact” with an officer. Why is that significant? Because the cops had *no probable cause* whatsoever to pursue and arrest him. They are relying on the case of *Illinois v. Wardlow* (2000), where, as the police interpret it, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that flight after making eye contact with the police in a “high crime area” is grounds to detain someone. This would allow cops to arrest anyone in a black neighborhood for no reason at all. It’s a green light for racist cop terror.

And that is precisely what Baltimore has lived under for decades. As a black writer described growing up in the city: “To us, the Baltimore Police Department is a group of terrorists, funded by our tax dollars, who beat on people in our community daily, almost never having to explain or pay for their actions” (D. Watkins, “In Baltimore, We’re All Freddie Gray,” *New York Times*, 29 April). Freddie was the seventh black man killed by the local police in the 12 months.

Last year, the liberal *Baltimore Sun* (28 September 2014) published a detailed

¹ See “‘Rough Rides’ and the Challenges of Improving Police Culture,” *The Atlantic*, 27 April.

investigative story, “Undue Force,” about the more than 100 cases of people who have won court judgments or settlements for police brutality or civil rights violations in the city. The article summed up:

“Victims include a 15-year-old boy riding a dirt bike, a 26-year-old pregnant accountant who had witnessed a beating, a 50-year-old woman selling church raffle tickets, a 65-year-old church deacon rolling a cigarette and an 87-year-old grandmother aiding her wounded grandson. Those cases detail a frightful human toll. Officers have battered dozens of residents who suffered broken bones – jaws, noses, arms, legs, ankles – head trauma, organ failure, and even death, coming during questionable arrests. Some residents were beaten while handcuffed; others were thrown to the pavement.”

In addition to those horrific cases, there are many others. In May 2014, police shocked a 19-year-old meningitis patient, George King, with a Taser five times in ten minutes and choked him into unconsciousness, a coma from which he died a week later. No charges were filed.

Freddie Gray was not the first person to suffer a spinal cord injury in a Baltimore police van: Jeffrey Alston in 2004 and Dondi Johnson in 2005 were both paralyzed after being given a “rough ride.” And while many of the victims of police killing in Baltimore have been passed over in silence by the media, Freddie Gray’s death was not the first to be the subject of extended protest. Tyrone West was killed in a traffic stop in 2013 and his sister and others have kept up weekly protests since then.

The Baltimore Police Department has been the subject of endless suits and investigations. In 1980 the NAACP called for a federal inquiry into the BPD for brutality. After 1999 under Democratic former mayor Martin O’Malley, Baltimore adopted “zero tolerance policing.” This was first implemented by New York City’s racist Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani under police chief William Bratton, who is now once again NYC top cop under liberal mayor Bill de Blasio. In Baltimore, as in New York, this policy led to huge numbers of arrests and “a highly militarized approach to policing residents,” in the words of the ACLU.

Following the *Sun* exposé, Baltimore entered into a “collaborative review” by the U.S. Department of Justice over grievances against the police. After Freddie Gray went into a coma but before he died, the feds held a public hearing where hundreds of furious residents, overwhelmingly black, “inundated federal officials with their assertions that city police have been brutalizing residents with impunity” (*Baltimore Sun*, 17 April). One man said that things had gotten to the point where black residents would have no choice but to “gather our arms and fight back.”

The *Sun* editors fretted over the cost of the numerous legal actions over police violence, for which Baltimore paid out \$5.7 million in settlements and judgments since 2011. Actually, this is peanuts compared to other cities. Dallas paid \$6 million since 2011, Denver \$13 million over ten years, Minneapolis \$21 million since 2003 and Los Angeles \$20 billion in 2013 alone.² Then you get into the big league, with New York City shelling out \$428 million in 12,000

² See Radley Balko, “U.S. cities pay out millions to settle police lawsuits,” *Washington Post*, 1 October 2014.

CLASS STRUGGLE EDUCATION WORKERS

Mumia Gravely III

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Now! Don't Let Them Kill Him in Prison



Mumia Abu-Jamal and Wadiya Jamal

At this moment, Mumia Abu-Jamal is in grave medical condition. It was reported yesterday evening (April 24) that after Mumia was earlier taken from the hospital over objections from his family, and then two days ago removed from the prison infirmary and placed in the general prison population, his medical condition is worsening.

For decades the authorities have sought to silence the imprisoned radical journalist and former Black Panther, whose radio broadcasts earned him

the reputation as “the voice of the voiceless.” His prison writings, including Live from Death Row, and hundreds of broadcast articles collected in several books have been read around the world.

A medical alert from Noelle Hanrahan of “Prison Radio,” says that Mumia is now barely able to eat and showing symptoms possibly associated with “hyper glucose levels, diabetic shock, diabetic coma, and with kidney stress and failure.”

Mumia urgently needs 24-hour medical care. Readers are asked to contact prison authorities and demand that he “be seen immediately, and not be left to go into a diabetic coma.”

Direct calls and e-mails to:

John Kerestes, Superintendent SCI Mahanoy: 570-773-2158 x8102 | 570-783-2008 Fax | 301 Morea Road, Frackville PA 17932

Tom Wolf, Pennsylvania Governor: 717-787-2500 | governor@PA.gov | 508 Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg PA 17120

John Wetzel, PA DOC: 717-728-4109 | 717-728-4178 Fax | ra-contactdoc@poc.gov | 1920 Technology Pkwy, Mechanicsburg PA 17050

Susan McNaughton, DOC Press secretary 717-728-4025. PA Docsmcnaughton@pa.gov

Mumia is innocent. The ruling class whose crimes he has relentlessly exposed and denounced has tried and failed to execute him. He was on death row for almost three decades, but the state was unable to kill him with lethal injection due to the worldwide campaign of protest. Now the authorities seem bent on killing him through deprivation of urgently needed medical attention.

We demand, Free Mumia Now!

NJ Teacher Whose Students Sent Get-Well Cards to Mumia Defend Marylin Zuniga

By Class Struggle Education Workers

Class Struggle Education Workers stands in solidarity with Orange, NJ elementary school teacher Marylin Zuniga who was suspended after her third grade students sent “get well” messages to Mumia Abu-Jamal, the renowned black radical journalist who was framed and convicted in the 1981 shooting death of Philadelphia police officer Daniel Faulkner.

Despite Mumia’s innocence, he was sentenced to death and kept on Death Row for 29 years. He is still imprisoned for life while the authorities are determined to silence this “voice of the voiceless” one way or another.

Zuniga’s suspension by the Orange school board stemmed from a lesson she taught on civil rights leaders back in February during Black History Month. She asked her class of black and Hispanic students to consider the meaning of a quote from Jamal: “So long as one just person is silenced, there is no justice.”

On March 30, Jamal went into diabetic shock with life-threatening high blood sugar and was taken from prison to an outside hospital. Two days later he was suddenly returned to SCI Mahanoy,

the same prison whose medical personnel had failed to diagnose or treat him. That’s when the kids sent their cards. Zuniga told a WABC reporter, “In April, I mentioned to my students that Mumia was very ill and they told me they would like to write ‘get well’ letters to Mumia.”

Zuniga’s victimization was not because school children sent cards to prisoners but because the prisoner is Mumia Abu-Jamal. The suspension is part and parcel of a decades-long vendetta against Jamal spearheaded by the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), dutifully whipped up by the right-wing media, and supported by both Democrats and Republican politicians. John McNesby, the president of the Philadelphia FOP wasted no time in attacking Zuniga. “It’s absolutely not teaching them anything except how to interact with a convicted cop killer.” (*New York Daily News*, 11 April).

Jamal has been in the crosshairs of the notoriously corrupt Philadelphia police since he was a teenage member of the Black Panther Party. His subsequent courageous and eloquent writing and radio broadcasts in Philadelphia earned him both the reputation as the “voice of the voiceless” and the undying hatred of the Philly PD and the FOP. The cops shot and beat Jamal on the night

Faulkner was killed, then railroaded him onto death row. For thirty years, they tried to execute him. In December 2011, Jamal’s death sentence was overturned in favor of “life with no parole.” Now Jamal’s enemies hope medical neglect and abuse will finish the job. For those who are determined to silence Mumia, the third-grade class at the Forest Street Elementary School in Orange NJ can’t be allowed to get in the way.

There is opposition to Zuniga’s suspension and possible firing. Prominent academics including Noam Chomsky and Cornell West signed a letter from Educators for Mumia Abu-Jamal and sent it to the superintendent of the Orange public schools calling for her immediate reinstatement. The letter likens the messages from Zuniga’s class to the letters written by students worldwide that were sent to Nelson Mandela while a prisoner of South African apartheid and branded a terrorist by the U.S. State Department.

When the Orange school board met on April 14, a vociferous crowd of Zuniga supporters demanded that the teacher be allowed to speak. Zuniga stated that she was “very proud of my students’ work” while conceding that she believed she had erred in publicizing the students’ messages online for which she apologized. As Zuniga reaffirmed



Marylin Zuniga speaking at Orange, NJ school board hearing, April 14.

her love for her students, their families and Orange community, as well as her desire to continue teaching at Forest Street Elementary School, the crowd cheered “Let her teach!” The school board tabled the issue of Zuniga’s fate and will meet again in May.

There should be more teachers like Marylin Zuniga. Class Struggle Education Workers demands: Full reinstatement for Marylin Zuniga. Let her teach!

cases since 2009, and Chicago \$521 billion over the last decade, with nearly 500 brutality cases pending.³

A notable example was Oakland,

³ Chicago’s Homicide Squad was so notorious for coerced confessions that in 2009 the state of Illinois set up a Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission to investigate them.

California which paid \$74 million to settle at least 417 lawsuits over police brutality. Those include multiple suits against the Oakland police when Baltimore’s current chief, Anthony Batts, headed the marauding OPD cops. In one case, over 150 people were held on buses for over six hours and never charged during a November 2010

protest over the minimal sentence given to the BART cop who killed Oscar Grant. Others concerned demonstrations by Occupy Oakland, including one in January 2012 in which over 400 people were arrested.

For police departments all over the U.S., massive violations of the rights and taking the lives of thousands of people

(1,100 killed by cops in 2014 alone) is standard operating procedure. Paying millions for beating, maiming and killing people is dismissed as a cost of doing business, just as Wall Street banks and stock market speculators brush off billion-dollar fines by the Securities and Exchange Commission. It doesn’t stop their criminality one bit. These

are the “best practices” of capitalist policing. Freddie Gray’s Baltimore is not an exception but the norm.

Media, Authorities Denounce “Riots”

Protests against the police murder of Freddie Gray have now been officially labeled the “Baltimore riots.” The April 29 *Sun* led with, “Baltimore descends into chaos, violence, looting.” The freebie tabloid *Metro* headlined, “War in Baltimore.” Capitalist media and politicians up to the White House demonize black youth, labeling them “thugs” and “criminals” and accusing the protesters of “violence.” But a look at how the supposed “riots” actually began shows a very different story, that they were in response to provocation by racists and the police.

On April 25, the march of several thousand protesters proceeded without incident as the police stayed away. After the demonstration ended at City Hall, a group marched toward the Camden Yards baseball stadium where the Orioles were playing. There they were met by phalanxes of riot police. As the cops pushed them back, the windows of a police car were broken. There was also a confrontation with drunken fans at a bar shouting racial epithets. A second group went to the Inner Harbor tourist area where a journalist reported that he saw whites “jeer, spit, and throw things at protestors and try to hit them.” Store windows were broken.

After Freddie Gray’s funeral on April 27, high-school students leaving school in West Baltimore were met by hundreds of riot cops. A dubious posting was circulating on social media calling for a “purge,” referring to a 2013 movie in which crime was made legal for a night, supposedly to begin at the Mondawmin Mall at 3 p.m. The police also claimed they had “credible information” that gangs were getting together to “‘take-out’ law enforcement officers’.”

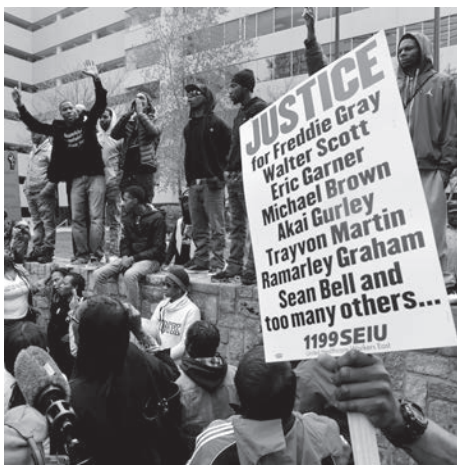
“When school let out that afternoon, police were in the area equipped with full riot gear. According to eyewitnesses in the Mondawmin neighborhood, the police were stopping busses and forcing riders, including many students who were trying to get home, to disembark. Cops shut down the local subway stop. They also blockaded roads near the Mondawmin Mall and Frederick Douglass High School, which is across the street from the mall, and essentially corralled young people in the area. That is, they did not allow the after-school crowd to disperse.” —“Eyewitnesses: The Baltimore Riots Didn’t Start the Way You Think,” *Mother Jones*, 28 April

This was confirmed by several teachers who witnessed the events, including one who wrote:

“There were police helicopters flying overhead. The riot police were already at the bus stop on the other side of the mall, turning buses that transport the students away, not allowing students to board. They were waiting for the kids. As I sat at the intersection of Gwynns Falls, I saw several police cars arriving at the scene. I saw the armored police vehicle arrive. Those kids were set up, they were treated like criminals before the first brick was thrown.”

—Gawker, 28 April

Moreover there’s a curious aspect to at least one of the fires, by far the largest, at a senior housing project being built next to the Southern Baptist Church which is sponsoring it. Shots of this fire were looped over and over on TV to show the city burning.



A number of unions have protested police brutality. It’s high time for action.

But the site is in East Baltimore, miles from the West Baltimore area where businesses were trashed and small fires set. At the time, city authorities said it was not clear if it was related to the “riot.” And the pastor, Donald Hickman, was well-known for supporting anti-brutality protesters. Strange.

Now the Republican governor is saying that the National Guard should have been brought in earlier to avoid the “riots,” while the Democratic mayor counters that they didn’t want to use heavy weaponry on 13- and 14-year-olds. Presidential candidates are also weighing in. Obama may add a little rhetoric about “troubling questions” about “police officers interacting with individuals, primarily African-American, often poor.” But the “debate” between the twin capitalist parties is basically over how to better suppress the protests.

While the media plays up the “riots,” the politicians piously inveigh against “senseless violence” that only “tears the city down” (as if they had done anything to rebuild impoverished West Baltimore, where many buildings that were burned down during the 1968 “riots” following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. are still vacant lots). But the fact is that the Monday unrest got the nation’s attention while the days of marches were ignored. As the young black writer D. Watkins quoted earlier wrote:

“We are all starting to believe that holding hands, following pastors and peaceful protests are pointless. The only option is to rise up, and force Mayor Rawlings-Blake to make what should be an easy choice: Stop protecting the livelihoods of the cops who killed Freddie Gray, or watch Baltimore burn to the ground.”

Communists understand and defend black youth lashing out however they can against the all-sided injustice they face, but this in itself is not a strategy. “Getting the attention” of the rulers about police brutality will do no more to solve or even alleviate the problem than did Occupy Wall Street’s brief success in 2011 in “changing the conversation” to talk about inequality. By the 2012 election it was back to normal: money talks. It will take nothing less than a socialist revolution to put an end to the poverty, racism, cop terror and endless war of decaying American capitalism.

Only Socialist Revolution Can Bring Justice

As the media vultures flocked to the city to cover the “Baltimore is burning” story, one of the most cynical and widely despised of the lot, Geraldo Rivera of Fox News, was confronted by an eloquent young black man who gave him an earful.

“I want you and Fox News to get out of Baltimore city. Because you’re not here reporting about the boarded-up homes,

and the homeless people on the MLK. You’re not reporting about the poverty levels up and down North Avenue.... But you’re here for the ‘black riots.’ You’re not here for the death of Freddie Gray. Fox News don’t give a damn about these people. This is the real Baltimore. This is where people wake up and wonder where they’re going to go to get a meal.”

Geraldo’s response was to denounce the young man as a “vandal” and to claim that the people in the crowd, who had been demonstrating about police brutality and official cover-up all day, just “want to make trouble.”

What made black Baltimore explode in fury is not only the cop killing of Freddie Gray, it was also the generalized misery in this area marked by astronomical levels of unemployment, disease and physical devastation. Manufacturing jobs in Baltimore have fallen by 90% since the late 1960s, so that today in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood where Freddie lived 52% of the population aged 16 to 64 is jobless, 49% of high-school students have dropped out, 61% of the adult population has less than a high school diploma and 33% of homes are abandoned.⁴

In the Upton-Druid Heights neighborhood next door, 64% of working-age black men are unemployed, average family income is under \$16,000, the mortality rate is double the city average for heart disease, triple the rate for AIDS, and life expectancy is 68. As an article in the *New York Times* (30 April), “Health Problems Take Root in a West Baltimore Neighborhood That Is Sick of Neglect,” noted: “The fact that 94 percent of its population is black is lost on no one.” What exploded in Baltimore is a toxic mixture of racial and class oppression.

Liberals have made much of the fact that Baltimore has a black Democratic mayor and a black police chief who supposedly tried to cool things out rather than immediately escalate the confrontation like the good ole boys in Ferguson, Missouri city hall did last August. In fact, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake is Baltimore’s second black woman mayor, and Anthony Batts is the seventh black police chief. Moreover, the police force is roughly half black, and the city council is majority black and entirely Democratic. And they preside over a system of racist police terror.

Racism is generally treated, even by many leftists, as a matter of opinions, and getting rid of it is assumed to be essentially ideological, whether it is white liberals calling to “check your privilege” or more leftist variants. For Marxists, racist ideas are an expression of the underlying material reality of black (and brown) oppression. Black cops can enforce racist “law and order” as brutally as white cops, just as the repressive apparatus of slavery sometimes included black overseers. To get rid of racism, we must get rid of racial oppression, the keystone of American capitalism.

Moreover, all the various palliatives and supposed reforms to attempt to soften (or at least disguise) the hard edges of police repression have been tried and failed. Black police chief? Black mayor? Civilian review board? Federal investigation? Baltimore has had them all, to no avail. What about admitting “the role of policing in past and present injustice,” improving training and promoting “community trust”? This is the recipe of Obama’s Task Force on 21st

⁴ Justice Policy Institute, Prison Policy Initiative, “Sandtown-Winchester/Harlem Park, February 2015.”

Century Policing report issued last month. And its model of “implementing national best practices” was ... the Baltimore police under BPD commissioner Batts! So much for that plan.

The capitalist system can permit certain reforms on secondary matters and for limited periods. For a time after World War II certain measures of a “welfare state” were enacted, particularly in Europe in order to stave off the “Communist menace.” But the police are at the heart of the capitalist state, those “special bodies of armed men” that the ruling class depends on in order to rule. And as world capitalism is mired in a continuing economic depression since the crash of 2007-08, the bourgeois rulers must rely increasingly on police-state measures.

The current uproar over police killing of black and brown people owes much to the spread of cellphone cameras, which have brought home the brutal reality of racist repression to white people in a way never before possible. African Americans, Latinos and immigrants didn’t need to see YouTube videos since they had to deal with it personally every day. The actual numbers of unarmed civilians being killed by the police may or may not be increasing, but awareness of its pervasiveness is heightened.

Most importantly, the current evolution of U.S. capitalism has led to a generalization and intensification of repression. With the middle class hollowing out, the numbers of working poor sharply increasing and actual unemployment higher than at any time since World War II,⁵ U.S. society is looking more like Latin America, and the repressive apparatus is being beefed-up to match. Meanwhile, the U.S. continues to wage imperialist war around the world. In this situation, the masters of Wall Street and Washington are not about to turn *their* cops into Officer Friendlys.

A real fight against the killer cops must be directed against the ruling class, its repressive forces and the capitalist system which spawns racist police terror. The Internationalist Group calls to build a **revolutionary workers party** to fight against white liberal Democrats and black capitalist politicians who are pushing the militarization of the police as hard as reactionary Republicans. We raise a program to fight mass unemployment, through a **sliding scale of working hours** to divide up the available work and create jobs for all. We call on class-conscious workers to fight for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants** and for **workers action to defeat of U.S. imperialist war** abroad and the capitalist war on workers “at home.”

The police continue to kill with impunity because they are doing their job in defending capital and keeping the modern-day wage slaves “in their place,” just as the slave catchers did prior to the Civil War.⁶ Just as it took that Second American Revolution to abolish chattel slavery, nothing less than a new revolution smashing the repressive apparatus of capitalist rule — *the bourgeois state* — and bringing the workers to power can put a stop to wanton, racist police murder. ■

⁵ The government masks this by simply eliminating the long-term unemployed from its statistics. People who haven’t had a job in over two years are simply disappeared. Actual joblessness doubled in 2008-09 to around 23% of the workforce and has stayed there.

