

The

Summer 2015

No. 40

\$2 €2

Internationalist



It Will Take Workers Revolution To End It

Killer Cops, Vigilantes: **Racist Terror Stalks Black America**

Now Black Churches Are Burning... p. 3



Charlotte, NC Fire Department

Bear Creek Road Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC was set ablaze and burned down, June 24.

Internationalist Group Holds Conference.....15
International Perspectives of the LFI..... 36

**Charleston Massacre and Cop Terror:
It's Racist American Capitalism. . . . 88**

Australia \$2, Brazil R\$3, Britain £1.50,
Canada \$2, Europe €2, India Rs. 50,
Japan ¥200, Mexico \$10, Philippines 50 p,
S. Africa R10, S. Korea 2,000 won

In this issue...

Killer Cops, White Supremacists: Racist Terror Stalks Black America	3
Bernie Sanders and the Pressure Politics of the Opportunist Left.....	6
Mexico: Down With Elections Under the Military Boot!.....	8
Letter to the Editor: "Is China Now Capitalist?"	13
Internationalist Group Holds National Conference	15
Document of the First National Conference of the Internationalist Group: The Trotskyist Struggle for International Socialist Revolution.....	16
Fernando López: Comrade, Internationalist, Revolutionary	31
International Perspectives of the League for the Fourth International ...	36
All Honor to Our Comrade Marília, Communist and Poet of Struggle	57
China : Battle Over Capitalist Restoration Looms.....	59
The Bugbear of "Russian Imperialism"	66
For a Scottish Workers Republic in a Socialist Federation of the British Isles.....	78
Charleston Massacre and Cop Terror: It's Racist American Capitalism	88

Subscription blank graphic based on a poster by V.A. Rodchenko, *Books* (1925).

Order Now!

A series of articles that appeared in *Workers Vanguard* when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism, in response to a Maoist anti-Trotsky diatribe. Articles cover permanent revolution, "socialism in one country," the popular front, the struggle for the Fourth International, Mao's China, Trotskyism vs. the SWP, and more.



US\$1

Order from/make checks payable to: Mundial Publications, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, New York 10008, U.S.A.

Visit the League for the Fourth International/ Internationalist Group on the Internet

<http://www.internationalist.org>

Now available on our site:

- Founding Statement of the Internationalist Group
- Declaration of the League for the Fourth International
- Articles from *The Internationalist*
- Articles from *Vanguarda Operária*
- Articles from *El Internacionalista*
- Articles and documents in German, French and Pilipino
- The fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Marxist readings



Visita la página del Grupo Internacionalista en Internet

Visite a página da Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil

- Matérias de *Vanguarda Operária*
- A luta para libertar Mumia Abu-Jamal
- Documentos marxistas sobre a luta pela libertação do negro e da mulher

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), Mark Lazarus, Abram Negrete, 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. 40



1162-M

Summer 2015

It Will Take Workers Revolution To End It Killer Cops, White Supremacists: Racist Terror Stalks Black America



Whitney Curtis for The New York Times

St. Louis County Police prepare to confront protest march over killing of Michael Brown, 13 August 2014.

For Labor/Black/Immigrant Mobilization Against Police Killings

After months of rampaging killer cops came the June 17 Charleston, South Carolina massacre – nine black churchgoers in a Bible study class at the iconic Emanuel AME Church murdered by a white supremacist (see page 88). In the following week, six churches with black congregations have burned. This, too, is hardly new. Between 1995 and 1999, a government task force opened investigations into 827 church burnings and bombings. Then they stopped counting...

The summer of 2014 exploded in massive outrage against the racist murder of black men by the police. First, Eric Garner, choked to death by a swarm of cops in Staten Island, New York in July. Millions saw the assault on a bystander's cellphone video. Then, three weeks later, Michael Brown, shot down by a killer cop in Ferguson, Missouri, his body left in the street for hours as grisly warning by the lily-white police to the mainly black residents of the St. Louis suburb. But the population refused to be intimidated and instead rose up. Even when an army of cops from throughout the region was brought in, along with armored cars and heavy weaponry, and then the state police followed by the National Guard, angry demonstrators refused to leave. This

chilled America's capitalist rulers to the bone: they had been preparing for years to impose martial law in case of urban unrest, but when they brought out all their hardware, it didn't work.

In late autumn it happened again, this time nationwide. When word came on November 24 that a grand jury had let off Darren Wilson, the Ferguson cop who murdered Michael Brown, thousands flooded into the streets. Ferguson was aflame, I-44 shut down in St. Louis, I-580 in Oakland. The next night, tens of thousands, coast-to-coast, blocked highways, tunnels, city centers. Ten days later when the Eric Garner grand jury verdict came down, again with no indictment, there was a repeat. Vast numbers marched in angry defiance of a system where police kill unarmed African Americans with utter abandon and total impunity. By December 13 there were 30,000 in the streets of Washington, D.C. and 50,000 in New York. While many chanted "No justice, no peace," when the Internationalist Group and CUNY Internationalist Clubs in NYC chanted "Only revolution can bring justice," it was widely taken up.

Night after night the mass protests continued in NYC, with die-ins at Grand Central Station, clashes with cops on the

Brooklyn Bridge. The names of Akai Gurley in Brooklyn and 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland were added to the list of victims of racist police murder. Protests became mainstream as Congressional staffers chanted, “Hands up, don’t shoot” outside the U.S. Capitol. New York City Council members chanted Eric Garner’s dying words, “I can’t breathe.” *And then suddenly it all stopped.* Two NYPD officers were shot by an enraged man, driven beyond reason by the orgy of killing by cops, who decided to take a couple with him and then committed suicide. It was certainly convenient for the ruling class, as was the fact that the two dead cops were not white but Latino and Chinese. When New York City mayor Bill de Blasio demanded that the “anti-police” demos stop, many liberal protest organizers complied.