⁶ The first professional police forces in the U.S. were the slave patrols that started out precisely in Charleston, South Carolina in the 1830s.

Ayotzinapa: To Get Justice, Fight for Socialist Revolution

Massacre in Mexico: It Was the Murderous Capitalist State

Constituent Assembly – A Bourgeois Trap

For a National Strike On the Road to a Workers and Peasants Government!

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

The following article from February 2015 is translated from *Revolución Permanente*, the newspaper of the *Grupo Internacionalista de México*.

MEXICO CITY – For the last four months, the streets of Mexico have resounded with hundreds of thousands of anguished voices exclaiming, “They took them from us alive, we want them back alive!” They are demanding the return of the 43 students of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College kidnapped last September 26. They demand “Justice!” But how to get it? For sure not by begging the murderers, among whom we count the rulers at all levels, as well as those who profit from the oppression of the working masses.

“It was the state!” they cry out, hoarse from repetition, rightly rejecting the claims of the authorities who want to wash their hands of the affair by blaming a two-bit drug trafficking cartel. “Down with [Enrique] Peña Nieto!” they demand, making it clear that the Mexican president and his PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), like the PRD (Revolutionary Democratic Party) governor of the state of Guerrero bear personal and institutional responsibility for the killing in Iguala. But only them? Behind this atrocious crime there is a whole, bloody system: capitalism.

For the massacre of the teachers college students is no anomaly, above all in this country [Mexico] that in recent years has seemed like a horror film that never ends. Recall the hideous massacre of 45 Indians, members of the Las Abejas Collective in the municipality of Chenalhó (Chiapas) in 1997. Or the spine-chilling discovery of the bodies of 72 undocumented migrants in an empty field in San Fernando, Tamaulipas in 2010, or after that the second massacre of San Fernando when another 193 people were killed in 2011. Or the recent execution of 22 “suspects” by the Army in Tlatlaya (Mexico State) last June. And above all, the 100,000

people murdered and more than 20,000 disappeared since 2006 in the “war on drugs.”

“What of it?” is the response of the federal government, expressing its haughty disdain for the unwashed masses by shelving the case of the dead and disappeared of Ayotzinapa. Just as the Argentine government tried to hide its dirty war of the 1970s behind an “official story,” the arrogant Mexican regime proclaims its unappealable “historical truth”:

“it was the narcos” (drug traffickers) who kidnapped and massacred the students, it decrees. “It was not a state crime,” the criminal state insists. And it continues to follow its bloody path: a “shootout” on January 6 in Apatzingán (Michoacán) left a toll of 13 dead; teachers college students who protest on the Autopista del Sol (Highway to the Sun) superhighway to obtain justice for their comrades are kidnapped by the *federales*.

In spite of their disdain and feigned calm, “those on top” are quite worried about the unrest among “those on the bottom.” The Tierra Caliente (hot land) of Michoacán is still aflame, despite the arrests of dozens of “autodefensas” (self-defense forces) who had become uniformed “rural guards.” Now the state is a battlefield between the cartel of the Caballeros Templarios (Templar Knights), which was favored by the previous PRI state government, and another gang, Los Viagras (linked to the Jalisco Nueva Generación cartel) which currently enjoys the approval of the federal government’s “commissioner,” who is now a top-level military officer.

For its part, the state of Guerrero is a “bonfire” (as Luis Hernández Navarro wrote in *La Jornada*, 3 February), with an interim governor and state office buildings burned down in October. On January 12, parents and students from Ayotzinapa searching for their children and fellow students clashed with hundreds of military police inside the grounds of the 27th Infantry Battalion in Iguala. Meanwhile,

more than 30 city halls have been taken over by the Guerrero People’s Movement (MPG), whose participants include the Ayotzinapa teachers college students, peasants and dissident teachers of the CETEG.¹

Mayors are on the run, after being expelled from the municipalities for corruption. They roam the state like nomads; in Acapulco, the government pretends to operate out of meeting rooms in the luxury hotels of the port city (“Twilight of the Mayors,” *Milenio*, 3 February). In several places, “popular municipal councils” have arisen, and in the regions of La Montaña and Costa Chica, the rival community police of the CRAC, UPOEG and now the FUSDEG proliferate. Everywhere in Guerrero, walls are painted with the slogan, “There Will Be No Elections on June 7” until the 43 students are returned.

The bloodbath and mass kidnapping of Iguala have thrown the life of the country into turmoil, plunging the government into the worst crisis of bourgeois “governability” in half a century. Vast sectors of the population feel outraged and shaken. The imperialist masters are worried as well: the main focus of Peña Nieto’s recent interview in the White House was “security” and the kidnapped *normalistas*, as the teachers college students are known. President Obama offers to send American “aid.” In short, the “Ayotzinapa case” is far from being a merely local, or even national affair.

Thus the Mexican edition of *Forbes* (January 2015), the American business magazine that calls itself the “capitalist tool,”

¹ State Coordinating Committee of Education Workers of Guerrero, affiliated with the national CNTE, which is predominant in the state against the “institutional” corporatist pseudo-union, the SNTE. See our article, “Defend the Independent Teachers of Guerrero!” *The Internationalist* No. 35, Summer 2013

published an in-depth article on Ayotzinapa and the rural teachers colleges. Meanwhile, the geostrategic consulting firm Stratfor has distributed analyses of the events in which it argues that “Normalista Unrest Highlights Mexico’s Geographic Challenge” (October 2014) and “Mexico’s Normalista Protests Threaten to Spread” (November 2014). They warn that:

“Despite President Enrique Peña Nieto’s efforts to surmount the country’s security problems through economic reforms and increased coordination of security forces, the federal government is struggling to maintain its authority. Mexico is seeing rising unrest among an increasingly disillusioned population, especially in southwestern states.”

The Grupo Internacionalista has insisted from the outset that the massacre was due to the onslaught against the Ayotzinapa students and the rural teachers colleges in general, which in turn is the product of an offensive aimed at privatizing education instigated by Washington and the imperialist financial institutions.² In particular, as our comrades in the United States have stressed, it is the product of a policy of “Militarization in Mexico, *Made in U.S.A.*”³

The federal government has opted to wait to let the protests run down and then crush the rebels, exhausted by so much mobilization, with overwhelming force. That is exactly what president Vicente Fox of the clerical-rightist National Action Party (PAN) did in Oaxaca in 2006. Now,

² See “Mexico: Massacre in Iguala Calls for Mobilization and Workers Revolution,” *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014, some 15,000 copies of which have been distributed in the many demonstrations for Ayotzinapa.

³ See “Huge Outrage Over Guerrero Massacre,” *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014.



Students march in Mexico City on 2 October 2014 to commemorate the martyrs of the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre and to demand that the 43 teachers college students from Ayotzinapa be returned alive.



Tzotzil indigenous women confront the Mexican army after the massacre of Acteal, Chiapas, December 1997.



Guerrero state government offices in flame after being besieged by hundreds of students and teachers furious over the Iguala massacre and the role of the government, 13 October 2014.

following the announcement of the “historical truth” decreed by the attorney general Murillo Karam, the minister of the interior (*gobernación*) Osorio Chong commented to PRI senators in a closed session that the federal government had sent “as many forces of the Army, Navy and Federal Police as imaginable” to Guerrero (*La Jornada*, 30 January).

The repressor-in-chief of Bucareli (the street where the Secretariat of Gobernación is located) announced that he will not tolerate that groups “which have for a long time been recognized as radicals in Guerrero take advantage of the tragedy of Ayotzinapa in order to mobilize and commit excesses.” The murder of “radicals” has already begun. On February 4, the decapitated body of Gustavo Salgado Delgado, leader of the Revolutionary Popular Front (FPR) in the state of Morelos and an important organizer of the protests for Ayotzinapa, was found. The FPR rightly insisted that “this crime is part of a policy of terror carried out by the state.”

Despite the escalating repression, rather than concentrating on extending the rebellion to the workers of the entire country, the Guerrero rebels have retreated to their base. Currently there is a strike by teachers throughout the state over unpaid salaries (due to the educational “reform”), and on February 5 there were protests in Ayotzinapa in Guerrero, along with some marches in Chiapas and Michoacán, *but not in the national capital*. As combative as it is, an uprising limited to a few states in southwestern Mexico will not be able to resist the federal government’s onslaught.

Meanwhile, appeals are being made to the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances in Geneva and to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San José, Costa Rica. These bodies, completely subordinated to the orders of U.S. imperialism, will never require the Mexican government to do anything that doesn’t have Washington’s stamp of approval. The same goes for human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, whose job is to denounce regimes that are on the U.S.’ black list, like Cuba, Russia or Syria.

The history of the “dirty war” in the state (see box, page 9) which unleashed a reign of terror there exceeding that in any

other region of the country, demonstrates that the Mexican government will never tolerate a “Red Guerrero,” any more than in 2006 it permitted a “Oaxaca Commune,” despite the fantasies of some starry-eyed leftists. The dream of “heading into the hills” to launch a new guerrilla war is a policy of defeat. Mexico has had more rural armed struggles than any other Latin American country, yet all failed in the face of the vicious repression by the Mexican government and Yankee imperialism.

The repression of the Ayotzinapa students is not the result of local corruption nor of purely national policies. The assault on the rural teachers colleges is part of the plans of the imperialist financial agencies to regiment and privatize public education. It goes hand in hand with the “free trade” policies which have devastated Mexican agriculture. In short, the hunting down of the radical *normalistas* is the product of international capitalism, and to defeat it requires *working-class mobilization in an international revolutionary struggle*.

Workers Mobilization on the Road to Socialist Revolution

What’s needed is a counteroffensive of the proletariat, at the head of the oppressed, against the bourgeois regime of hunger and repression. The combativeness of the *normalista* students and teachers of Guerrero has been exemplary, but it is necessary to extend it to the entire country, and above all to key sectors of the working class. The Grupo Internacionalista has agitated in numerous student and union assemblies, with student and worker brigades and distributing Marxist literature in the mass mobilizations, calling for a *national strike against the murderous government*, beginning with a strike of the education sector, in a fight for “a *workers and peasants government* to resolve the democratic tasks *in the course of initiating and extending international socialist revolution*.”

Around the world there have been solidarity protests in several dozen countries of the Americas and in Europe. Our comrades of the Internationalist Group in the United States organized the first emergency pickets at the beginning of October outside the Mexican consulate in New York, which were highlighted by the press in Guerrero.

The IG emphasized that from Ferguson, Missouri, where the black youth Michael Brown was the victim of a racist police murder last August, to Ayotzinapa, it is one struggle. Our Brazilian comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) put forward a motion of solidarity with the teachers college students which was passed by the combative teachers and health workers unions of the state of Rio de Janeiro, and they held a protest outside the Mexican consulate in Rio last October 17.

In Mexico, the struggle for Ayotzinapa has convulsed the country. There have been at least four national days of work stoppages of

24, 48 and 72 hours in schools at different levels. In Oaxaca, the militant teachers of Section 22 of the CNTE stopped work and blocked the airports of Oaxaca and Huatulco, along with the refinery of Salina Cruz. In Guerrero, the teachers of the CETEG set up a tent city in the center of Chilpancingo and have directed their anger at buildings symbolizing the rotten bourgeois institutions: the governor’s residence (October 29), the state congress (November 12 and January 5), various government office buildings throughout the last four months, and the 27th Infantry Battalion in Iguala on January 12.

The bourgeoisie is desperately trying to turn the page and get past the issue. Speaking at the Imperial World Forum in Acapulco during a December 4 visit to Guerrero (in which he didn’t go to Ayotzinapa, Iguala or even Chilpancingo), Mexican president Peña Nieto called on the parents and schoolmates of the disappeared students to “get over [*superar*] this moment of pain.” (He promised hotel executives concerned about highway blockages that he would “protect free movement” on the superhighway with beefed-up police.) But the chief executive only managed to fan the flames of indigna-

tion. After the uproar in the social media over #YaMeCansé (I’m tired of it) picking up on the insulting words of the attorney general Murillo Karam, now there was an explosion of fury with the hashtag #YaSuperenlo (Get over it already).

What the highest authorities in the country want is for everyone to accept the bloody M.O. (*modus operandi*, or method of operation) of Mexican capitalism. And if the easy way doesn’t work, the government is waving its big stick. The job of threatening a crackdown was given to the secretary of the Navy, Vidal Soberón Sanz, who claimed that the parents of the are being “manipulated” by groups that are “profiting” from their pain (*La Jornada*, 10 December 2014). In the same vein, the big business groups of the National Business Council (CCE) are calling to “enforce the law against acts of vandalism” (*Milenio*, 11 November 2014).

In Oaxaca, the businessmen’s associations have organized shock troops to block the teachers’ demonstrations. On January 10, tourist operators led by the mayor of Huatulco broke up the blockade of the local airport by the Section 22 teachers. It won’t be long before in Oaxaca such *white guards* surface, bringing together drug traffickers and “legitimate” businessmen to back up the official repressive apparatus against the radical students and educators.

As on earlier occasions – the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in 1994, the 2006 rebellion in Oaxaca – the fact that struggles have arisen in outlying and economically backward peasant regions has limited their impact. As the imperialist geostrategists of Stratfor indicated in their November 2014 commentary, “If the normalista and teachers’ groups are able to cooperate with the Mexico City organizers and significantly escalate the demonstrations, the Mexican government will find it difficult to manage prolonged unrest in multiple areas using non-violent means.” For that very reason, the Grupo Internacionalista has struggled, both over Oaxaca in 2006 and Guerrero today, to mobilize the “heavy battalions” of the Mexican proletariat.

Education workers unions in Mexico City and elsewhere in the country have joined the mobilizations, and have even stopped work or have announced that they will participate in general work stoppages. In the nationwide mobilization of November



Contingent of the Grupo Internacionalista in the march to Mexico City’s Zócalo, 22 October 2014. Banner says: “For Ayotzinapa – For a National Strike Against the Murderous Government.”

The fact that the crime of Iguala is no anomaly but one more link in the chain of deadly violence that characterizes bourgeois politics in this country can be confirmed by casting a brief glance at the history of the state of Guerrero over the last half century.

Already in the late 1950s, Guerrero was experiencing a reign of terror unleashed by the tyrannical governor, General Raúl Caballero Aburto, of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), who was charged with having murdered more than 30 people, and tortured many more. In order to fight him, a Guerrero Civic Association (ACG) was formed, which included members of the Mexican Communist Party and of the Popular Socialist Party. A number of the dead were thrown into the Pozo Meléndez sinkhole (also known as the Devil's Mouth) near Taxco, which is where many of those persecuted during the Dirty War of the 1960s and '70s ended up. It's also very close to where the Ayotzinapa students were disappeared last September 26.

Caballero Aburto was ultimately removed following the murder by army soldiers of 19 students in Chilpancingo, on 30 December 1960. Later, protests against the electoral fraud orchestrated by the PRI ended with a massacre of 31 December 1962, in Iguala. The ACG, led by the teacher Genaro Vázquez Rojas, a graduate of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College and a member of the Revolutionary Movement of Teachers (MRM), organized a "civic work stoppage" in front of the municipal building. With the support of police and the army, white guards (private armies of gun thugs hired by local bosses) attacked the demonstration, leaving eight dead and 280 arrested. Following this massacre there was a "scorched earth" operation to take back the municipalities which been won by the Civic Association.

After several years as a rural school teacher, Genaro Vázquez was captured by the Guerrero police in 1966. On 18 May 1967, judicial police carried out another massacre, this time against protesting teachers in Atoyac de Álvarez, in the Costa Grande region. The judicial police fired on the crowd from the rooftops of houses, leaving a toll of between five and nine people dead and various wounded. See the vivid description of the slaughter in the magnificent book of Carlos Montemayor, *Guerra en el paraíso* [War in Paradise] (1991).

This set off the guerrilla uprising of Lucio Cabañas, who was leading the pro-

In Guerrero, the Dirty War Never Ended

test meeting in Atoyac. For his part, Genaro Vázquez, after being liberated by a guerrilla commando in 1968, undertook guerrilla struggle in the regions of Las Montaña and the Costa Chica under the name of the National Revolutionary Civic Association. He died in a traffic accident in February 1972 in obscure circumstances. According to the report/novel of the always well-informed Carlos Montemayor, Genaro was finished off by a military man.

During the 1970s and '80s, Guerrero was the scene of one of the bloodiest episodes of the *dirty war* against the guerrillas. The state was literally subjected to a state of military siege. The 27th Military Zone, with headquarters in Acapulco, was outfitted with the most modern military equipment of the time. The Federal Security Directorate and the Army carried out massacres of entire peasant settlements, applying brutal counterinsurgency techniques in order to sweep away popular support for the guerrillas. As Laura Castellanos, author of *México armado* (2007), commented:

"Guerrero also has the infamous honor of being the first place in the Americas where so-called 'flights of death' were inaugurated, even before they were used by South American dictatorships; dozens, perhaps hundreds of civilians were transported in military airplanes and then dumped, alive in the high seas. Others were incinerated or thrown into mass graves."

—"Before and After Iguala" [in Spanish] in *Milenio*, 20 November 2014

The final report of the Truth Commission for Guerrero, published last fall, recounts that between 1974 and 1981 around 1,500 people were tossed into the sea, some of them alive (*La Jornada*, 18 October 2014).

Military control of the state strengthened the *caciques* (local bosses) and their paramilitary gangs. In various areas, the army permitted large-scale planting of marijuana and poppies, which generated a kind of "social base" for the counterinsurgency linked to drug trafficking. Despite the extermination policy, some groups dating back to the guerrilla groups of Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez managed to survive into the 1990s. In order to revive repression against peasant communities which



The dirty war never ended: students from Ayotzinapa protest the massacre of their compañeros by state and federal police in December 2011.

might give them cover, PRI governor Rubén Figueroa Jr. undertook the massacre of 17 members of the Peasant Organization of the Southern Sierra (OCSS) in Aguas Blancas, on 28 June 1995. A year later the formation of the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) was announced.

Due to the uproar over the Aguas Blancas massacre, the governor was forced to request a leave and was replaced by Ángel Aguirre Rivero. But the killings didn't stop. On 7 June 1998, in the community of El Charco, municipality of Ayutla de los Libres, soldiers of the Mexican army threw fragmentation grenades into a primary school, killing five Indians sleeping there. This was followed by the devastating effects of [Mexican president Felipe] Calderón's war on drug trafficking from 2007 to 2013 in which more than 100,000 people were killed, 8 percent of them in Guerrero (Alejandro Poiré in *Nexos*, 11 February). Some 8,000 Guerrero residents lost their lives in this war ordered by the White House, the Pentagon and their puppets in Los Pinos [Mexico's White House].

As staunch defenders of democratic rights, revolutionary Marxists oppose all laws against the production, selling or consumption of drugs, as well as laws concerning the use of alcohol or tobacco,

as a violation of individual liberties. As we have underlined, the "war on drugs" is a dispute between sectors of the bourgeoisie for the purpose of maintaining a pervasive military and police presence in the impoverished areas of the countryside and in working-class neighborhoods in the cities. It also reflects the subordination of Mexican bourgeois governments to Yankee imperialism in its pernicious counterinsurgency wars in Latin America since the 1960s.

Even so, the dirty war in Guerrero never ended. The murder of two students from Ayotzinapa by state police in the Autopista del Sol superhighway on 12 December 2011 was the most notable event of the first year of Ángel Aguirre Rivero's second term as governor of the state (this time for the Party of the Democratic Revolution [PRD]). And now he has ended by requesting a leave over the massacre of Iguala of 26 September 2014, the worst of all, but not the first ... nor the last. The drums of the dirty war will continue beating out their deadly cadence, and the church bells will keep tolling their chimes of mourning, until a socialist revolution puts an end, once and for all, to this diabolical capitalist machinery of death. ■

20, the workers of the National Union of Telephone Workers of Mexico stopped work for 24 hours. (The Grupo Internacionalista solidarized with this action, taking brigades of striking students to different Telmex locations.) This demonstrates that it is not only necessary but also possible to mobilize the power of the working class. While the union bureaucracy seeks to limit the scope of such actions, we must intervene to forge a revolutionary leadership.

The Bourgeois Trap of a New Constituent Assembly

The bourgeoisie is genuinely worried that the situation could spin out of control. This fear is all the more real because the PRD is utterly discredited and unable to play the role assigned to it when it arose 25 years

ago: of being the bourgeois pole of a *popular front* to chain the workers, who were in the process of throwing off the yoke of corporatism, to a section of the capitalist class. The aim is to keep the struggles of the working people under control and to divert popular discontent into the sterile channels of parliamentary politics. For its part, the party of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, MORENA, is focused on the June 7 elections while the clamor for an electoral boycott is spreading through Guerrero and Oaxaca. And what about Mexico City?

A measure of the generalized loss of credibility of the bourgeois political system is the resignation of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas from the PRD. The party founder complained of the "myopia, opportunism and complacency" of the party leadership. At

the same time, Cárdenas advocated calling a new "Constituent Congress" to "draw up a new *magna carta*." He stressed: "We are not trying to get rid of the institutions and institutional life. By no means. There is a lot that is useful, although a lot that needs to be fixed." He only intends, he says, to "recover" the "essence of constitutionality" laid down in the constitutions of 1824, 1857 and 1917 (*La Jornada*, 22 November 2014).

The same tack was taken by Raúl Vera, the former curate who worked with Samuel Ruiz in San Cristóbal de las Casas (Chiapas) at the time of the Zapatista uprising and who is now the bishop of Saltillo. Vera issued a call for an assembly to "draw up a new Constitution" (*Proceso*, 28 December 2014). His call was joined by various well-known personalities, including the former rector

of the National University, Pablo González Casanova; the poet Javier Sicilia, who in 2011 led the *No Más Sangre* (No More Blood) movement; and Father Solalinde, of the Casa Hermanos en el Camino (Brothers on the Road) shelter for migrants. According to Sicilia, "now is the time to refound the nation" by means of "building a new Constituent Assembly" that in turn will "articulate a Committee of National Salvation which in 2018 will become the government" (*Proceso*, 4 January).

The perspective of "refounding the nation" by means of a constituent assembly and a new constitution expresses the outlook of bourgeois sectors (and of "moderates" in the petty-bourgeois left which are tailing after them) who want to carry out reforms without touching the bloody roots of the Mexican

Ayotzinapa and the Imperialist

The following article from February 2015 is translated from *Revolución Permanente*, the newspaper of the Grupo Internacionalista of Mexico.

From the beginning of the mobilizations for Ayotzinapa, we have emphasized that the real motive behind the horrific massacre in Iguala on 26 September 2014 goes far beyond the corruption of a murderous government. Substituting one bourgeois politician for another changes nothing when it is the system that is to blame. Today they chant “Down with [Mexican president Enrique] Peña Nieto!” just as yesterday they were calling in Guerrero for “Down with [state governor Ángel] Aguirre Rivero!” and in 2006 in Oaxaca they kept repeating that “[state governor] Ulises [Ruiz Ortiz] has fallen.” But if a governor or a president is ousted, who replaces him? Ruiz and Aguirre are gone, and their successors Gabino Cué and Rogelio Ortega keep hounding students and teachers, indigenous people, peasants and workers.

As we pointed out four months ago: “Whatever the immediate cause that triggered the bloodbath of Iguala, the rationale for the slaughter is the *demonization of militant students* and the commitment of the governments of all the parties to *close the rural teacher training institutes*. This is part of the *privatization offensive against public education* ordered by Washington and the global financial institutions.”

–“Mexico: Massacre in Iguala Calls for Mobilization and Workers Revolution!” *The Internationalist* No. 38, October–November 2014

We might add that Peña Nieto’s attorney general, Jesús Murillo Karam, who declared himself “tired” of the whole affair, only to later invent “historical truths” about the crime of Iguala, when he was governor of the state of Hidalgo in the 1990s slashed enrollment at the rural teachers college of El Mexe, and interior minister (secretary of Gobernación) Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong, during his stint as governor of Hidalgo, “finished the job and closed El Mexe, which for a long time served as headquarters of the Federation of Socialist Peasant Students of Mexico (FECSM),” as Arturo Cano noted in *La Jornada* (8 November 2014).

Thus the top executives of the Peña



Students of the Federation of Socialist Peasant Students in front of the campus of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College.

Nieto regime with regard to the case of Ayotzinapa are sworn enemies of the rural teachers colleges. Along with the FECSM, another of their favorite targets is the dissident teachers of the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (*la CNTE*), squared off against the “institutional” corporatist “National Union of Education Workers” (*el SNTE*).¹ Last year, Carlos Loret de Mola, the anchor of the morning news program on Televisa (Mexico’s leading TV network), reported that in a meeting behind closed doors at Los Pinos (the presidential residence), it was announced that “we’re going kick the ass of the CNTE crowd” (*El Universal*, 12 August 2014). The journalist added, “We already know who is going to do it, to whom and when. All that’s left to know is how ... they’ll go about it.” So now we know.

Over the last 20 years, if not earlier, there have been constant attempts to close the rural teachers colleges. In the case of El Mexe, there was a particular motive for the persecution: in February 2000, just days after the takeover of the National University of Mexico (UNAM) by the Federal Police that put an end to the ten-month strike there, the governor of Hidalgo ordered state po-

¹ For a fuller discussion about the nature of corporatist pseudo-unions in Mexico, see “SL on Corporatism in Mexico: Games Centrists Play,” *The Internationalist*, July 2013.

lice to take El Mexe by assault and arrest its 900 students. But instead it backfired. When hundreds of paramilitary police arrived at the campus and arrested around 170 students, the neighboring community mobilized and some 1,500 peasants surrounded them, disarmed the police and held them until the arrested students were returned.²

Following the definitive closing and violent eviction of the El Mexe students in 2003, there was the attempt to close down the Mactumactzá teachers college in Chiapas and the Lázaro Cárdenas teachers college in Tenebría in Mexico State, as well as the kidnapping and torture of students from the Atequiza teachers college in the state of Jalisco, all in 2008. Then in 2012 there was the simultaneous assault by thousands of police on the teachers colleges in Tiripetío, Cherán and Arteaga in Michoacán in an attempt to break the strike of students protesting against a curriculum “reform” along free-trade lines (replacing the teaching of indigenous languages used in the communities with English instruction). The assault sparked a march of 50,000 people in the state capital Morelia, called by the CNTE.

The reason for this crusade against the rural teachers colleges is not simply the ha-

² See “El Mexe: Rebellion in Hidalgo,” in *Mexico: The UNAM Strike and the Fight for Workers Revolution*, special supplement of *The Internationalist* (March 2000).

tred of the bourgeois rulers for radicalized students. As with just about everything having to do with education in Mexico, the government’s actions were in response to the dictates of the imperialist financial institutions. The article on “Fight ‘Maquilization’ of the University,”³ in *Marxism and the Battle Over Education* (special supplement to *The Internationalist* 2d. edition, January 2008) quotes documents from the World Bank which advocate a “market orientation for tertiary [higher] education,” including imposing tuition, reduction in the size of the study body of public universities, an increase in private universities, weakening unions, as well as having “fewer and/or different faculty” and “the closure of inefficient or ineffective institutions.”

On the latter, the imperialist efficiency “experts” made very specific recommendations. In September 2002, a World Bank mission prepared a detailed report, “Program Support for the State of Chiapas” (adorned with the inscriptions “confidential” and “official use only”), which “recommended” eliminating the reservation of teaching positions for graduates of the teachers colleges and “the conversion of state teachers colleges” (quoted in Proceso, 30 August 2003). Based on this report, Chiapas governor Pablo Salazar announced his intention to “convert the Mactumactzá rural teachers college into a polytechnical university.” This set off furious student protests, to which the police responded with deadly gunfire.

In recent years, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has taken the lead in promoting “market-oriented education reform.” We should point out that this educational *counter-reform*, which was the first undertaking of the Pact for Mexico coalition formed by the main bourgeois parties (PRI, PAN and PRD), was based on an *Agreement for Mexico-OECD Cooperation to Improve the Quality of Education in Mexican Schools* (2010 [in Spanish]) to “establish a national selection exam and other tools of evaluation” for hiring and firing teachers and professors. It also proposed introducing a system of “pay for performance.”

³ I.e., transforming universities into an educational version of *maquiladoras*, the highly exploitative free trade zone factories.

regime: the capitalist system. This slogan of “refounding” the country has been popularized in Latin America in recent years above all by the bourgeois populist Evo Morales in Bolivia, and subsequently by Rafael Correa in Ecuador. In fact, Morales launched this slogan in the middle of the peasant uprising of 2003, and particularly in 2005 precisely *in order to prevent a workers revolution* which was literally on the doorstep.

As for the 1917 Constitution, once praised as “the most advanced in the world” at the time by those (like Adolfo Gilly) who have now declared it destroyed, this is not only the basic law of a *capitalist state*, its promulgation marked the consolidation of the victory of the bourgeois “Constitutionalist” army of Venustiano Carranza over the radical peasant armies of Zapata and Villa. Even

its most “progressive” clauses (Article 3 on education, Article 27 on the property of land and natural resources, Article 123 on union rights) served to undercut, divert and keep under the control of the capitalist state the struggles for agrarian reform, the expropriation of oil, free education and workers’ rights.

Bourgeois ideologues have spilled rivers of ink attempting to explain the fact that in Mexico the democratic aspirations of the masses who fought in the three bourgeois-democratic revolutions that have shaped the history of the country have not been achieved. Many refer to the long (70-year) rule of the PRI-government as a “presidential” regime, which they attribute to a supposed “authoritarian” predilection among Mexicans. The writer Octavio Paz describes the PRI governments as the embodiment of

a “philanthropic ogre” that bargains away democratic rights in exchange for a some paltry handouts in terms of social security of the population. The historian Enrique Krauze has come out for a “democracy without adjectives” and lambasted “ancient ideological archetypes” inherited from the colonial regime of New Spain, and even from the Aztec *tlatoanis* (leaders) supposedly favoring centralized states.

But the truth is that the present situation is not derived from inveterate ideas derived from *tlatoanis*, viceroys or *caciques* (Indian chiefs). As explained by the theory of *permanent revolution* of Leon Trotsky, who together with Lenin led the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, in semicolonial countries with a relatively small capitalist class, subordinated to their

imperialist senior partners and surrounded by huge masses of workers and poor peasants, the weak bourgeoisie is incapable of achieving an agrarian revolution, national emancipation or democracy. It requires beefed-up measures of control in order to maintain the machinery of exploitation. Only by means of a proletarian revolution can the fundamental tasks of the bourgeois revolution be accomplished.

As Marxists we point out that democratic demands in Mexico *cannot* be satisfied in the framework of capitalism. The watchword of Francisco Madero, titular leader of the 1910 uprising that set off the truncated Mexican Revolution, who called for *Sufragio efectivo, no reelección* (“Effective Votes, No Reelection”) contrasts with Mexico today, which is the world champion in elec-

The Internationalist

Assault on Public Education

Imperialist financial institutions like the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) impose their dictates on educational policy on the Mexican government, pushing to close the teacher training institutes, declaring them “redundant” (as well as being bastions of radical groups).

It is against this plan to make education conform to the requirements of capital and destroy educators’ rights that the teachers of Guerrero, Oaxaca and other sections of the CNTE rebelled, throwing the country into turmoil for months, for which Los Pinos now wants to “kick their ass.” As for the rural teachers colleges, a bulletin titled *Analysis of Policies Concerning Basic Education Teachers in Mexico* (OECD, October 2009 [in Spanish]) speaks quite openly:

“The rural teachers colleges, for their part, are often bastions of radical groups, present a high level of conflictivity and have a very important mobilizing potential; for the most part, they are anachronistic institutions, which no longer correspond to the current needs of educating teaching cadres...”

Its conclusion: “the possibility should be considered of turning around of some of the campuses to devote them to fulfilling other educational needs.” They cite the case of El Mexe as a “paradigm” for having eliminated its “redundant” student body.

We quote these texts to show that references to imperialist dictates as being behind the offensive against the rural teachers colleges, radical students and militant teachers are in no way speculation. As submissive administrators of a semi-colony, Mexican rulers respect *and* carry out⁴ the orders of their imperialist overlords. And not only concerning education. The privatization of the oil industry via the recent “energy reform” is one more example, within the framework of the North American Free Trade Agreement. With these free-trade policies, the country has been turned into a giant *maquiladora* for U.S. industry, in addition to ruining Mexican agriculture.

This latter factor directly affects the onslaught against Ayotzinapa. Obviously, for peasant communities who make their

⁴ A reference to a classic phrase of Spanish imperial officials in Latin America who would “respect but not carry out” (*acato pero no cumplo*) their instructions from Madrid.



Riot police captured by the population of de El Mexe, 19 February 2000.

living from planting and harvesting crops, the teachers from the rural teacher colleges are hardly “redundant.” But if the peasant producer disappears from the market, all that will be left is agribusiness – with its technologically advanced machinery, genetically modified seeds, freezing plants – and imports. That’s what we are seeing today as peasant production falls. Currently 35% of the corn consumed in Mexico, the country where this basic foodstuff originated, is imported, as is more than 50% of the wheat and 75% of the rice. Meanwhile, the countryside is being depopulated, above all of young people.

More than a decade ago, Hugo Aboites, an educational researcher, currently rector of the Autonomous University of Mexico City and author of the book *Viento del Norte: TLC y privatización de la educación superior en México* (Northwind: NAFTA and the Privatization of Higher Education in Mexico), noted that the attack on rural teachers colleges:

“shows that the future of the Mexican countryside no longer goes through peasant communities, nor indigenous groups, nor the *ejidos* (communally owned land), nor cooperatives or rural organizations, but through agroindustry, through big capital which are turning the Mexican countryside into a *maquiladora*. “There is a plan for Mexican agriculture behind the elimination of the rural teachers colleges. It is the same plan that points to eliminating agronomy and veterinary schools. It is a plan in which these institutions no longer have a place,

because it is no longer based on the peasant and worker masses but on capital, and a capital which needs technicians.”

–“The Hour of the Rural Teachers Colleges” [in Spanish], *Contralínea*, October 2003

Correct, and precisely because the very existence of the rural teacher training schools goes against the project of “technifying” the countryside for the profit of the big monopolies, they cannot be defended within the framework of Mexican capitalism. The same is true of the free-market “reform” of public education in general. As Aboites remarked:

“An educational model which offers free education and which even pays young people to study is a model that turns out to be subversive of the very idea of privatizing education...”

“Unfortunately, the economic question and the globalization of the countryside are the principal causes of the clash of the state governments with the students, as a result of which the authorities will be implacable.”

Thus one cannot defend the rural teacher schools with a nationalist program seeking to preserve institutions which, despite their rhetoric of “socialist education,” were part of the corporatist capitalist regime established by [Mexican presidents] Plutarco Calles and Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s. The governments of the misnamed “democratic transition” – of the PRI, the PAN and (at the state level) the PRD – since 2000 have been unable to do without the pseudo-unions of

the CTM, CROC and SNTE in order to maintain a corporatist police control of the workers in key sectors. But the highly stratified capitalist system is gone. Hence a successful defense of the rural teachers colleges is only possible on the basis of a revolutionary and internationalist program.

The combative teachers college students of the FECSM have managed to resist for more than a decade, but in the end their marches and occupations are insufficient to defeat Mexican capitalism and imperialism. The attack on the rights of Mexican students and teachers is the same as that being experienced by educators in the imperialist countries, where governments, industrialists, bankers and stock market speculators are also demanding “pay for performance” according to the “value added” by the teachers, and where they seek to eliminate any vestige of trade-union defense of teachers’ rights, where they seek to close “inefficient” schools and to privatize or turn the public schools and universities into profit platforms.

To crush the offensive which seeks to regiment and privatize public education, it is necessary to mobilize the only social power capable of defeating the bourgeoisie, that of the working class, on a worldwide level. In this struggle against the capitalist offensive, battle-hardened Mexican students and teachers have much to contribute, with their steadfast defense of the rural teachers colleges, their boycotts of standardized tests, their work stoppages and occupations. But petty-bourgeois layers such as students and professors do not produce value and profits for the capitalists. In order to prevail in this genuine class war, it is not enough to take over a few turnpike toll booths and sit down in the central plazas of the state capitals. It is necessary to *shut down key sectors of industry, commerce and transportation*.

For that reason, the Grupo Internacionalista has called from the outset for a *national strike against the murderous government* to prepare the struggle for a *workers and peasants government* that would *begin the socialist revolution*. Only in this way can we sweep away the learned “experts” who seek to “reform” public education by destroying it at gunpoint. Only in this way can we avenge our comrades of Ayotzinapa who have fallen in the struggle. ■

toral fraud. Instead of Zapata’s watchword of “Land and Freedom,” we face the reality that poor peasants have been forced off their land to emigrate to the poverty belts around the big cities, or to the United States. The 19th century struggle of the liberal Mexican bourgeoisie for national independence is sharply counterposed to today’s reality of Mexico as a semi-colony of the U.S.

The one-party regime – in which the PRI fused with the state apparatus – functioned by means of a system of corporatist control fomented by Washington. The bonapartist (i.e., military/police) character of the “PRI-government,” that over time was downgraded to semi-bonapartist, kept it in power for seven decades. It could not simply be dismantled by decree. Despite the rhetoric of a “democratic transition” after

2000 and the dismantling of the state-owned industrial apparatus, the PAN governments of Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón found they had to rely on corporatist and semi-corporatist pseudo-unions in order to impose their austerity measures and carry out their privatization programs.

The corporatist system was based on the *organic integration* of the workers unions and organizations of the working people (peasants, teachers, small businessmen, etc.) and all social sectors into the bourgeois state apparatus. Instead of defending the interests of the exploited and oppressed, the corporatist apparatuses carry out the functions of state control. The corporatist “unions” are in reality labor cops to hold the workers’ struggles at bay and prevent the rise of genuine workers unions.

At the same time, the corporatist system couldn’t be based exclusively on repression. It set up a system of “social security” (the Mexican Social Security Institute IMSS, the Government Employees Social Security Institute ISSSTE, the Infonavit housing projects) which offered some crumbs to the workers. Yet after a quarter century of brutal cutbacks, a privatizing offensive and the domination of the doctrines of free-trade capitalism, the threadbare web of social services is practically in ruins. The bourgeoisie is not offering more democratic concessions – on the contrary, it is bent on eliminating those that remain and increasingly resorts to blatant repression. The idea that by means of a new constitution and passing new laws the situation of the mass of the exploited and oppressed can be changed is a fraud.

Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Party!

As revolutionary Marxists, we hold – together with Lenin and Trotsky – that it can be appropriate to call for a revolutionary constituent assembly in late-developing capitalist countries where there is a military/police dictatorship and there are not even formal democratic rights for sectors of the population subject to discrimination (indigenous peoples, religious minorities, etc.). In such circumstances, the slogan can bring together oppressed sectors fighting for full democratic rights against the bourgeoisie and imperialism, and in support of the working class fighting to build organs of proletarian power, such as soviets. In that way, as an episodic tactic, it does not imply

May Day 2015 in New York and Portland

Internationalist photo



Internationalist contingent in New York City May Day march.

On May 1 in New York City, an Internationalist contingent of 50 people marched on the workers day. The contingent included the Internationalist Group the Internationalist Clubs at the City University, Class Struggle Education Workers, the Orquesta Skarroñeros band and immigrant workers in the IG's Marxist study circles. Led by a group of red flags

with the symbol of the Trotskyist Fourth International and a banner of the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, marchers highlighted the call to defend black Baltimore, demanding cops and National Guard out of the besieged city. Signs and chants also emphasized the struggle to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, threatened with execution by deliberate medical neglect in prison.

abandoning, postponing or diminishing the struggle for socialist revolution.

In Mexico, however, formal democratic rights for the population already exist. Obligated to placate the insurgent peasants and fearful of proletarian uprisings in the cities, the Mexican bourgeoisie judged it necessary to make some concessions to those sectors in the 1917 Constitution. Since those rights already exist on paper, calling for a new constituent assembly today only serves to divert the struggle. Trotskyists fight for rights such as universal access to public education at every level as well as for other rights "consecrated" in the Mexican Constitution, such as health, work and housing, while emphasizing that the full satisfaction of these elemental rights is impossible under the rule of the exploiting class.

In the face of the regime's crisis and the urgency of presenting a genuinely revolutionary policy for a proletarian counteroffensive against decades of repressive attacks and starvation policies, the immense majority of left groups follows a diametrically counterposed policy, of class collaboration, chasing after bourgeois populist sectors. The most prominent of the supposedly socialist groups which call for a constituent assembly is the Communist Party of Mexico (Marxist-Leninist). These inveterate Stalinists have a certain influence in the CETEG, the Guerrero People's Movement and the Popular National Assembly (ANP) formed in Ayotzinapa last October.

For the last 80 years, Stalinists of every denomination have applied the disastrous Menshevik scheme of "two-stage" revolution: first a bourgeois-"democratic" revolution (anti-oligarchical, anti-imperialist, popular-democratic, etc.), and only later a socialist stage, which never arrives. Confronted with the irrefutable bankruptcy of the stagist policy – which by excluding a proletarian revolution opened the way for the victory of reactionary forces, from Franco in Spain to Pinochet in Chile – in recent years the PCM (m-l) has sought to don a more leftist image. Thus it proclaims that "the character of the coming

revolution will be socialist." But in order to cover up its real politics, it has provided itself an escape clause: the Constituent Assembly.

In an article titled "From the Popular National Assembly to the New Constituent Assembly" (*Vanguardia Proletaria*, 15-31 January), the PCM (m-l) poses the need for a "Political General Strike" or "HPG" (according to its initials in Spanish) to prepare "insurrectionary processes" to then "install a revolutionary Provisional Government and convoke a Democratic and Popular Constituent Assembly." While it may from time to time add the qualifier "proletarian," it is clearly seeking an alliance with bourgeois forces. Thus it explicitly associates itself with the Initiative for a Popular Civic Constituent Assembly of Vera, Solalinde and Sicilia and their "proposal to refound the country" which has a marked ecclesiastical, if not downright clerical, tone and purely bourgeois liberal content.

At the same time, the PCM (m-l) continues to uphold the policy of the popular front. It cites the Democratic National Convention called by the EZLN (Zapatista National Liberation Army) in 1994, which likewise called for a "new Constituent Assembly" and which called to "vote against the system of a state party" (the PRI) and in favor of the program of the Convention, which had been endorsed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, presidential candidate of the PRD. In a document titled "Two Unpostponable Tasks" (August 2014), the PCM presents as examples of a "united front" a list of popular-frontist coalitions, among them the National Front of Resistance to the Privatization of Electrical Energy, the Committee to Promote National Unity Against Neoliberalism, and others.

Following close on the heels of the Stalinists are several groups which abuse the name of Trotskyist. The Movimiento de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (MTS, Socialist Workers Movement) has in its previous incarnation as the LTS for years called not only in Mexico but all over Latin America for the slogan of a "constituent assembly." The front page of its newspaper *Tribuna*



Labor Against Racist Police Murder contingent in Portland, OR May Day march.

In Portland, Oregon the IG marched with a contingent of Labor Against Racist Police Murder. Members of Class Struggle Workers Portland won several unions, including IUPAT Local 10, IATSE Local 28 and the IWW to form the contingent. Those unions also passed a motion of solidarity with the immigrants of Pasco, Washington where Mexican worker Antonio Zambrano

was shot down by police in February. A delegation from Pasco traveled to Portland to participate. The AFT, AAUP and groups of workers from the Laborers and other unions joined in. Toward the end of the march it was brutally attacked by police using flash-bang grenades and tear gas, underlining that the fight against cop terror is an immediate issue in Portland as elsewhere.

Socialista (14 November 2014) proclaims, "Peña Get Out! We're fighting for a free and sovereign constituent assembly." Its program doesn't go beyond a "democratic" reform of capitalism, taking up "the demands of the large majority," "renationalization of the energy sector and privatized enterprises," etc. A supplement (30 November) proposed:

"For our part, the MTS holds the view that a Political General Strike which turns the slogan 'Throw them all out' into reality, and which establishes a provisional government of the working-class, peasant and popular organizations in struggle, is the road to achieve our demands."

In fact, the MTS places itself to the right of the reformist Stalinists of the PCM (m-l), who at least recognize that to prevail against the present bourgeois state a constituent assembly requires an insurrection and who throw in some empty rhetoric about proletarian revolution. The MTS, on the other hand, in its writings about Ayotzinapa never talks about revolution, and the only reference to socialism is its name *Its policies are purely bourgeois liberal*. It calls for the corrupt politicians to "get out" (*que se vayan*), just as Bishop Vera did in his homily of December 5. And far from calling, as the GI does, for the formation of workers and peasants councils (soviets), the MTS only speaks of "organs of direct democracy," without any class content.

These "democratic" social-democrats disguised as pseudo-Trotskyists are horrified by the call of authentic Trotskyists to institute a proletarian dictatorship under a workers and peasants government. To call for a constituent assembly in Mexico today is a bourgeois program to divert the potentially revolutionary struggle of the working people fed up with murderous governments. Only by raising up the great mass of the exploited and oppress can we win. Limiting oneself to "democratic" goals would be to betray the workers, peasants, students and indigenous peoples. There will not be a new edition of the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17. As we have repeated over and over, the next Mexican revolution will be a workers

revolution, or it will not be.

What's needed today is to arm the most conscious fighters with the theoretical and programmatic perspective of Trotsky's permanent revolution, beginning with the recognition that even the most basic democratic demands are incompatible with bourgeois rule. In order to obtain them it is necessary for the working class to take power and undertake socialist tasks by abolishing bourgeois private property of the means of production and extending the revolution to the imperialist colossus of the north, with its large contingent of Mexican workers. In order to carry out this perspective today we need a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard of the working class, a party like the Bolsheviks which takes up the defense of all the oppressed.

Intervening in the struggle of Ayotzinapa, the Grupo Internacionalista assumes as its task the forging of the nucleus of a Leninist-Trotskyist revolutionary workers party, to contribute to resolving the acute crisis of working-class leadership.

The hard truth is that without an internationalist, socialist, workers revolution, the massacres will continue. There never has been and never will be a "democratic" capitalism in Mexico. Against the bourgeois nationalist illusions in a "people united" (as in the slogan *¡Ayotzi aguanta, el pueblo se levanta!* ("Hold on Ayotzinapa, the people are rising up!")) proletarian internationalists call for a policy of class struggle, *¡Luchar, vencer, obreros al poder!* ("Fight to win, workers to power!"). Instead of waving the red-white-and-green Mexican tricolor flag of the mass murderers, we raise the red flag of communism. The slogan of the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International is:

¡Revolución permanente, en todo el continente, revolución socialista en el monstruo imperialista!
(Permanent revolution throughout the continent, Socialist revolution inside the imperialist monster!)

Internationalist photo

To Smash Capitalist Austerity, Mobilize Workers' Power to Rip Up Eurobankers' Diktat on Road to Socialist Revolution

Greece: The SYRIZA Illusion Exploded

The victory of SYRIZA, the “Coalition of the Radical Left,” in the Greek elections of January 25 was front-page news around the world. Frankfurt and London bankers warned of impending doom, leftists from Paris and Madrid to Latin America and the U.S. hailed the new prime minister, Alexis Tsipras, as the messiah of struggle against austerity. The hosannas over SYRIZA’s larger-than-expected vote lasted only a few hours, until the “radical leftist” Tsipras announced the formation of a governing coalition with the rightist pro-military, anti-immigrant ANEL (Greek Democrats). Nonetheless, it was clear that the stage was set for a showdown with far-reaching consequences for the European Union (EU).

In Greece there was an explosion of joy. Finally – *finally!* – people felt they had elected a government that would stand up to the hated Eurobankers who have put them through hell. Official unemployment up to 27 percent of the workforce, well over half of young people with no job. Over one third of the population living in or on the edge of poverty, food banks and soup kitchens serving old, young and middle-aged. Gross domestic product down by 22%, wages by 30%, household income by almost 40%, the minimum wage slashed to under 500 euros a month and basic pensions to €360 (US\$400).¹ The economic devastation is more severe than in the U.S. during the 1930s Great Depression, and in the sixth year of the crisis it’s still at rock bottom.

As Greeks celebrated the election results in the streets, the capitalist media worried. The London *Telegraph* (26 January) predicted, “Syriza triumph in Greece leaves markets set for turmoil.” The *Guardian* announced, “Syriza’s historic win puts Greece on collision course with Europe.” In Paris, *Le Monde* (27 January) headlined, “Syriza, the Greek warning to Europe.” The voice of the Swiss bankers, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, proclaimed the “Dawn of a New Age in Greece.” The *Wall Street Journal* editorial-

¹ The European common currency, the euro (€), currently trades at an exchange rate of about US\$1.15.

ized about “The Greek Warning,” fretting that a Greek exit from the euro was “not likely, at least not immediately or intentionally,” but while the Eurozone would survive an “accidental exit,” even so “the result would be ugly.”

While the financial press wrung its hands, the Euroleft was euphoric. After three decades of Thatcherism and its “Labour” version, Blairism,² the British Socialist Workers Party exulted, “As Greece rejects austerity, we can do it here” (*Socialist Worker*, 27 January). The Socialist Party of England and Wales followed suit, declaring “Syriza victory shows austerity elite can be beaten” (*The Socialist*, 29 January). In France, the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) hailed “Syriza victory, a slap at the Troika” (*L’Anticapitaliste*, 29 January), namely the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Central Bank (ECB) and European Commission (EC), who with their “Memoranda” over the last five years have done their best to destroy the Greek economy.

In the United States, the International Conservative Margaret Thatcher became prime minister of Britain in 1979 and unleashed a war on trade unions, culminating in the defeat of the 1984-85 miners strike, much as Ronald Reagan went after labor in the U.S. with a sledgehammer. During her 12 years in office, the Tory “Iron Lady” massively privatized nationalized industries and shredded much of the social-democratic “welfare state.” Labour Party prime minister Tony Blair, who held office from 1997 to 2007, largely continued Thatcher’s economic policies, under the watchword that “there is no alternative” (TINA) to “free-market” capitalist policies generally referred to as neoliberalism.



Alexandros Vlachos/EPA

Thousands turned out for February 27 demonstration called by Communist Party (KKE) in Syntagma Square outside the Greek parliament to protest agreement with European finance ministers that capitulated to the Eurobankers’ demands for more austerity and privatization.

Socialist Organization (ISO) gushed about “A new day for Greece and Europe” (*Socialist Worker*, 26 January), saying the election represented “a long-awaited breakthrough against the ruling class agenda of austerity and repression.” But the agreement for a joint government with ANEL knocked these reformist leftists for a loop. Barely two days later the ISO was asking, “Which path for SYRIZA?” A statement by its Greek affiliate (which is part of SYRIZA) on “The tasks for the left after SYRIZA’s victory” criticized the alliance with the rightist party, saying it “jeopardizes the political project for a government of the left.” It was only the first blow for SYRIZA’s hapless leftists.

On all sides, SYRIZA’s election victory was declared “historic.” Not exactly ten days that shook the world, like the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia, more like one day that shook the markets. But the New York Stock Exchange, Paris Bourse and City of London bankers quickly recovered from SYRIZA shock. Soon the IMF/ECB/EC Eurocrats were again blackmailing Greece into submission, as they did earlier with Ireland and Cyprus. The first step was a move by the ECB to ban Greek banks from using Greek government bonds as collateral. This set off a bank run in which depositors withdrew €20 billion, ensuring that if Greece didn’t bow to ECB demands its financial system would collapse when the existing “bailout” expired on February 28.

SYRIZA’s election slogan was “Hope is on the way.” The resemblance to Barack Obama’s 2008 “Hope” election poster is hardly accidental. A “slick and very media-savvy” campaign, “with the US trained speech writers and reputedly a New York based PR firm” (*Guardian* [London], 26 January), sought to project the telegenic Tsipras as a symbol of Greek dignity and win votes with vague feel-good slogans. Even more quickly than with Obama, the “hope” has been dashed. After three weeks of barbs and clashes with the bankers’ car-

tel that cast Greece into misery, SYRIZA bowed to their extortion demands. Tsipras and finance minister Yanis Varoufakis capitulated on the debt, on austerity, on privatization, on everything.

Manolis Glezos, a SYRIZA member of the European Parliament and hero of the Resistance for having dared, as a young Communist, to tear down the Nazi flag on the Acropolis in 1941, at least had the courage to say, “I apologize to the Greek people for having assisted in this illusion.” Greeks voted for SYRIZA’s promise to abolish the regime of austerity imposed by the Troika and the “oligarchies,” he noted. But “the fact that the Troika has been renamed ‘the Institutions,’ the Memorandum has been renamed the ‘Agreement’ and the creditors have been renamed the ‘partners’” changes nothing. He and others cited a popular Greek phrase about how monks in the Middle Ages renamed meat as fish to get around fasting requirements.

In the January snap election, while SYRIZA ran on a program of ending austerity through negotiations within the European Union, the Communist Party (KKE) campaigned against this dangerous illusion, warning at a January 11 election rally in Piraeus that the new government “will implement the EU decisions” and “will defend the interests of the big business groups.” True enough. Yet the alternative offered by the Stalinist reformists was purely parliamentary: vote KKE. After SYRIZA’s capitulation, the KKE called a February 27 rally of some thousands in front of parliament to declare “no toleration of the new agreement” and call for a break with the EU and capital. How exactly? By supporting a KKE bill in parliament.

A day later, SYRIZA held a central committee meeting at which 41% voted for an amendment by the dissident Left Platform expressing “disagreement with the agreement and the list of reforms agreed in the Eurogroup” of finance ministers as “an undesirable



Kathimerini

SYRIZA allied with clerical-rightist, pro-military ANEL (Greek Democrats) to form government. Above: ANEL leader Pavos Kammenos, now defense minister, at military ceremony, January 28. His appointment is a guarantee that government will not touch the military, or interfere with coup preparations.



Capitalist austerity breeds fascism: XA (Golden Dawn) Nazis stage anti-Turkish, Greek nationalist provocation, January 31. Organize workers militias to crush the fascist scum!

compromise for our country.” It was an embarrassment for Tsipras, but not more. Notably, the SYRIZA left wing did *not* call to overturn the capitalist “reforms” nor demand a vote in parliament, much less a popular referendum, nor demand an end to the coalition with ANEL. *Leftists in SYRIZA and their international supporters have acted as enablers for the next round of wage cuts, privatizations and debt gouging – used to round up votes, and then discarded as squeezed lemons.*

The duopoly of the rightist New Democracy (ND) and the “left” bourgeois Pan-Hellenic Socialist Party (PASOK) that ruled Greece for the last 40 years is finished, having delivered the masses to the slaughter by the Eurobankers. Ominously, in the absence of a revolutionary opposition, the Nazi fascists of Golden Dawn (Chrysi Avgi, or XA) are lurking about, waiting to pick up support from the ruined middle class and demoralized workers. XA’s two-bit *Führer* Nikolaos Michaloliakos and other Golden Dawn members were jailed after the stabbing death of anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas in 2013. But XA still gets hundreds of thousands of votes, has ties to ND leader Antonis Samaras, and may step up its murderous attacks on immigrants and leftists as disillusionment with SYRIZA sets in.

As defenders of revolutionary Marxism, of the Bolshevik politics of Lenin and Trotsky, we stand for intransigent political opposition to the bourgeois Greek government. We wrote at the time of the 2012 elections that a vote for SYRIZA would not represent opposition to capitalist rule and “should be rejected by class-conscious workers.”³ This is even more true today. In the recent (January 25) election, Trotskyists would have given critical support to the KKE, in order to draw a class line against the defenders of capital of SYRIZA and the other bourgeois parties.⁴ But passive “non-tolerance” (KKE) and empty “disagreement” (Left Platform) will not defeat austerity. Nor will bureaucratic labor rallies: Greece has had more than 30 one-day or two-day “general strikes” since 2010, to no avail. The “movement of the squares” in 2011 fared no better, dying out after a few months, and anarchist clashes with the police amount to street theater, leading nowhere. The crisis of revolutionary leadership in Greece today is excruciating.

³ See “Battle Over Anti-Worker Austerity Comes to a Head in Greece,” *The Internationalist* special issue, Summer 2012.

⁴ See “What Is SYRIZA?” on page 17.

In the face of the unrelenting capitalist onslaught, the League for the Fourth International warns that there is no reformist or national solution to the immiseration of Greek working people, whether through illusory negotiations within the EU or by a Greek exit (“Grexit”) from the euro. What’s needed is to mobilize workers’ power: to build workers councils to challenge the bourgeois parliamentary regime; occupy enterprises slated for privatization or already privatized; spread workers control through industry, transport and commerce; for an all-out general strike posing the question of which class shall rule. Above all, build a genuinely **communist workers party** with a Trotskyist transitional program of sharp class struggle for a **workers government** that initiates **Europe-wide socialist revolution**.

Eurobankers Continue Torturing Greece

There was drama aplenty on January 26 as the new Greek government quickly announced steps to implement its election platform. Panagiotis Lafazanis, the minister of reconstruction and energy and leader of the Left Platform of SYRIZA, declared that the planned privatization of the Public Power Corporation was frozen, and the auctioning off of the Port of Piraeus, the country’s largest, for which the Chinese consortium Cosco and Danish Maersk were vying, would be put on hold. The labor minister announced that the minimum wage would be restored to the (miserable) €751 a month, collective bargaining rights would be reinstated, laid-off public sector workers rehired, and a stop put to drafting striking workers for military service.

The new Greek foreign minister objected to new sanctions against Russia by the European Union. Not a word against NATO, though, as SYRIZA (in deference to its ANEL allies) has dropped its paper opposition to the Western imperialist military alliance. Prime Minister Tsipras waxed poetic, declaring that Greece was “leaving behind five years of humiliation and pain,” and with “a clear, strong, indisputable mandate” from the people, “Greece has turned a page. Greece is leaving behind destructive austerity, fear and authoritarianism.” For good measure, his first act as prime minister was to lay roses at a memorial to 200 Greek Communists executed by the Nazis during the WWII German occupation. Who could miss the symbolism?

In the limelight was the “rock star Greek finance minister” (*Le Monde*, 29 January), Yanis Varoufakis. The tieless Mr. Cool grabbed media attention by showing up in untucked electric blue shirts and motorcycle boots, riding his Yamaha 1300 cc. muscle bike to meet dark-suited central bankers arriving in chauffeured BMW sedans. To a disdainful British top journalist, Varoufakis said Greece had been subjected to “a kind of fiscal waterboarding” that “turned this nation into a debt colony” (BBC Newsnight, 30 January). Speaking with the equally snotty *Der Spiegel* (14 February), he added, “Our country is literally being pushed under water. Just before we suffer an actual cardiac arrest, we are granted a momentary respite.... My aim is to end this permanent terror of asphyxiation.”

Cast opposite the bad boy minister from Athens in the looming showdown was his Berlin counterpart, Germany’s Dr. Strangelove, Wolfgang Schäuble, ever ready to go for the “nuclear option” of forcing Greece out of the Eurozone and the European Union. The hard-line German finance minister provoked the January elections by refusing to extend financial support and then insisting that “all previously agreed Greek debt must be paid in full regardless of the composition of the next Greek government” (WorldPost, 13 January). While stoking popular resentment against supposedly lazy, profligate Greeks (who work longer hours for less pay than the labor force of any other Eurozone country), Schäuble neglects to mention that 90% of the “bailout” money never went to Greece, but instead was paid out to European (including German) banks.

But the financial gunfight at the Eurozone OK Corral came to an abrupt and fateful end.

After all the defiant talk and tweaking the noses of Berlin politicians, Frankfurt bankers and stuffed-shirt Brussels bureaucrats, at 6 p.m. on February 20, six hours before an ultimatum from Schäuble expired, Finance Minister Varoufakis agreed to a humiliating Eurogroup statement that committed Greece to fulfill the “commitments” of the Master Financial Assistance Facility Agreement (MFFA, i.e., the hated Memorandum), under minute supervision of the “institutions” (IMF/ECB/EC, i.e., the despised Troika), and to “refrain from any rollback of measures and unilateral changes to the policies and structural reforms that would negatively impact fiscal targets, economic recovery or financial stability, as assessed by the institutions.”

That’s it for SYRIZA’s campaign promises. Driving in the knife, German finance minister Schäuble remarked, “The Greeks certainly will have a difficult time to explain the deal to their voters.” Trying to put a good face on it, Tsipras declared that “we have won the battle, but not the war.” But who could believe that fiction? The Eurogroup statement insisted on “the independence of the European Central Bank.” And the independence of Greece? Hardly of interest to the “Troika.” Already in the early stages of the euro crisis, current European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker told the German news magazine *Focus* (3 July 2011): “The sovereignty of the Greeks will be massively limited.” In fact, what has been starkly shown is the dictatorship of finance capital that underlies bourgeois “democracy.”

On February 24, Varoufakis handed in a “submission,” which after talk of fighting corruption, “promoting tax justice” and

cracking down on tax evasion, mentioned raising the minimum wage “over time,” in a way that “safeguards competitiveness,” and committed “not to roll back privatizations that have been completed, and to respect tender processes that have already been launched.” Earlier, in his interview with *Der Spiegel*, he was even more explicit, saying, “We are not stopping the privatization of our ports. We just want to make sure that our country’s national assets are not sold off for peanuts.” The Greek finance minister later bragged of the “creative ambiguity” in the documents, but these commitments are unambiguous, and quite devastating.

In a widely circulated interview, Giorgos Gogos, a SYRIZA dock worker, said that the January election sent “an important message, that we’re not going to privatize.” The Port of Piraeus, he pointed out, is vital to ensure communication with Greece’s many islands, whereas “private investors care only for their profits and nothing else.” Gogos vowed, “I have trust in my comrades in SYRIZA,” that “they will follow what they have been saying,” and if they have to reverse their plans, “they will have to ask for the opinion of the people and the society first” (*Viewpoint Magazine*, 16 February). Yet now the SYRIZA tops have agreed not to stop privatization in general, and of the port in particular, without consulting the workers.

Varoufakis pointed to a phrase in the February 20 document referring to “flexibility” on maintaining “appropriate primary fiscal surpluses.” But that only applies to the current year, and by agreeing to any kind of “primary surplus” (before debt service) in the state budget, by definition SYRIZA is committing to continue the austerity regime. Greek leaders cite the democratic mandate of the January elections when the population voted overwhelmingly against austerity. But in a vivid expression of the hauteur of the Brussels bureaucracy, European Commission vice president Jyrki Katainen declared, “We don’t change our policy according to elections.” For these guardians of capital, any pretense of democracy is giving in to “mob rule.”

As for the Greek foreign minister’s challenge to EU sanctions against Russia, that lasted barely 24 hours. SYRIZA is well aware that Greece’s presence in the Eurozone is in good part due to its strategic position on NATO’s southern flank. Greece has a huge military (130,000 soldiers in a country of 11 million people), much of it equipped by German arms manufacturers. While Greek workers’ wages are slashed on orders of the Troika, the same creditors insist it spend billions on weapons purchases. Despite the economic crisis, Greece currently has 170 F-16 fighter jets on order from the U.S. It also has an important NATO air base at Souda Bay, Crete, which was a launching point for bombing Libya (and would be for an attack on Syria).

SYRIZA’s 2013 program calls for Greece to leave NATO and close all foreign military bases, as Greek leftists have long demanded, given NATO’s backing of the colonels’ dictatorship from 1967 to 1974 and the U.S./UK role in instigating the post-WWII Greek civil war in which tens of thousands of leftists were killed. The fact that Greece didn’t leave NATO the day SYRIZA took office is another proof that it is a defender of imperialist capitalism. And the naming of ANEL leader Panos Kammenos, who is tight with the officer corps and opposes civilian control of the military, as minister of defense is a commitment



Hip fashion plate Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis in Athens, January 27. Posing as “erratic Marxist,” Varoufakis says his aim is to “stabilize European capitalism” (see article “What Is SYRIZA?”). After tweaking noses of Eurobankers, he has now traded in motorcycle gear for Burberry scarf.

that the new government will not touch the military, which together with the police is the backbone of the capitalist state.

Kammenos’ nomination recalls the Statute of Constitutional Guarantees that the Unidad Popular regime of Salvador Allende signed on taking office in 1970 – guaranteeing that at any time a coup could be mounted to topple the elected government. And the Greek police are shot through with high-level fascist supporters. Moreover, on February 18, on SYRIZA’s proposal, parliament elected ND right-winger Prokopis Pavlopoulos president of Greece. Pavlopoulos was minister of interior during the brutally suppressed protests over the 2008 police murder of the high school student Alexandros Grigoropoulos. Now, thanks to SYRIZA, he will be commander in chief of the army, with the power to name prime ministers, dismiss parliament, issue decrees ... and declare a state of siege.

Opportunists Push “Left” Populism

By now, bank lending in Greece has virtually stopped, depositors continue to withdraw funds but the European central bankers have cut off all but emergency funding, and allowing precious little of that. Greece’s economy is “running on empty” and is “close to bankruptcy,” as *The Economist* (7 March) put it. Now “the institutions” (i.e., the IMF/ECB/EC Troika) are dismissing Greece’s proposed list of “reforms” as

inadequate, provoking the next crisis. As a leading financier said of the Eurobankers in the run-up to the last confrontation in Brussels, “They are squeezing them [SYRIZA] on everything, it’s part of a system to suffocate them, to make them realise the end is coming, to realise it is time to get on their knees” (*Financial Times*, 18 February).

Clearly, the European bourgeoisies have closed ranks to humiliate the new “radical left” Greek government, which is perceived as a threat to conservative and social-democratic parties throughout the continent that are wedded to austerity and “free market” capitalism. Greek public debt of €17 billion is relatively small, and unlike in 2010-12 a default would not threaten the world financial system, since most of it is owed to various central banks and almost none to the international banks, which were already bailed out. But ceding to SYRIZA could reverberate in Spain, where the populist Podemos (“We Can Do It”) party is now leading in opinion polls due to its call to slash the €1 trillion government debt, much of it held by commercial banks.

The intransigence of the international bankers was not only predictable, it was widely predicted. At the time of the 2012 elections we wrote that “SYRIZA awakens illusions that it can do away with harsh austerity by negotiations, which the Eurobankers will not agree to” (“Battle Over Anti-Worker Austerity Comes to a Head in Greece”). The reason goes beyond elec-

toral calculations and obdurate “neoliberal” ideology, as many bourgeois liberals and pseudo-socialist reformists claim. Schäuble & Co. are not mainly concerned to reinvigorate the economy, they are out to raise the rate of exploitation in order to boost profits and bolster the banks, which even in Germany are extremely shaky.

The entire Eurozone structure is designed to enforce austerity on the working class (budget deficits of over 3% of gross domestic product are prohibited by the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, although the bigger powers violate this all the time). Moreover, even if the Greek government could miraculously convince European capitalist governments and bankers to undertake significant Keynesian deficit financing of infrastructure and productive investment (as opposed to marginal “quantitative easing” to shore up banks), it would not pull the continent out of the economic doldrums. As we wrote in 2011:

“The reality is that the advanced capitalist industrial countries are stuck in a full-scale depression that will take years to overcome, through massive destruction of capital (shutting down factories, escalating mass unemployment), imperialist trade war or actual shooting war....

“The pseudo-socialists ignore the fact that the current war on workers is not a policy (‘neo-liberalism’) which could be changed, but a necessity for a decaying capitalist system. Keynesian policies were abandoned in the late 1970s because of a severe crisis caused by a falling rate of profit. While the current profit rates are obscene, schemes like ‘tax the rich’ or taxes on stock market transactions (the Tobin tax) will not make it profitable for capital to invest in productive capacity, as it has failed to do on a substantial scale in the advanced capitalist countries since the early 1980s.

“Instead, bankers furiously refuse to take a ‘haircut’ (loss) on Greek loans, however packaged. Their response is not irrational: they know, if the reformist left does not, that the entire international capitalist financial system is technically (and actually) bankrupt and could come crashing down on the least hiccup. Companies refuse to invest, refuse to hire and instead sit on vast piles of cash, while executives cash out by paying themselves fabulous sums for accomplishing nothing. Their attitude, like that of Louis XV and the Old Regime prior to the French Revolution, is *après moi le déluge* (after me comes the flood) – and they act accordingly.”

–“Upheaval in Europe Over Capitalist Austerity,” *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011

In short, the ongoing Greek financial crisis is not about mythical overpaid Greek workers, nor just about tax-evading oligarchs (although there are plenty of those) and sadistic rulers of the Fourth Reich of German imperialism torturing small European countries, it’s an outgrowth of the world capitalist economic crisis reverberating from Wall Street, whose consequences are still with us. And it won’t be ended by negotiations, amicable or not, with the imperialist money men.

So now that the SYRIZA illusion has been exploded, what is the response of the Greek left? At the latest central committee meeting, the Left Platform of the Coalition called for a “return to the election commitments,” i.e., the platform announced at the Thessaloniki International Trade Fair last September. Platform spokesman and energy minister Lapavitsas added that Greece must “bring a full array of options to the table”

and “be prepared for extraordinary liquidity measures” in bargaining with the Eurozone finance ministers in June (*Guardian*, 2 March). In other words, it should threaten to introduce capital controls, as Cyprus did when the ECB forced it into bankruptcy in 2013. Some threat, which would almost exclusively affect Greek depositors!

In a similar vein, the Red Network (part of the Left Platform, including the DEA⁵) declared that “the left, the labor movement and the social movements must find the strength to answer: NO!” As if that would impress the Frankfurt bankers! It threw in a clause about the need for “a working class and popular struggle that seeks to overthrow this policy that binds the government to austerity.” But Greek workers staged endless protests, one-day strikes and other forms of “popular struggle” against austerity in 2010-11, with zero effect on policy. Moreover, a DEA spokesman admitted that “there are still no planned protests by the unions or the social movements” (*Socialist Worker* [U.S.], 2 March). What the declaration underlines yet again is their loyalty to this bourgeois government, which they aspire to pressure and advise.

In turn, the (reformist) Communist Tendency of SYRIZA⁶ called on the government to “immediately cancel the Memorandum agreement” and carry out the Thessaloniki Program, while “advising” the government to “complement” this with “radical and socialist measures, such as the repudiation of the debt, the nationalisation of church property, and the nationalisation of the largest companies, initially the most profitable ones.” Such helpful advice to a bourgeois parliamentary government is empty posturing, which Tsipras will ignore. In any case, this program is no more socialist than the nationalizations by the post-World War II Labour government in Britain which this Labour-loyal current views as the model.

If the response of the reformist SYRIZA left has been one of verbal opposition while doing nothing to inconvenience the government, the no-less-reformist groups in ANTARSYA (Front of the Anti-Capitalist Left) have called for mass protest. Their demonstration in Syntagma Square on February 26 reportedly drew hundreds of people. But while saying “NO!” in the streets rather than in the confines of the government party, ANTARSYA only calls for repudiating the Memoranda, cancelling the debt, rehiring laid-off workers and “breaking with the euro.” This amounts to extra-parliamentary lobbying to pressure the bourgeois SYRIZA government to implement a supposedly “anti-capitalist,” but in reality reformist, program. That is very different from a call for revolutionary class struggle aimed at bringing down the capitalist regime and replacing it with a workers government.

For all its vague talk of “overthrow” and “rupture,” ANTARSYA acts as a transmission belt to and from SYRIZA. Various of its

⁵ International Workers Left, associated with the International Socialist Organization in the U.S.

⁶ Part of the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) led by Alan Woods, heirs of the Militant Tendency led by the late Ted Grant, which for decades was buried inside the British Labour Party. The fact that this “Communist Platform” is part of a *bourgeois* party, SYRIZA, hardly bothers the IMT, as it has for many years posed as the “Marxist wing” of populist capitalist parties, from Benazir Bhutto’s Pakistan People’s Party to the Party of the Democratic Revolution in Mexico. The concept of a class line between bourgeois and proletarian is alien to these opportunists, who consider the police – the armed fist of capitalism – to be part of the working class.



Germany’s Dr. Strangelove, hard-line finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble, ever ready for the nuclear option of pushing Greece out of the Eurozone, in February 5 Berlin meeting with Varoufakis.



Dock workers march into Syntagma Square in Athens to protest plans to privatize port of Piraeus, 19 December 2014. Workers should occupy the port, including the container terminals already handed over to Cosco where non-union workers struck last June over dangerous working conditions.

components praised SYRIZA's campaign, "saluted" its big vote and said its victory filled them with "immense joy at achieving victory for a left 'No' to austerity, and many worries over what happens next" (Andreas Sartzekis of the OKDE-Spartakos,⁷ in *International Viewpoint*, January 2015). Another group in ANTARSYA, the SEK,⁸ in response to the EU/ECB/EC agreement, called to revive strikes, rallies and occupations. But what it means by its call for a "transitional anti-capitalist program" ("NO to the Agreement, This Shall Not Pass!" 25 February) is a series of demands on the government: canceling the debt, breaking with the euro and the EU, and "nationalization of the banks under workers control."

For its part, on February 27, the Communist Party brought out a crowd of thousands to protest the agreement and demand a "break with the European Union, capital and their power." Unlike the SYRIZA Left and ANTARSYA, who view Tsipras' cabinet as in some way "their" government, the KKE in a February 24 statement declared "no support or toleration for the government that continues on the same path of commitments to the EU and the profitability of the monopolies." But what is its alternative? At the rally General Secretary Dimitris Koutsoumpas cited a draft law introduced to parliament by the Communist Party to repeal the Memorandum, reinstate the minimum wage, etc. And he ended with a call for "popular sovereignty," or "people's power" as it used to be called.

When the rest of the Greek left denounces the "sectarianism" of the Stalinist KKE, they mean above all its refusal to join with SYRIZA. To deny political support to a bourgeois party is in fact imperative. But when the KKE poses the alternative as "people's power," it is denying the need for *workers* power. In the past, the arch-nationalist Communist Party called simply for Greece to leave the European Union.

⁷ Organization of Communist Internationalists of Greece-Spartacus, the Greek section of the pseudo-Trotskyist International Committee (formerly United Secretariat) of the Fourth International, which, however, prefers SYRIZA over ANTARSYA, since the former's far higher electoral score shows that they are the more successful opportunist maneuverers.

⁸ Socialist Workers Party, Greek affiliate of the British SWP, heirs of Tony Cliff who broke with Trotskyism denouncing the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state as "state capitalism."

Today it says that without "socialization of the means of production, the different organization of the economy and society, the return to the national currency on its own could actually lead to worse developments for the popular strata" ("Syriza, the new pole of social democracy in Greece," KKE web site, 10 February). Indeed. Yet vague talk of "socialization" and a "different organization of society" won't defeat the Eurobankers.

It all recalls the "anti-globalization" movement's slogan of "another world is possible" and chants of "this is what democracy looks like." But in these times of worldwide capitalist crisis and depression, the massive impoverishment of working people cannot be overcome under imperialist "democracy." With different formulas, the Greek reformist left, inside SYRIZA and without, is putting forward a program for a more "left" version of bourgeois populism, when the urgent need – and only way defeat capitalist austerity – is to fight for *socialist revolution*.

Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Workers Party in Greece

The government of the "leftist" SYRIZA and the rightist ANEL, champion of the Greek Orthodox Church and the military, is no ally of the working class but the "executive committee of the [Greek] bourgeoisie" – as Lenin in *State and Revolution* (1917) described *all* capitalist governments. Today SYRIZA is the enforcer of austerity on behalf of the Eurobankers. Tsipras will inevitably crack down on militant workers, as Allende did against the miners and *cordones industriales* in Chile in 1973 and Kerensky did in Russia in July 1917. The task of Bolshevik-Leninists in Greece today is to build a *revolutionary Trotskyist workers party* in opposition to the phony "friends of the people" of SYRIZA, in order to defeat the Greek Pinochets and Kornilovs and open the road to workers rule *throughout Europe*.

That means telling the truth to the masses, beginning with the battle over the debt. While reformists in SYRIZA and ANTARSYA call blithely to repudiate Greece's unpayable burden of debt to the imperialist bankers, who hold it as a sword of Damocles over the heads of the workers, the Trotskyists of the League for the Fourth International warn that "the dominant imperialist powers would oust any government and subject to a devastating embargo any country that dared to cancel their debt. *Abolition of the imperialist debt requires workers revolution*, as the Bolsheviks did in 1917, and

international extension of the revolution" (see "Greece on the Razor's Edge," *The Internationalist* No. 32, January-February 2011). Calls to cancel the debt must be part of a program for a proletarian revolutionary counteroffensive.

Likewise on the question of a Greek exit from the Eurozone, the LFI underscores that "our opposition to the imperialist European Union is not nationalist but internationalist, opposing the Europe of the capitalists by fighting for workers rule – a *socialist united states of Europe*." Should Greece be forced out of the EU by the *diktat* of the Eurobosses enforcing capitalist austerity, class-conscious workers throughout Europe should defend Greece against the economic assault of the imperialist overlords. But under capitalism, "Grexit" will mean a drastic devaluation and slashing of wages, with little likelihood that this will lead to economic recovery anytime soon.⁹ Thus in the face of the bankers' assault, Trotskyists stand for *Europe-wide revolutionary workers mobilization* while simultaneously calling for a *socialist federation of the Balkans* (including the right to self-determination of Macedonia).

A major threat facing the workers movement in Greece today is that of murderous fascism, particularly directed against immigrants and the left. The Golden Dawn Nazis of XA have strong connections within New Democracy, which is usually (and falsely) described as a "center-right" party, and among the police. Even if it tried to, SYRIZA would never be able to purge the state apparatus of repression, which ever since the 1940s Greek Civil War and the 1967-74 colonels' dictatorship has been a hard core of anti-communism. Thus in contrast to the criminal passivity of the KKE, it is vital that revolutionary Marxists struggle to form *armed workers defense groups* to smash the fascist thugs and defend immigrants. We call as well to *shut down the concentration camps for immigrants*, and demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*.

Revolutionary Marxists fight police-state repression, demanding *freedom for all class-war prisoners*, including the jailed anarchists and urban guerrillas transferred to recently opened "Type C" maximum security prisons. We also call for *abolition of the "anti-terrorist" laws* under which several were convicted. On March 2, anarchists occupied SYRIZA's headquarters, rightly holding the "leftist" ruling party responsible for the continued imprisonment of their comrades (now on hunger strike). We neither call on the capitalist state to ban or "jail Golden Dawn," measures which will be used against the left, nor to free all "political prisoners," as a number of XA Nazis have been jailed on charges of assault and the 2013 murder of leftist rapper Pavlos Fyssas. Instead, *Trotskyists call on the workers movement to smash the fascist threat*.

Faced with ongoing mass unemployment on a scale unseen since the 1930s Depression, the call for a *shorter work-week with no loss in pay (a sliding scale of hours)*, to divide up the available work

⁹ Argentina's uncoupling from the dollar in 2001 is often cited as a positive example, but that led to years of mass unemployment, and Greece does not have the export capacity that enabled the South American country to bounce back. Greek light industry (such as textiles) has been largely destroyed and cannot compete against lower-wage Asian producers, while agricultural production has been so hard hit that today Greece imports 40 percent of its food. Moreover, its fruit exports to Russia have now been slashed by Moscow's retaliation against EU trade sanctions.

among all takers (a centerpiece of Trotsky's Transitional Program), assumes vital importance, as does the call for *indexing pay to inflation (a sliding scale of wages)*, which would be a crucial defense against massive wage-cutting in the wake of a Greek exit from the euro. But these demands, which as Trotsky pointed out prefigure a socialist planned economy, will not be implemented by SYRIZA or indeed any "left" or even "socialist" government of the capitalist state. They must be won by *mobilizing workers power against the bosses and against leftists now administering the capitalist state*.

As Tsipras & Co. carry out the austerity policies of the Eurobosses, a revolutionary transitional program would mobilize the working class on the path from protest to a struggle for power. Faced with demands for privatization, authentic Trotskyists would call on Piraeus dock workers to not only oppose this but to prevent it by *occupying the port, including the docks already turned over to the Chinese company Cosco, and impose workers control*. Likewise, *fired workers of the shuttered ERT state radio and TV company should take over the closed facilities and start broadcasting*. Faced with the crisis in health care, workers should *impose workers control of the hospitals*, including private hospitals, *seize needed drugs and medicines from the pharmaceutical monopolies*, and provide *free health care* to all who need it.

The level of class mobilization today is far lower than it was in 2010-11, and many workers have illusions in SYRIZA. That is why it falls to authentic communists, the Trotskyists, to take the lead *now* in putting forward a transitional program of sharp class struggle. To call on the capitalist government to implement the planks of SYRIZA's now-abandoned bourgeois election platform, as much of the Greek left does, is to sow illusions just as dangerous as the idea that the imperialist financiers could be induced to write off Greece's debt and to abandon austerity. By seeing the populists in power as allies rather than representatives of the class enemy, the opportunists are preparing the way for another bloody Metaxas dictatorship¹⁰ to seize power once the populist "radical leftists" have managed to demoralize the mass of the workers and poor.

The stance taken by would-be socialist and communist groups on the election of the SYRIZA government in Greece today will be a litmus test of revolutionary Marxism, as was the 1970 election of Allende's Unidad Popular (UP) in Chile. At that time, opportunists of all stripes, including social democrats, Stalinists and supporters of Ernest Mandel, Nahuel Moreno and other pseudo-Trotskyists, helped fuel the deadly illusions of the hope-filled masses in hailing the popular-front UP government. In contrast, authentic Trotskyists warned that this "left" capitalist government would lead to a bloodbath once its support had been ground down under relentless imperialist pressure, unless class-conscious workers mobilized under a revolutionary leadership to bring down capitalism before it crushed the working class.

Building such a genuinely communist leadership is the challenge that the League for the Fourth International poses for those who seek a revolutionary way forward in Greece today. ■

¹⁰ In August 1936, General Ioannis Metaxas seized power, with the support of the Greek king, and imposed a fascistic, bonapartist (police-military) dictatorship aimed centrally at smashing the left.

Bourgeois Populist “Radicals” Based on Middle-Class Sectors

What Is SYRIZA?

SYRIZA, the “Coalition of the Radical Left,” mesmerized the mainstream capitalist media and the bulk of the left throughout Europe and the world with its January election victory. It recalled the election of François Mitterrand and his Union of the Left in France in 1981, or the victory of Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular in Chile in 1970. Those *popular-front* coalitions headed off a potentially revolutionary crisis by chaining the workers to a section of the ruling class, thus opening the way to a return of the right as the left failed. In the Greek case, SYRIZA is a bourgeois populist party with a “left” rhetoric. But seldom has the bankruptcy of the “left” governing a capitalist state been so dramatically shown as in Athens today. Many a disillusioned leftist has to be asking, “How could this happen, and so fast?”

Part of the answer is that SYRIZA leaders Tsipras and hip finance minister Varoufakis were bluffing in the high-stakes game of liar’s poker: they never had a plan nor the resources to withstand an unbending “*nein*” from the German-dominated Eurobankers. Partly, too, they miscalculated badly on the response of the ruling French and German social democrats and Italian Democrats, none of whom broke ranks with the conservative bankers. Despite the Greek leaders’ whirlwind tour of European capitals, in the end they had no allies in Brussels. But much of the explanation for SYRIZA’s political *kolotoumba* (somersault) is confusion about the nature of the party itself.

“Left” and “right,” after all, describe relative positions on the spectrum of *bourgeois* politics, dating back to the French Revolution of 1789. SYRIZA started out in 2004 as a coalition of (not-so) “far leftists” who were in the process of turning sharply to the right. A crazy quilt of ex-“Eurocommunists” of Synaspismós (Coalition of the Left, Movements and Ecology) and AKOA, ex-KKEers of KEDA, Maoists of the KOE and groups mislabeled Trotskyist including followers of the late Tony Cliff (DEA) and Ted Grant (Communist Tendency), SYRIZA came together as an anti-establishment electoral coalition firmly rooted in capitalist parliamentary politics. Despite the “radical” in its name, its program didn’t go beyond classical social democracy.



SYRIZA supporters at October 2014 rally.

It was the largely middle-class movement of “*aganaktismeni*” (the outraged) camped out in Syntagma (Constitution) Square in front of parliament and in other city plazas in 2011 that launched SYRIZA as a contender for power. The Coalition raised its electoral score from under 10% to 27% in two legislative elections in 2012, as its number of deputies shot up from 9 to 71. Under pressure from the bourgeois media to rein in leftists in its ranks, a founding congress in mid-2013 began transforming SYRIZA into a bourgeois electoral party, including organizational measures concentrating power in the hands of Tsipras. A program was adopted replacing calls to cancel the debt with vague talk of “renegotiating” it within the EU framework.

In a lengthy interview with a social-democratic magazine in the U.S., Stathis Kouvelakis, a leader of the Left Platform of SYRIZA, explained that after 2012, there was “a process leading more to a party of members than a party of activists or active members, a *parti d’adhérents* rather than a *parti de militants*. Which also means that this rendered Syriza as an organization to a certain extent permeable to the practices of, if not clientelism, at least the practice of local, traditional networks of power, which are still very strong in Greek society” (“Greece: Phase One,” *Jacobin* Magazine, 22 January).

As SYRIZA was transformed from a coalition of activists into an electoral party, there was an influx of middle-aged academics, petty-bourgeois professionals and office employees. Kouvelakis noted that the party is “dominated very much by intellectual layers: public-sector workers with a high level of skills and education,” and “the relative weight of the younger layers remains quite limited.” And when snap elections were called after the failure of parliament to elect a president in December, the “radical” Coalition’s slate was stacked with distinctly non-radical members of parliament:

“On 3 January, the day he filled a stadium with 5,000 party members, the inner core saw him browbeat his party’s left into withdrawing their objections to his choice of prospective MPs. Tsipras has transformed both the party and its operation; the central committee in its shabby HQ became less important than the policy team around shadow ministers.”

—“‘Hope begins today’: the inside story of Syriza’s rise to power,” *Guardian* (28 January)

While SYRIZA received the votes of many working people, its ties to the workers movement are slim, and hardly organic. A dock worker member, queried about criticisms that the party “is dominated by university intellectuals, not people from the union movement,” answered that this is “more or less true,” and “people in the unions who are members of SYRIZA are few in number.” He added that SYRIZA and the unions “don’t have strong connections,” and agreed that “there is a negative opinion of trade unions” in the party, because of historical ties of the unions with the rightist New Democracy (ND) and the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Party (PASOK),

which governed Greece for the last four decades. In the port of Piraeus, he said, “the power rests with the Communist Party link in trade unionism” (*Viewpoint Magazine*, 16 February).

The petty-bourgeois character of SYRIZA’s base was heightened in the recent elections, as it managed to break into traditional ND and PASOK fiefdoms in the countryside where, the *Guardian* (28 January), reported: “farmers have been forced to take mortgages, the banks are clamouring to repossess and suicides in these quiet farming towns are on the up.” The planks in SYRIZA’s election platform calling for an end to the onerous unified property tax and lowering rates on small and medium property had a particular echo there. Urban homeowners were attracted by calls to end seizure of bank accounts as well as foreclosures and evictions from primary residences.

With its electoral appeal among white-collar government employees, homeowners and property-owning small farmers, SYRIZA managed to attract much of the former base of PASOK. From over 3 million votes in 2009, it fell to 750,000 in 2012 and under 300,000 in 2015. Although part of the social-democratic Second International, PASOK is a bourgeois nationalist party with a clientalist base in the government bureaucracy. As it crumbled amid popular fury over the austerity it implemented under the Eurobankers’ Memorandum, whole sections of this *capitalist* party went over to SYRIZA, typified by the prominent legislator Alexis Mitropoulos, a founder of PASOK. In fact, in key respects SYRIZA is to the right of the early PASOK, which called to leave NATO, nationalize the means of production, etc.

Today, SYRIZA is not a “far left” party at all, or even part of the workers movement, but — like PASOK, whose position it has inherited — a party based on the petty bourgeoisie with a bourgeois populist program. The phenomenon of capitalist parties proclaiming themselves “radical,” “socialist” and “revolutionary” is hardly new. In fact, they often appear in a potentially revolutionary crisis when the ruling class needs some



Mr. Tsipras goes to Washington, to assure imperialists he is “not so dangerous.” Here SYRIZA leader speaking at Brookings Institution, January 2013.

League for the Fourth International

LFI, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A. E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

Internationalist Group/U.S.

Internationalist Group, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.
E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com
New York Tel. (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711
Portland Tel. (971) 282-7903

Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

Brazil: write to Caixa Postal 084027, CEP 27251-740, Volta Redonda, RJ, Brazil
Rio de Janeiro: write to Caixa Postal 3982, CEP 20001-974, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil
E-mail: lqb1996@yahoo.com.br

LIVI/Deutschland

Germany: write to Postfach 74 06 41, 22096 Hamburg, Germany

Grupo Internacionalista/México

México: write to Apartado Postal 12-201, Admón. Postal Obrero Mundial, CP 03001, México D.F., México
E-mail: grupointernacionalista@yahoo.com.mx
Tel. Mexico City: 55-3154-7361; Guadalajara: 33-1752-6643; Oaxaca: 951-129-2086

left-talking poseurs to defuse the crisis and divert the masses. This was the case of the French Radical Socialist Party, founded in 1901 amid the mass radicalization over the clerical-militarist and anti-Semitic Dreyfus Affair. The bourgeois Radical Socialists ensnared the Socialist Party of Jean Jaurès in the web of class collaboration, bringing it into the capitalist government via the Left Bloc.

As Tsipras noted in a talk at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C. during a 2013 visit to introduce himself to the International Monetary Fund and U.S. State Department, “the term ‘radical’ was used by many parties in Greece, even former Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis used the term ‘Radical Union of Greece,’” one of the parties the conservative leader led during the quarter century he ruled the country. Tsipras ended his talk saying, “I hope I’ve convinced you that I’m not as dangerous as some people think I am.” He convinced the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises, which declared after the January election that “The Federation, as the basic representative of the organized Greek businesses, will be at the side of the government.”

In the case of Greece, a country of small businesses, whose monopolistic sectors (shipping and banking) operate mostly offshore, while SYRIZA’s rhetoric may have a social-democratic tinge, its bourgeois nationalist program (like that of its predecessor PASOK) reflects the interests of a significant section of the ruling class. The weak bourgeoisie of this “second-tier” imperialist country requires a strong state sector to survive in the face of the multinational giants that dominate the Eurozone economy. In this way, the “Coalition of the Radical Left” resembles various populist bourgeois parties in Latin America.

An example is Evo Morales’ Movement toward Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia, based on the Aymara and Quechua peasantry. While invoking “socialism” in its name and although Morales frequently excoriates Washington – much as Tsipras goes after German domination of the EU while recalling the Nazi occupation of Greece in World War II – the MAS regime of “Andean capitalism” (in the words of Bolivia’s left-talking vice president Álvaro García Linera) has spearheaded vicious attacks on the workers while using rhetoric about defending (state capitalist) enterprises like the COMIBOL mining company.¹ Another parallel is the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) of the bourgeois populist government of the late Hugo Chávez and his successor, Nicolás Maduro, although here again SYRIZA is notably to its right.

With their anti-Yankee rhetoric and ties to Cuba, Chávez and Maduro have been a thorn in the side of Washington, under Republican Bush as well as Democrat Obama. In the face of imperialist attacks, Trotskyists stand for military defense of Venezuela, Bolivia and other countries targeted by the arrogant Yankee overlords. But despite its talk of “revolution” and the reference to “socialism” in the party’s name, the PSUV is a bourgeois party based on the capitalist state apparatus, particularly the military. And while we stand four-square against the seditious opposition by pro-imperialist rightists following Washington’s script for toppling the Caracas regime, Trotskyists denounce its repression of labor and worker

¹ See “Brutal Repression by Evo Morales Against Bolivian General Strike,” *The Internationalist* No. 35, Summer 2013.

Centrists Waffle in Greece

In the kaleidoscopic Greek left, two smaller groups, the Workers Revolutionary Party and the Trotskyist Group of Greece, merit attention. Unlike the out-and-out reformists, whose program is clearly to pressure the capitalist state, now under new management with the bourgeois populists of SYRIZA, these centrists at least purport to be fighting for workers revolution. In practice, however, in both cases their concrete programs and calls amount to a slightly more leftist version of the reformists’ platforms ... or not even.

It should be mentioned at the outset that in 2013, Workers Revolutionary Party (EEK) leader Savas Michael-Matsas was prosecuted as a result of a lawsuit by the Golden Dawn (XA) Nazis accusing him of defamation and incitement to violence for sponsoring a 2009 demonstration calling to “smash fascism” after a murderous XA attack on immigrants. Among the several co-sponsors of the protest, Savas was singled out by the Nazi-fascists in a vile anti-Semitic diatribe as “an instrument of the World Jewish Conspiracy to foment civil war among Greeks to impose a Judeo-Bolshevik regime in Greece.” XA’s connections with the ruling New Democracy were powerful enough to trigger the prosecution, although Savas was eventually acquitted.

The EEK, Greek affiliate of the Coordinating Committee for the Refoundation of the Fourth International led by Jorge Altamira’s Partido Obrero in Argentina, ran candidates in the January elections on a program calling for “mass struggle for workers’ power,” for a social revolution and “socialist unification of our region and Europe over the ruins of the imperialist E.U.” But while expressively dismissing SYRIZA’s Thessaloniki Program as trying to “empty the ocean of the people’s sufferings with a teaspoon” and warning that its allegiance to the continuity of the state “opens the way to a 1973 Chile-type tragedy,” the EEK called on workers and youth to urge the leaders of SYRIZA, a bourgeois party, to “break with the bourgeoisie.” Thus like ANTARSYA, with which it tried to form a

bloc, in reality the EEK acted as a pressure group on SYRIZA.

Following the election, Savas declared bombastically in a February 3 article that “The Greek people has shaken the world” and claimed that in the Greek context a “government of the left” meant a government of revolutionaries. While he saw in the SYRIZA-ANEL government “some features of a Kerensky type of government,” a subsequent statement on the agreement with the Eurogroup declared that if the election of SYRIZA was “a leap forward of the popular movement,” the February 20 agreement and election of the rightist Pavlopoulos to the presidency constituted “a step back,” and called to “oust the nationalist and pro-capitalist ministers.” Yet *all* the ministers are “pro-capitalist” as members of the *bourgeois* SYRIZA-ANEL government.

The Trotskyist Group of Greece, section of the International Communist League (ICL) called for critical support to the Communist Party (KKE) in the January 25 elections, a valid tactic in this case where the KKE was sharply counterposed to SYRIZA and its satellites in ANTARSYA. The TGG accurately characterized SYRIZA as not a “radical left” party or even part of the workers movement, but a bourgeois party based on the petty-bourgeoisie (not unlike PASOK, whose position in the Greek political spectrum it has taken over). And it also correctly called for no vote to the ANTARSYA front, which in effect acts as a pressure group on SYRIZA.

The TGG put forward a series of demands including to organize the unorganized, for a sliding scale of wages and hours and for union defense of immigrants, although in line with the ICL’s repudiation of the key thesis of Trotsky’s Transitional Program¹ – that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary proletarian leadership – it does not refer to transitional demands. And indeed its “class-struggle program” is not all that different from the

¹ See “In Defense of the Transitional Program,” *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998.

ments in the Central Committee, but CC decisions are meaningless. No need to check if the union tops are lined up either, as British Labour Party leaders still do occasionally. Greek unions could be decimated and it wouldn’t put in question SYRIZA’s existence any more than it would that of the U.S. Democrats, Argentine Peronists, or the ex-Communists of Italy’s bourgeois Democratic Party.

As for SYRIZA’s economic program, it is resolutely capitalist. Nothing in its platform for the 2015 election, the Thessaloniki Program, goes beyond what bourgeois governments have done elsewhere. Its call for a “European New Deal” recalls U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s; in urging “quantitative easing” by the European Central Bank, it echoes the U.S. Federal Reserve Bank under Barack Obama (whom Tsipras has cited as an alternative to EU austerity policies). And SYRIZA’s call for a moratorium on interest payments and for writing off much of the public debt in order to make it “sustainable” was endorsed in an open letter to the *Financial Times* (23 January) by 18

usual laundry list of demands raised by the reformists. There is no mention of workers militias, for example, and it includes the call to “nationalize the banks.” In fact, the TGG’s call is strikingly similar to the Cliffite SEK’s program (see main article) and even to the right of the OKDE-Spartakos’ call (in its election manifesto) for expropriation of the banks without compensation.

Calls to nationalize the banks are a staple of reformists and populists in periods of economic crisis, and are hardly anti-capitalist. Greek banks are today technically (and actually) bankrupt, and nationalization by the bourgeois SYRIZA-ANEL government could be the only way to stave off economic disaster for the bourgeoisie, especially should Greece abandon the euro. To call for nationalization of Greek banks today is no more revolutionary than when Mexican president José López Portillo seized Mexican banks in 1982 to prevent their collapse. Or when the popular-front bourgeois government of France under François Mitterrand nationalized most of the French banks in 1982. (In both cases, after being recapitalized by the state, the banks were reprivatized.)

While SYRIZA’s call for “public ownership” of banks and utility companies is openly bourgeois, even to call for “nationalization under workers control” (as the SEK does) is just a fig leaf to have some kind of class-collaborationist “works council” with union representatives occasionally looking over some sanitized figures. A genuinely revolutionary transitional program in Greece today would be for workers to *occupy and seize* Alpha Bank, Eurobank Ergasias, Piraeus Bank, the National Bank of Greece and the rest; for a workers commission to *open the books* to investigate the rampant financial corruption, speculation, etc.; to implement genuine *workers control – dual power in the plants, ports and other industries*; and to *fight for a revolutionary workers government to expropriate the banks and all of capitalist commerce, transport and industry in the fight for a Socialist United States of Europe.* ■

leading bourgeois economists, including Joseph Stiglitz, most of them advocates of John Maynard Keynes’ policies of stimulating production by boosting demand.

Finance Minister Varoufakis (a former advisor of PASOK prime minister George Papandreou and not a member of SYRIZA) says openly that his aim is “stabilising European capitalism,” and that his “agenda [is] founded on the assumption that the left was, and remains, squarely defeated.” He decided “not to propose radical political programs ... to overthrow European capitalism,” but instead favors “forging alliances with reactionary forces ... to stabilise Europe today” at “the risk of becoming co-opted, of shedding our radicalism through the warm glow of having ‘arrived in the corridors of power’” (“Yanis Varoufakis: How I became an erratic Marxist,” *Guardian*, 18 February). This “game theorist” is no Marxist at all, but he’s certainly aware of the game he is playing. In bowing to the Eurobankers he didn’t betray his principles, just stabbed in the back the working people who voted for SYRIZA. ■

French Leaders Declare War After *Charlie Hebdo* Massacre

Defend Muslims in Europe Against Racist “War on Terror” Backlash!

Imperialist Mass Murderers Seek to Exploit Indignation

On January 7, the offices of the French weekly *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris were subjected to a horrific massacre. In all 12 people were shot to death, including the top editor and caricaturists of the satirical magazine, and another 11 wounded. The attackers were of North African descent. As they carried out their assault, the gunmen are said to have cried out “Allahu akbar” (god is great). Afterwards on the street, an amateur video showed the attackers shouting as they killed a policeman (of Algerian descent), “We have avenged the Prophet Muhammad. We have killed *Charlie Hebdo*!” In response to this grotesque terror attack, France’s imperialist rulers have launched a war against the “enemy within.” While they claim to be only targeting *ihadis* (holy warriors), the Muslim and immigrant population as a whole is under siege.

Immediately after the shooting, a massive manhunt was launched. Some 88,000 police and gendarmes (paramilitary police) were mobilized, as military helicopters flew overhead. Hundreds of soldiers were posted around the French capital. Two days later, a police woman was shot to death in a southern suburb by a gunman, who shortly afterwards attacked a kosher supermarket near the Porte de Vincennes, killing four Jewish customers and holding others hostage. Within a few hours police had surrounded the Hyper Casher market and the printing plant where two of the *Charlie Hebdo* killers had holed up, and in a coordinated assault killed the assailants. The gunmen, who “synchronized” their actions, proclaimed their allegiance to rival Islamist¹ jihadi groups, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic State.

The shock of the killing spree deeply shook France, and the rulers rushed to assert control. Social-democratic president François Hollande and the conservative opposition called for “national unity” against terrorism. The liberal daily *Le Monde* (9 January) published a somber front page headlined, “The French September 11,” recalling the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The lights on the Eiffel Tower were dimmed, the bells of Notre Dame cathedral rang. Tens of thou-

¹ Islamism, or political Islam, is a doctrine holding that Islamic law (sharia) should govern society. Thus for Islamists there is no separation of church and state. While there are different Islamist currents, and sharp differences between Islamists of the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam, all call for a theocratic regime in which religious doctrine and authority are supreme, and thus are inherently anti-democratic. Jihadis or jihadists seek to impose Islamic rule through holy war (jihad) against infidels, apostates and all non-believers.



French army special forces comb through northern France during manhunt for *Charlie Hebdo* killers, January 8.

sands went into the streets with signs saying, “*Je suis Charlie*” (I am Charlie). Then on Sunday, January 11, over four million people marched throughout the country in the largest demonstrations in French history, “against terrorism” and for “republican values.” The French national anthem, *La Marseillaise*, was repeatedly sung. What a travesty!

The “values” of the bourgeois French republic, what might those be? Mass deportations of tens of thousands of Roma (Gypsy) people, begun by the previous conservative government and then escalated by the present “Socialist” administration? “*Freedom of expression*”? Like banning pro-Palestinian protests when Israel attacked Gaza last June-July? Or the police murder of 21-year-old environmental activist Rémi Fraisse protesting construction of the Sivens Dam last November? “*Secularism*”? Like when the Catholic church, fascists and conservatives mobilized against gay marriage, including a homophobic mass march of 800,000 in Paris? And “*national unity*”? When marchers in the January 11 parades for “national unity” sang (in the words of the *Marseillaise*) of “hordes of slaves” who are coming to “cut the throats of our sons and our women,” and whose “impure blood” should “irrigate our fields,” whose blood were they baying for? That of our colleagues and neighbors.

And how grotesque to demonstrate “against terrorism” by marching together with – in fact, behind – blood-soaked imperialist terrorists, their allies and puppets! Heading up the January 11 Paris march were 44 heads of state and government, various of whom are guilty of terrorist killing on an immensely larger scale than the *Charlie Hebdo* and Hyper Casher killers. There was Israeli prime minister Netanyahu, the mass

murderer of Gaza. Also the ambassador of Saudi Arabia, which two days earlier began the flogging of liberal blogger Raif Badawi with the first 100 of 1,000 lashes on charges of insulting Islam. Let’s not forget Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko, who ordered the “anti-terrorist operation” that is killing thousands of Russian-speakers in the east. Also present was his handler, U.S. “diplomat” Victoria Nuland.

French president Hollande is himself a certified warmonger, sending troops to kill Muslims from Mali and the Central African Republic to Iraq. Without a doubt, the massacre at *Charlie Hebdo* was an attempt to impose censorship through the barrel of a gun, while the attack on the supermarket was anti-Semitic terror – and at the same time these acts of Islamist jihadis were the predictable result of years of wanton slaughter by U.S., French and lesser NATO imperialists in the Middle East and elsewhere.

- In “one short year,” defense minister Jean-Yves Le Drian recently boasted, the nearly 4,000 French troops in West Africa in Operation Barkhane have killed over 200 jihadists. This was after killing 700-800 in Mali in 2013-14. Now the French army wants to cross over into southern Libya. The Hyper Casher gunman was of Malian descent, as was the Muslim supermarket worker who hid a number of the Jewish customers.

- Currently France has 900 military personnel and 15 fighter planes in the Middle East, plus another hundred officers at American command posts, in Operation Chammal. It is the second-largest component of the U.S. war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). In response to a French air strike, a French tourist was executed by ISIS allies in Algeria.

- For the last 13 years, the U.S. im-

perialists and their NATO junior partners have waged a vicious war and occupation that has annihilated an estimated 600,000 people in Iraq (after an estimated 1 million were killed by imperialist sanctions in the previous decade) and 80,000 in Afghanistan, overwhelmingly non-combatants. Photos of sadistic torture of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib reportedly enraged the brothers who murdered the journalists at *Charlie Hebdo*.

Yet in the days after the Paris killings there was hardly a mention in the media of these wars and *mass murder* by the imperialists that set the stage for the murders at *Charlie Hebdo*. Nor was it noted that France and the U.S. had sent tons of arms to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies, which in turn financed and armed jihadists seeking to overthrow the Assad regime in Syria. Then on January 13, the National Assembly voted 488 to 1 to continue the war in Iraq and Syria. The next day President Hollande strode onto the deck of the aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* to declare that the Paris attacks justified its dispatch to the region to help “carry out operations in Iraq with greater intensity.” So the killing of cartoonists at *Charlie Hebdo* is used to escalate the butchery in the Middle East! This is the meaning of “national unity” with imperialist terrorists.

Muslims and Immigrants Targeted

One must ask, why in this period of continuing global capitalist economic crisis, massacres and never-ending war is there a major political crisis over some *cartoons*? It is all part of the “new world disorder” following counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East European deformed workers states at the beginning of the 1990s. Ever since, the imperialists (particularly U.S. imperialism) have sought to assert world hegemony in a “war of civilization.” The war is also directed at the working class in the imperialist countries in a frantic drive to shore up the decaying capitalist system. Rampant union-busting, religious reaction and racist repression exemplify Leon Trotsky’s observation in the Transitional Program (1938): “The objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only ‘ripened’; they have begun to get somewhat rotten.”

Today Muslims and people of North African and Arab origins or appearance in particular are in the crosshairs of the “anti-terrorist” backlash. Racist forces are already beating the drums for stepping up the war on immigrants. Tens of thousands of police and troops are in the streets of French cities. The League for the Fourth International

No to Equating Muslims with Terrorists!
Drive French and U.S. Imperialism Out of the Middle East and Africa!

calls for *U.S., French and all imperialist forces to be defeated and driven out of the Middle East*. And while fighting to defend democratic rights for all, including freedom of the press which is constantly threatened by the capitalist rulers now posing as its champions, *we urgently call on the workers movement to come to the defense of the embattled immigrant and Muslim populations in France, Germany, Britain and elsewhere in Europe*.

The threat is hardly abstract. **January 7:** shots fired at a Muslim prayer room in Port-La-Nouvelle; car of a Muslim family hit by gunfire in the Vaucluse; “death to Arabs” spray-painted on the gate of a mosque in Poitiers. **January 8:** grenades thrown and bullets fired at a mosque in Le Mans; an explosive device set off at a kebab restaurant near a mosque in Villefranche-sur-Saône; gunshots fired toward a mosque in Saint-Juéry; a mosque in Aix-les-Bains caught fire in a suspected arson. **January 9:** graffiti outside a mosque in Bayonne saying “assassins” and “dirty Arabs”; a 17-year-old of North African origin attacked by a gang near Isère; a pig’s head and entrails left outside a prayer room in Corte, Corsica with a note, “next time it will be one of your heads.” By January 11, 50 anti-Muslim actions were reported.

The racist backlash is already being exploited politically by the racist right. Marine Le Pen, the leader of the fascist National Front (FN), has kept it relatively low key, preferring to play the victim for being excluded from the January 11 “national unity” demonstration. But she is demanding reinstitution of the death penalty, has reiterated the FN’s opposition to “massive immigration” and called for tougher measures against “radical Islam.” Immediately after the massacre, smaller more explicitly Muslim-hating far right groups vituperated against the “Islamization” of France. The fascists are seeking to garner votes in coming elections with their anti-immigrant, Islamophobic appeals. But their sinister action won’t stop at the ballot box.

This is also true internationally. The anti-immigrant UKIP (United Kingdom Independence Party) denounced a “Fifth Column” undermining Britain. The demented Zionist media mogul Rupert Murdoch tweeted that “Maybe most Moslems peaceful,” but until they denounce jihadists “they must be held responsible.” A self-

proclaimed “terrorism expert” for Murdoch’s Fox News wrote that areas of France, London and the entire city of Birmingham were “no-go areas” that “are totally Muslim where non-Muslims just simply don’t go in.” But while the media made fun of the Murdochian nightmares of British cities under the sway of sharia police and courts, the call to hold all Muslims “responsible” for the Paris killings is a deadly serious threat.

In Italy, the immigrant-bashing Lega Nord (Northern League), which has led violent demonstrations attempting to block the construction of mosques, and leftovers of the fascist Alleanza Nazionale (AN) infest many local administrations. In the Venice region, the AN head of educational policy sent a threatening letter to school principals to pressure parents to “request a condemnation of these acts, because if they have decided to come to live in Europe, in Italy, in the Venice region, they must know that they are being received in a civilization with principles and values, rules and customs to which they must adapt.” In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders of the ultra-rightist, anti-Muslim PVV is calling to close the borders.

In particular, anti-immigrant hysteria has reached a fever pitch in Germany, where since last October weekly Monday demonstrations by Pegida (European Patriots Against the Islamization of the West) in Dresden have steadily escalated. On January 12, police said 25,000 joined a Pegida march claiming to mourn the dead in Paris. But while 30,000 marched *against* Pegida in nearby Leipzig and 100,000 throughout Germany that night (*Berliner Zeitung*, 13 January), blocking demos of a few hundred anti-immigrant fanatics, government-sponsored assemblies will be no match for the Islamophobic marches shot through with Nazi thugs. *What’s needed is mobilization of the workers movement to crush the racist hate-mongers*.

But the most immediate threat actually comes not from the fascists and other anti-immigrant rightists, but from the mainstream bourgeois parties and the capitalist state. In France, ex-president Sarkozy thundered against the “enemy within” the day after the “national unity” march. Jihadis should not be allowed back into the country, anyone with a French identity card who wants to “destroy France” should be expelled, more prisons built and surveillance of the Internet increased, he

Anti-Muslim attacks after the Charlie Hebdo massacre

(as of 9 January 2015, 6:30pm GMT)

1. Wednesday. Shots fired at a prayer room in Port-La-Nouvelle about an hour after prayers. There were no deaths, injuries or arrests.

2. Wednesday. A car belonging to a Muslim family targeted by gunfire in Vaucluse. No injuries were reported.

3. Thursday. Three training grenades were thrown at Mosquée de Sablons in Le Mans. Further reports suggest a bullet hole in glass as well. Police cordoned off the area during their investigation.

4. Wednesday. The gate of Mosquée de Poitiers tagged with anti-Muslim graffiti stating, “morts aux arabes” (death to Arabs).

5. Thursday. An explosion of ‘criminal origin’ targeted a kebab shop near a mosque in the town of Villefranche-sur-Saône in Rhône.

6. Friday. Graffiti found at three places outside a mosque in Bayonne, one said “Charlie freedom,” while others said “assassins” and “dirty Arabs.”

7. Friday. In Rennes, a private Islamic Cultural Centre is vandalised with the slogan “outside” in Breton and French.

8. Friday. Proposed mosque in Bischmiller, Haut-Rhin is vandalised with the slogan “Ich bin Charlie” (“Je suis Charlie” in German).

9 and 10. Friday. In northern France, two proposed mosque sites in Lievin and Bethune were vandalised with anti-Islamic graffiti.

11. Thursday. Four gunshots were fired towards the entrance of a mosque in Saint-Juéry (near Albi in southern France).

12. Friday. In Corte, Corsica, a boar’s head and entrails is left outside a prayer room alongside a threatening note that read ‘next time it will be one of your heads’.

13. Thursday. In Mâcon, a street is vandalised with the slogan “Islam is going to f*ck you – Charlie”

14. Thursday. A 17-year-old (of North-African descent) is assaulted by a gang after suffering racist abuse near Isère.

15. Thursday. A mosque in Aix-les-Bains caught fire in a suspected arson.

Sources:
<http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/01/08/01016-20150108ARTFIG00116-serie-d-actes-anti-musulmans-a-lendemain-de-l-attentat-contre-charlie-hebdo.php>
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said. Yet the government can already put in preventive detention, ban from leaving the country and seize the passport and national identity card of anyone it can convince a special “anti-terrorist” magistrate might “disturb public order” by “intimidation” or is part of a “criminal conspiracy,” even if the “conspiracy” has done nothing and consists of a single person.

Adopting the language of the fascist FN, in a January 13 speech to the National Assembly that was applauded by the entire body, Prime Minister Valls declared that “France is at war with terrorism, with jihadism, with radical Islamism.” To wage this war he called for “exceptional measures,” including “improving” surveillance, “expanding” monitoring of Internet and social media, “reinforcing” measures against propagating radical Islam, a new law for spy agencies (already in the works), more money and hundreds more intelligence agents, a national “anti-terrorist” index of individuals like that of sexual predators, special cells and solitary confinement of jihadi prisoners, and data on all airline passengers. No need for “special laws” like the U.S.A. PATRIOT Act, rammed through Congress in the wake of 9/11, says Valls, they’ve got plenty.

Already the machinery of internal repression is being ratcheted up. Some 100 people have reportedly been jailed in France for “glorifying terrorism.” Not only the anti-Semite and fascist stooge Dieudonné M’bala, who identified with the gunman at the kosher supermarket, but also someone who joked about the attacks (sentenced to six months), another who supposedly referred to the *Charlie Hebdo* killers when he was arrested drunk after an auto accident (he got four years), and quite a few for Facebook postings. Elsewhere in Europe, at least two dozen “suspected radicals” and “potential terrorists” have been picked up on the same sort of flimsy pretexts. So much for “freedom of expression”! All those arrested under such anti-democratic speech laws should be freed.

So now France is under siege – not by terrorists, but by its government. Under the “anti-terror” plan Vigipirate, 10,000 army troops are being posted at “sensitive locations” around the country, in addition to the almost 90,000 police and gendarmes already mobilized. Some 4,700 of those forces will be protecting Jewish schools and synagogues, although dozens of Islamic mosques and prayer rooms have been defaced, firebombed or shot at in the last few days. In addition to harassing people of Arab and African appearance in the Paris metro, no doubt many of those military and paramilitary forces will be stationed in the heavily immigrant *banlieues* (suburbs) of major cities. Not to “protect” the Muslim population but to occupy their *quartiers*, to back up police raids and suppress manifestations of discontent, particularly by minority youth.

After all the feel-good media coverage of the January 11 “national unity” march, it was noted that one sector of the French population was conspicuously absent – young people from the *banlieues*. Hash-tags appear on social media proclaiming #jenesuispascharlie, “I’m not Charlie.” The Ministry of National Education reports that in 70 schools (out of 64,000), some students contested the January 8 minute of silence for victims at *Charlie Hebdo*. Horrors! The minister demands that educators carry out a “great mobilization of the schools for the values of the Republic.” Teachers unions are called upon to assume a special responsibility in imparting these “values,” including to turn in to the police students who object to praise of *Charlie Hebdo*. But as a teacher in Seine-Saint-Denis told *Le Figaro* (14 January):

“Everyone’s talking about the unrest. The pressure cooker is about to explode. If you throw in the amalgam that’s being made between Islam and the murders, plus some attacks on mosques, the mixture becomes even more potent than that which provoked the riots of 2005. Get ready for it to explode.”

Meanwhile, spy agencies everywhere

The Internationalist

Philippe Wojazer/AFP



The “Sacred Union”: millions demonstrated “against terrorism” grotesquely marching behind imperialist terrorists and their puppets, Paris, January 11.

are trying to use the crisis to legalize indiscriminate data sweeps, give them unlimited access to everyone's electronic devices and override encryption introduced after the Edward Snowden revelations about the U.S. National Security Agency's massive, illegal spying on the general population. The idea of British prime minister David Cameron marching in the January 11 Paris demo in defense of freedom of the press is grotesque: not so long ago his government ordered computers at the London *Guardian* with encrypted Snowden files pulverized. Of course, it's all beside the point as it turns out that U.S. and French spy services had been monitoring all of the *Charlie Hebdo* "malefactors" for years, had jailed two of them, and one even starred in a documentary about home-grown jihadis.

Left Tail of the "Sacred Union"

Immediately after the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre, French media and political circles began talking of an "*union sacrée*," the political truce during World War I when the bulk of the French left and labor movement agreed to support the imperialist war effort. This shameful capitulation took place only days after the veteran socialist leader and opponent of imperialist war Jean Jaurès was assassinated by an ultra-rightist French nationalist. The reformist French left today is treading the same path of betrayal of the working class, immigrants and oppressed. With the Socialist Party in office and calling the shots, the French Communist Party (PCF) has taken up the call for national unity while smaller left parties tag along behind with a transparent pretense of "independence."

The PCF, the allied Parti de Gauche (PG – Left Party) and its leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon (the joint PG-PCF presidential candidate) built and marched in the January 11 demonstration, portraying it as a "republican response against obscurantism and religious fundamentalism of all sorts" and proclaiming "We are Charlie." In the National Assembly two days later, the entire body rose to sing the *Marseillaise*, for the first time since 1918. The spokesman for the PCF, Olivier Dartygollès, praised Prime Minister Valls for having "found the right words" on the issue of security, and congratulated the deputies on the "beautiful image of national unity" (*Le Monde*, 15 January). On the motion to continue French participation in the Iraq-Syria war, the PCF and PG deputies abstained, their sole criticism being that it was under NATO.

But this is par for the course for these inveterate reformists. Back in 1935, the PCF dropped the last vestige of Lenin's communism and on Stalin's orders voted for the French war budget. Soon they were supporting the popular front coalition of Socialist Léon Blum and the bourgeois Radical Party which in short order capitulated to Marshal Pétain's pro-Nazi regime without a fight. After World War II, the PCF played a key role heading off workers revolution and reestablishing the bourgeois republic under General de Gaulle. And after supporting the French colonial war against Algerian independence, on 17 October 1961 as thousands of Algerian demonstrators were arrested – literally under the windows of *L'Humanité* – and hundreds killed, their bodies thrown into the Seine, the PCF did nothing to mobilize the workers in their defense.²

² See "France: Racist State Terror From World War II to Today," *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998.



On 17 October 1961, Paris police chief Maurice Papon, a former Nazi collaborator, unleashed a monstrous massacre of Algerians demonstrating against a racist curfew. Over 12,000 were arrested (top) and 300 or more were murdered, many of their bodies thrown off bridges into the Seine River (bottom). Writing says: "Here Algerians were drowned." French authorities long denied there was a massacre despite massive documentation; no one was ever punished for it; Papon received the Legion of Honor medal the same year. The bloodbath is not mentioned in French school history books.

So what of the parties that claim to stand to the left of the PCF? The reformist New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), into which the pseudo-Trotskyist Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire dissolved a few years back, issued a joint statement with other left groups distancing themselves from calls for national unity and criticizing French military intervention. But the NPA's formal differences with the government are a mere fig leaf to hide its actual pro-imperialist policies. In fact, the NPA called on France to arm NATO-backed Syrian (and before that Libyan) Islamists, and although a September 22 NPA resolution said "no to all forms of imperialist intervention," at an October 11 Kurdish solidarity demo NPA spokesman Olivier Besancenot reportedly "call[ed] on the French government to protect the Kurdish people against the jihadis of the I.S." (AFP).

There are several tendencies inside the social-democratic NPA which strike a more militant posture (Tendance CLAIR, Courant Communiste Révolutionnaire, Anticapitalisme & Révolution) which last September put forward a joint resolution against the leadership's overtly pro-imperialist line. Yet as is typical of centrists who play their opportunist games in the shadow of larger reformist formations, after bickering among themselves they then dropped any criticism of the NPA's

call for French arms and "protection" for the Kurds. But in any case, neither they nor any other leftists dared to go against the government's use of the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre to justify escalating its military intervention in the Near East. Was there any protest outside the National Assembly against the renewal of the mandate for the war in Iraq and Syria? We have seen no mention of any.

Lutte Ouvrière (LO), the largest ostensibly Trotskyist organization left in France, issued statements criticizing the government's call for "national unity" and cynical claim to defend freedom of the press. But despite its pious appeals saying, "Don't Let Our Class Enemies Set Workers Against Each Other" (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 16 January), its calls are limited to more jobs, education, services, nothing about defense against racist attacks. Moreover, LO teachers set off the racist ban on wearing the Islamic head scarf (*hijab*) in schools by campaigning to expel two secondary school girls of immigrant origin in Aubervilliers! And in the 2005 revolt by youth in the *banlieues*, LO echoed Sarkozy's racist insults of "thugs," denouncing "traffickers" and "two-bit neighborhood caïds" (capos) who "today [have] the support of a large part of the youth."³

It is notable that while much of the left

³ See "France Turns Hard to the Right," *The Internationalist* No. 26, July 2007.

was tight-lipped about the mounting racist threats, and while the union tops have gone along with the calls for "national unity," a local union section, the CGT at the Saint-Gobain research center in Aubervilliers, didn't mince words:

"We denounce the racist and xenophobic theses of all stripes, whether they are anti-Arab, anti-Muslim or anti-immigrant and their theory of a supposed Islamization of Europe.

"We say: NO, the Muslims of France and elsewhere do not have to feel more concerned than anyone over these despicable murders and thus don't have to justify themselves or take a position.... "We will not be found in the National Union, under the banner of the reactionaries. Progressive union forces must not stand united with those whose political aim is to silence every dissident voice, every opposition in order to ensure our total submission but must instead fight them anywhere and everywhere. Moreover, we will not march hand in hand with our exploiters, who know so well how to profit from the current confusion."

—statement reproduced on the web site of the Tendance CLAIR

As Revolutionary Internationalists, We Are Not Charlie

What is urgently needed in France today is an authentically Trotskyist, communist vanguard that fights tooth and nail against all the imperialists and seeks to mobilize the working class against the racist repression coming down on Muslims, immigrants and people of Arab and North African heritage. At the same time as we denounce the murders of the journalists and Jews, we state frankly our disgust at those *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons which were deliberately insulting to oppressed sectors of the population. Since the murdered cartoonists included well-known figures such as Stéphane Charbonnier ("Charb"), Jean Cabut ("Cabu"), Bernard Verlhac ("Tignous"), Georges Wolinski and Philippe Honoré beloved by many on the left, and had drawn cartoons for *l'Humanité* and other left papers, our views will not be popular in certain circles.

The original *Charlie Hebdo* (1969-1981) was a leftist, "anti-establishment" publication satirizing Charles de Gaulle and other ruling figures. Its reincarnation (it was relaunched in 1992), however, has stayed well within the bounds of bourgeois journalism. Moreover, in recent years it has had a provocative anti-Muslim and anti-Arab bent. In 2006, it reprinted the vulgar cartoons of the prophet Muhammad published by the racist right-wing Danish paper *Jyllands-Posten*.⁴ In 2011 these supposed leftists did their own version with a special issue titled *Charia Hebdo* in reference to Islamic law (sharia), which led to its offices being firebombed. Its depictions of Muhammad have sometimes been downright racist, a caricature of a "swarthy" Arab figure. A similar cartoon about Jews would immediately be denounced, rightly, as anti-Semitic, recalling posters for Nazi films like *Der ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew) and *Jud Süß*.

It was notable that while portraying the uproar over *Charlie Hebdo*'s anti-Muhammad cartoons as oversensitiveness by religious fanatics who can't take a joke,

⁴ See "Racist Anti-Muslim Provocations Trigger Storm of Islamic Reaction," *The Internationalist* No. 23 (April-May 2006).



DREAM Act Axed

Democrats Swindle Immigrant Youth, Again

MARCH 30 – For the second time in a year, supporters of the New York State DREAM Act have been kicked in the teeth by the racist politicians who lord it over youth, workers and all the oppressed in the service of the capitalist class. Last time around, in March 2014, various State Senate Democrats joined forces with Republicans to kill the bill in what nysdreamact.org called “a surprise vote.” In the latest shell game, Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo took the proposed act out of his budget, while unleashing new vicious attacks on public education, teachers and students. Like the struggle against racist police murder from Ferguson to NYC, any real fight for immigrant rights requires telling the truth: This entire system, and all the politicians that represent it, are enemies of our most basic interests. The name of that system is capitalism – and to uproot racism, we must organize to overthrow it.

The NYS DREAM Act would allow “undocumented” students who meet in-state tuition requirements to gain access to state financial aid. While crafted in such a way as to do nothing for the vast majority of immigrant working people, this minimal reform is supportable (unlike the federal DREAM Act, a Trojan Horse aimed at luring immigrant youth into the imperialist armed forces). The bitter truth is that this brutal society is intent on making pariahs out of immigrant workers without whose labor it could not run – but who lack a miserable scrap of paper issued by the government of their exploiters. The daughters and sons of those workers are told to be supplicants showing they are “worthy” of even bits and

Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants! No Tuition – Open Admissions!

pieces of what citizens get by right. The “American Dream” is a fraud; as Malcolm X called it, a nightmare. **Smash racist discrimination – full citizenship rights, equal access to all programs and services for ALL immigrants, now!**

The CUNY Internationalist Clubs were born out of the campaign we launched to stop the CUNY administration’s attempted purge of undocumented students after 9/11 in 2001. When a racist Queens politician ranted that “illegal aliens” at CUNY posed a “security threat,” the CUNY tops saluted and moved to drive them out by more than doubling their tuition to the out-of-state rate. Bringing in support from immigrant workers organizations and other labor groups, our campaign succeeded in rolling back this attack for many undocumented students. (See the Internationalist pamphlet *Defend Immigrant Students – Stop CUNY’s “War Purge!”*) Those who have attended a New York State high school for at least two years and graduated, or got an NYS GED, are eligible for in-state tuition. Today, however, the CUNY bureaucracy routinely fails to inform new students of this fact, and tries to hit them with out-of-state tuition upon seeing that they don’t have a Social Security number.

For the Democratic Party, the issue of immigrant rights is just a way to round up votes. Like his fellow Democrat Cuomo, Barack Obama has pumped out empty promises about immigration “reform,” always

somewhere over the rainbow. In reality, his proposed reform has always been a fraud to cover increasing militarization of the border and never-ending attacks on immigrants, as he escalated deportations to over 400,000 a year and imprisons untold tens of thousands in hideous ICE camps.

Raising the dreams and hopes of immigrant youth, only to dash them on the brutal realities of bourgeois politics in racist USA – that is the function of all the vote-hunting NGOs, NYPIRG hucksters, union “leaders” and reformists of every persuasion. Nor will “militant” lobbying win the promised reforms. “Cuomo Betrays the People!” writes the populist Revolutionary Student Coordinating Committee. The only “people” Cuomo has ever represented are the bankers, real-estate sharks and other capitalists who call the shots for him, as they do for liberal De Blasio and the other Democratic and Republican politicians, as well as CUNY’s Board of Trustees.

What is needed is a revolutionary struggle, going beyond the campuses and bringing in a **power strong enough to defeat our enemies from Wall Street and City Hall to Albany and Washington**. That power is the multiracial, multi-ethnic working class, with its vital and growing immigrant component. NYC is an immigrant town and a labor town, as we have emphasized at one protest after another with the chant “Workers and students, shut the city down!”



Internationalist photo

CUNY Internationalist Clubs at May Day 2015.

Independent of and against all the capitalist politicians, this means fighting for full access to all programs and benefits for all CUNY students – an end to any and every kind of discrimination against immigrants, for restoring open admissions and no tuition at CUNY, and for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. Even these democratic demands can only be won as part of an all-out class struggle aiming to overthrow the oppressive system of capitalism and replace with a government of the working class. That is the revolutionary truth that must be told. Join us to help build the internationalist workers party needed to win this fight.

CUNY Internationalist Clubs

the *New York Times* (8 January) announced that it “has chosen not to reprint examples of the magazine’s most controversial work because of its intentionally offensive content.” Which is putting it mildly. And behind the depictions there is real animus. In 2000 a *Charlie Hebdo* writer was purged for objecting to an editorial by then editor Philippe Val which labeled Palestinians “uncivilized.” In 2003, another was “pushed out the door” for objecting to the magazine’s joining a “crusade of (‘European’) Civilization against (‘Muslim’) Barbarism” (“The Opinion of the Boss: Freedom of Expression According to Charlie Hebdo” [in French], *Les mots sont importants.net*, March 2006). Val has gone on to a powerful position as head of Radio France Internationale.

Offensive cartoons in *Charlie Hebdo* fixated on, but were by no means limited to, portrayals of Muhammad. In its series on “The Life of Muhammad,” *Charlie Hebdo* went out of its way to insult Muslims, with one cover showing a cleric exclaiming “The Koran is s—t.” Last fall a cover caricatured

pregnant veiled Muslim young women yelling “Don’t touch our welfare checks.” This was allegedly referring to the kidnapped female students made pregnant by Boko Haram in Nigeria – as if Nigerian school girls received welfare checks! This racist and sexist content was also seen in a cover showing the cabinet minister Christiane Taubira, a black woman, as a monkey. This was supposedly caricaturing a right-wing publication which had labeled her “as malignant as a monkey” and carried the symbol of the fascist NF, but the vile caricature was so hateful that it could well have been published by the National Front.

Charlie Hebdo was addicted to *la provoc* (provocation), which the *New York Times* (13 January) called being an iconoclastic “equal-opportunity offender,” supposedly going after all religions and ethnic groups. There is a long tradition in French literature and humor going back to Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Flaubert summed up as “épater le bourgeois,” to shock the prudish middle classes or bourgeoisie with

crudeness. But, beyond singling out Islam and Muslims for disdain, *Charlie Hebdo* was not so much going after the high and mighty as scorning the downtrodden and discriminated. Even had it given offense “equally,” which it didn’t, in a viciously unequal capitalist society this would victimize the poorest and weakest where those with resources could shrug it off. The satirical weekly all too often seemed to groove on taunting the oppressed. Its de facto guideline was “épater l’opprimé.”

A good summary of how *Charlie Hebdo* was perceived as part of the “everyday humiliation of Muslims in France” came from a young transit worker in Paris quoted by the *Washington Post* (14 January): “You go to a nightclub, and they don’t let you in. You go to a party, they look at your beard, and say, ‘Oh, when are you going to Syria to join the jihad?’ *Charlie Hebdo* is a part of that, too. Those who are stronger than us are mocking us. We have high unemployment, high poverty. Religion is all we have left. This is sacred to us. And yes, we have

a hard time laughing about it.” The fact is that *Charlie Hebdo* had long since joined the bourgeois “establishment,” which is why the virtual entirety of the French ruling class and well-to-do petty bourgeoisie could proclaim, “*Je suis Charlie*.” But the wretched of the earth resented its derisive insults.

The caricaturists and journalists of *Charlie Hebdo* reflect a strain of bourgeois radicalism with a long (and not so illustrious) pedigree in French political life. Today some supposed left-wingers in the Socialist Party, notably former leaders of SOS-Racisme, including the likes of ex-pseudo-Trotskyist Julien Dray, have taken to lecturing Muslims and youth of the impoverished suburbs on the value of *laïcité* (secularism). Marxists are staunch defenders of secularism, a heritage going back to the French Revolution and the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the 1905 law on the separation of religion and the state, ferociously opposed by the clerical right. Nevertheless, *bourgeois* secularism

This ideology is particularly strong in the French educational system, which traces its roots to Jules Ferry. Celebrated today as a preeminent republican and father of the secular school (*école laïque*), including by some supposed “socialists,” Ferry was the mayor of Paris in 1870-71 under the government of national defense, who made a fortune out of imposing hunger rations on the city’s poor (the “Ferry-famine”), who was a co-conspirator of the attempted coup of 18 March 1871 led by Auguste Thiers and had to flee to Versailles to escape the proletarian insurrectionists who founded the Paris Commune. He was also a notorious racist, an advocate of the expansion of French colonialism which he justified as a “right” of the “superior races” who had a “duty to civilize the inferior races.” As two-time prime minister he presided over colonial rule from Africa to Vietnam.

Smash Religious Reaction and Imperialism Through International Socialist Revolution

Revolutionary Marxists oppose discriminatory and exclusionary measures such as the 2004 law banning the *hijab* and the 2010 French law banning the full-length *burka* or *niqab* even as we oppose the veiling of women as symbolizing their subjugation and hail the heroic Algerian women who in the 1990s braved insult and deadly violence to reject the veil. In France today revolutionaries would come to the aid of young women in the *banlieues* who are threatened for daring to break such religious taboos. We oppose the bourgeois state acting as censor, as with the 1990 French law outlawing racist, anti-Semitic or xenophobic statements or actions, including denial of the Holocaust, because this arsenal is always deployed against the workers and oppressed. We call for – and have organized – mass mobilizations to smash the fascists because only the workers and oppressed have both the power and the interest to do so.

We defended Salman Rushdie against the *fatwa* (religious edict) by Ayatollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, ordering the assassination of the Indian author for supposedly insulting the prophet in his book *Satanic Verses*. Most of the pseudo-Trotskyist left actually supported the 1979 “Islamic Revolution” in Iran – which soon began murdering leftists, Kurds, gays and women who refused to wear the veil – where we proclaimed “Down with the shah, no to Khomeini.” We have defended Bangladeshi author and women’s rights activist Taslima Nasrin, threatened with death charged for “vilifying Islam” in her novel *Shame* (1993) portraying the persecution of a Hindu family by Islamist fanatics.⁶

At that time Jean Jaurès cited the on-going Dreyfus Affair⁷ to justify the participation of socialist Alexandre Millerand in the bourgeois cabinet of Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau alongside the butchers of the Commune. Luxemburg, like Lenin, praised Jaurès for defending the Jewish officer Dreyfus, falsely accused of treason by an anti-Semitic military officer corps, at a time when a number of socialists dismissed this as a dispute between bourgeois rivals. But Luxemburg wrote:

7 In 1894, the Jewish captain Alfred Dreyfus was framed on charges of supplying French military secrets to the German embassy and imprisoned in the infamous Devil's Island in French Guyana, South America. The high command continued the frame-up by suppressing documents showing that the real spy was an army major. The affair dragged on for a decade, splitting French politics into the camp of anticlerical Republican *dreyfusards* and anti-Semitic clerical-militarist *antidreyfusards*.

Today we must defeat the imperialists' war and occupation that first armed and financed the jihadis only to see the monster they created escape their control. To defend freedom of the press and freedom of speech, one must oppose all the laws restricting these basic rights along with the new crop of "anti-terrorist" laws opening the door to a police state. The bourgeoisie has nothing to offer a generation of youth without jobs (youth unemployment in the ghettoized Paris suburbs is 40% or more), without hope and who are subjected to unrelenting police harassment. Instead, class-struggle militants in the workers movement must fight to mobilize active defense of the besieged Muslim population, while putting forward a transitional program to combat the exclusion of youth of immigrant origin.

–“France: Workers Mobilize to Beat Back Attack on the Youth,” *The Internationalist*

We also called for “workers mobilizations in defense of the ghetto population ,” and to forge the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party to fight for a workers government. The attraction of religious delirium for some sectors of this disinherited population can only be overcome by a *workers movement with a revolutionary, internationalist leadership that mobilizes all its forces to fight for jobs for all, full citizenship for all immigrants, an end to racist repression and liberation of women through socialist revolution.*

Asesinato...

rosca en comisaría local. Sin embargo, esto no asegura para nada que se detendrá los asesinatos rutinarios de la policía ni su trato brutal de la población latina. Una medida de cuán profundamente arraigado está este sentimiento lo ofrece una pancarta penosa en la protesta del 14 de febrero: “Dispárame en la pierna, pero no me mates”. Pedir justicia del enteramente injusto estado capitalista no sólo cae en oídos sordos, sino que la policía, las prisiones y los políticos que sirven a los intereses de los patrones de los agronegocios conforman una máquina de represión racista para cuyo derribo hace falta una revolución.

Las peticiones de que se realice una investigación federal no servirán de nada, como lo ha mostrado Ferguson. La cháchara liberal de exigir “rendición de cuentas” de la policía, los *civilian complaint review boards* (paneles para recibir quejas de la población civil) u otras instancias semejantes no son más que un engaño cruel. La justicia para los que trabajan en los campos agrícolas sólo vendrá de la clase obrera misma, mediante una guerra en toda la línea en contra del racismo, la injusticia y la clase dominante que los crea. Desde Ayotzinapa hasta Ferguson y Pasco, la lucha es una sola. El Grupo Internacionalista llama por la movilización masiva de la multiétnica clase obrera para parar en seco a los policías asesinos. Para ello necesitamos construir un partido obrero revolucionario que combata toda forma de opresión en la lucha por una sociedad en la que quienes trabajan manden. ■

The Internationalist



**A Journal of Revolutionary Marxism for the
Reforging of the Fourth International**

**Publication of the Internationalist Group,
section of the League for the Fourth International**

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¡Movilización obrera para detener el racista terror policíaco!

Asesinato policíaco de trabajador mexicano en el estado de Washington

PORTLAND, Oregon – Los racistas asesinatos policíacos de víctimas desarmadas, particularmente entre los sectores oprimidos de la población, siguen sin parar. El año pasado, furiosas manifestaciones se extendieron por todo el país para protestar por los viles asesinatos policíacos de Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Akai Gurley y Tamir Rice, todos afroamericanos. Ahora los manifestantes se han volcado a las calles de Pasco, Washington, por el asesinato a manos de la policía del trabajador mexicano Antonio Zambrano Montes el 10 de febrero. Zambrano fue asesinado con múltiples balazos disparados por tres policías mientras, sin arma alguna, levantaba las manos. Se trató de una ejecución a sangre fría, como pudieron ver millones en un video que circuló en Internet.

Antonio era un hombre de baja estatura, de apenas metro y medio. La policía acusó a este trabajador agrícola de 35 años de estar aventando piedras contra los agentes, aunque recientemente se había roto ambas muñecas al caer de una escalera en la cosecha de manzanas. El video del incidente muestra a Zambrano corriendo aterrorizado mientras los policías lo persiguen en un crucero con tráfico, y luego cómo éste se da la vuelta y sube las manos mientras los policías le disparan. Además, aunque el asesinato ocurrió alrededor de las 5 p.m., la policía dejó el cadáver de Zambrano toda la noche tirado en la calle, como una espantosa advertencia. Su angustiada prima María Madrigal dijo en un programa de radio, “Para mí, es como dejar ahí a un animal muerto” (KUOW Seattle, 13 de febrero).

Según todos los testimonios, Zambrano estaba pasando por una mala racha. Su esposa lo había dejado, mudándose con sus dos hijas a California. Tras haberse lastimado, estaba sin trabajo y parecía desorientado. En enero quedó atrapado en el incendio de la casa donde vivía y sus pertenencias se quemaron. Durante un tiempo vivió en un refugio para gente sin techo. Más relevante aún, es que la policía iba por Antonio. Fue acusado de arrojar piedras a unos policías hace un año, y fue arrestado una semana antes, aparentemente por faltar a una cita en los tribunales. “Fue liberado el lunes”, informó el *Seattle Times* (11 de febrero). Al día siguiente, la policía lo abatió con una lluvia de balas. Acusación: aventar piedras a la policía. Juicio: ninguno. Sentencia: la muerte.

El asesinato policíaco de Antonio Zambrano no es un incidente aislado, sino que forma parte de un patrón. La policía de Pasco ha asesinado a cuatro personas en los últimos seis meses, lo que es más que lo que ha ocurrido en los últimos tres años en toda Inglaterra (con una población de 60 millones). Ni uno solo de los policías asesinos de Pasco ha sido enjuiciado. Uno de ellos fue sujeto a una demanda en 2012 por uso excesivo de fuerza en contra de una madre latina que iba a recoger a sus hijos de la guardería. La fuerza policíaca predo-

minantemente blanca pisotea a la población mayoritariamente hispana. Hay un solo concejal latino en la ciudad, y no hay ningún latino en la junta de educación, a pesar de que el 70 por ciento de los estudiantes son hispanos.

¿A quién le pueden pasar inadvertidos los paralelos? Se trata del asesinato de Michael Brown en Ferguson, Missouri, sólo que esta vez atrapado en video. La población negra o latina, la policía y la estructura del poder blancas. “¿Manos arriba, no disparen?” Bang: estás muerto. El *New York Times* (17 de febrero) titula un artículo: “Asesinato en estado de Washington ofrece un momento ‘Ferguson’ para los hispanos”. Y como gritaba un manifestante en Ferguson en agosto pasado, “¿Es ésta la Franja de Gaza?” (ver “Mobilize Across U.S. Against Racist Police Terror in Missouri”, en *The Internationalist* No. 38, octubre-noviembre de 2014). En la ciudad predominantemente hispana de Pasco, como en la Palestina asediada por los sionistas, la policía considera una piedra en la mano como permiso para matar.

Entretanto, el gobierno mexicano y el presidente Enrique Peña Nieto condenaron el asesinato del trabajador agrícola mexicano en Pasco por ser un “uso desproporcionado de la fuerza letal”. Exigen una investigación minuciosa y el castigo de los responsables del homicidio. Su propósito es quitarse la atención de encima por la masacre y secuestro de una cincuentena de estudiantes normalistas de Ayotzinapa en septiembre pasado. En lo que toca a la “investigación” del asesinato policíaco en Pasco, ésta es realizada por una agencia policíaca, igual que en México la Procuraduría General de la República “investigó” para encubrir el papel del estado.

El asesinato de Antonio Zambrano ha galvanizado las áreas donde reside la población trabajadora latina, llevada hasta el límite por el terror policíaco. Una mujer señaló, “Es como si tener una placa de policía te diera el derecho de acabar con la vida de un mexicano”. La familia y los compañeros de trabajo convocaron una manifestación ante la alcaldía de Pasco para el día siguiente. Conforme se esparció la noticia del asesinato, la manifestación del sábado 14 de febrero reunió a unas mil personas. Los que protestan exigen “justicia”, pero la justicia no vendrá de este racista sistema capitalista. Después de la furia desatada por los asesinatos policíacos de Ferguson, Cleveland y Nueva York, Pasco se ha convertido en el nuevo foco de protestas en contra de la



Airados manifestantes marchan en Pasco, Washington, el 14 de febrero, para protestar contra el asesinato policíaco de Antonio Zambrano Montes (en la foto, junto con su hija.)

mortífera e impune brutalidad policíaca.

Pasco es una segregada ciudad latina en el área metropolitana de las Tri-Cities junto con Kennewick y Richland, Washington, cuyos habitantes son blancos en más de un 80 por ciento. La mayor parte de los reportes mediáticos citan la estadística del censo de 2010 según la cual la población de Pasco es de menos de 60 mil personas, con un 56 por ciento de hispanos; sin embargo, el estimado poblacional del estado de Washington de 2014 cifra en 68 mil los habitantes de Pasco, con un porcentaje de latinos cercano a las dos terceras partes. La diferencia se debe al gran número de inmigrantes indocumentados en Pasco, como Antonio Zambrano, que no participan en el censo por miedo a ser deportados. No es una casualidad que la policía en Pasco actúe como si estuviera tratando con una población sin derechos.

Las Tri-Cities crecieron enormemente cuando se estableció el sitio nuclear de Hanford durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Richland sirvió de complejo habitacional del gobierno para alojar a los trabajadores. Pasco albergó la fuerza de trabajo agrícola del valle de Yakima (manzanas, peras y viñedos) y de la cuenca del río Columbia. La finalización de la presa Coulee en 1941 convirtió aquella área semiárida en una de las zonas agrícolas más ricas del país, donde se produce prácticamente toda cosecha importante. Las granjas familiares fueron rápidamente remplazadas por gigantes agroindustriales. Hoy, el campo está salpicado de círculos de siembra irrigados con agua subsidiada por el gobierno, proveniente del río Columbia.

Ya antes de esto, el valle de Yakima en el sudeste de Washington fue un centro de producción y comercio agrícolas con

una fuerte historia sindical. Durante los años 1930, los anarcosindicalistas de los Industrial Workers of the World (Obreros industriales del mundo – IWW) organizaron piquetes para exigir mejores condiciones de trabajo y alzas salariales, en tanto que los patrones se vanagloriaban ante la prensa local de su relación especial con la policía que actuaba como rompehuelgas y para imponer prácticas laborales draconianas. En los años 40, el gobierno incorporó trabajadores agrícolas y ferroviarios mexicanos mediante el programa Bracero. En los años 1960, hubo varias huelgas de trabajadores agrícolas latinos que contaron con la ayuda de estudiantes chicanos.

Hoy en día, los productores agrícolas de Washington impulsan un programa aumentado de “trabajadores huéspedes”, para conseguir una corriente eficiente y constante de trabajadores de bajos salarios que sean desechables, prácticamente sin derechos. Y cuando la “zanahoria” de los sueños del salir adelante con trabajo duro y determinación ya no funcione, los policías pueden blandir el garrote para mantener a los “esclavos asalariados” a raya. En una ciudad en la que un alto porcentaje de los habitantes trabaja en la agricultura o en industrias relacionadas, muchos de los cuales residen ahí desde hace largo tiempo, la policía está potenciada para usar despiadadamente la fuerza letal en contra de los inmigrantes, sin mucho temor de enfrentar consecuencia alguna si logran mantener a los trabajadores inquietos aislados y bajo control.

Seguramente, un millar de manifestantes marchando en Pasco debe tener un efecto aleccionador en los amigos de la

sigue en la página 23