On December 23, a couple thousand people (including the Internationalists) defied the NYC mayor and marched against police murder. Demonstrators still chanted “NYPD, KKK, how many kids did you kill today?” But the huge crowds were gone. The protests had been brought up short, face to face with the capitalist state. “Moderate” demo organizers who were only protesting racist police (which they saw as some “bad apples” rather than the racist system that means systemic police terror) denounced “violence” and stood down or tried to block more militant protests. Meanwhile, the cops were chomping at the bit, going into open rebellion against liberal Democrat de Blasio and itching to carry out mass arrests of hundreds and thousands of demonstrators as they did under Republicans Bloomberg and Giuliani. The naked assertion of *police power* independent of civilian control was an ominous threat to the democratic rights of everyone.¹

As 2014 drew to a close, according to the most detailed account based on publicly published sources, a total of 1,100 people had been killed by the police in the United States.² The actual numbers may be much higher, and there are no official figures since the government relies on very partial voluntary reporting by police departments. But the stark reality is that at least three individuals a day had their lives terminated by the forces of “law and order.” The last to die that year was Kevin Davis, a 44-year-old black worker who lived on the outskirts of Decatur, Georgia. Davis had called the police after being stabbed with a knife by an assailant who fled. When the police arrived, first they shot Davis’ dog and then him. When he was taken to the hospital, police refused to let his family have contact with him until he “expired” two days later (Alternet, 27 January).

Now we are half-way through 2015, and as of this writing (June 26) at least 549 people have been killed by cops, almost exactly the same rate as last year. Another, more elaborate, database of police killings, “The Counted,” has now been set by the U.S. edition of the British newspaper *The Guardian*, which includes information on race and ethnicity, gender, age, whether the victim was armed or unarmed, and other details. This tells us that 29% of those killed by police as of June 1 were black, although African Americans are only 13% of the U.S. population; that one-third of the black victims were unarmed, and two-thirds of unarmed people killed by police were members of minorities; that the average age of a person

killed by police was 37, that 27% had mental health issues and 95% were men. One-third of the women were killed by police in their own home, as was Tanisha Anderson, killed by Cleveland cops only days before they shot Tamir Rice.

So despite the mass protests and pious talk of police “accountability,” nothing has changed. Whether it is unarmed black men murdered by police, like Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Maryland, or the nine church-goers shot by a white-supremacist vigilante at a Bible-study session in Charleston last week, it is clear that murderous white racism is endemic in the United States. Soon another particularly egregious case will grab the headlines, and again there will be angry mass protests. Will they peter out or come to an abrupt end as they did last year with nothing to show for it? At most there may be a few cosmetic, symbolic changes like removing the Confederate battle flag, the banner of the Ku Klux Klan terrorists, that flies at state capitols and is part of state flags. But the racist killing will go on and on ... unless *we* put a stop to it. But how?

Tens of thousands of young people, black, white, Latino and others, and many older people as well, participated in the mass mobilizations last summer and fall. Over and over they chanted “black lives matter,” “hands up, don’t shoot” and “I can’t breathe” – slogans that reflect a sense of anguish and impotence. Many were radicalized by the experience, as they could see that Obama’s America is anything but “post-racial,” and the pretense of democracy is a cruel hoax. For that experience of activism not to turn into an exercise in frustration, like the endless antiwar marches that occur every time U.S. imperialism invades another country, it’s vital to draw the lessons of those protests – what they showed about the potential for struggle, but also what they did not, and could not, accomplish, and why not. It requires an understanding of the system of official and semi-official racist violence and murder that has characterized American capitalism ever since it solidified on the bedrock of slavery, and continues today.

It’s All About the State

Every time there is an upsurge of popular unrest, the question of the state is posed point-blank. In 2011, leaders of Occupy Wall Street argued that beat cops were part of the “99%.” Substituting income statistics for class analysis, they blinded demonstrators to the fact that the police are the armed fist of capital. They kept insisting on this (and tried to stop the Internationalists from chanting “We are all Sean Bell, NYPD go to hell”) even as cops were arresting hundreds on the Brooklyn Bridge. The populist Occupy “movement” disappeared after a few short months, partly due to coordinated national repression orchestrated from Obama’s Department of Homeland Security. More fundamentally, protesters did not come to an understanding of the class nature of the capitalist state, and the fact that it cannot be reformed. Similarly with the abrupt collapse of the mass protests against police murder last December.

Leftists chant “indict, convict, send the killer cops to jail” misleading protesters into thinking this is going to happen, although all of U.S. history shows the contrary. In the exceedingly rare case where a cop does time, it will be a slap on the wrist. And when they add “the whole damn system is guilty as hell” they don’t

¹ See “Police Bonapartism,” at www.internationalist.org.

² See www.killedbypolice.net/kbp2014.html.

say what that system is. Yet for there to be a real struggle against the *systematic* racist police murder it is crucial to understand that this is rooted in racist American capitalism. Chants like “we want freedom, freedom – these racist cops, we don’t need ‘em, need ‘em” suggest that there could be non-racist cops, when the reality is that it is not just a matter of individual attitudes: *all* police are part of a *machine of racist repression*. The rhyming reformism serves to mask the stark reality – as revolutionaries from Marx and Engels to Lenin and Trotsky have stressed – that the state enforces the rule of the economically dominant class.

“Who do you protect, who do you serve?” scream demonstration leaders as cops beat protesters bloody. For would-be socialists to pose this as a question to the cops, even rhetorically, buys into the lie (emblazoned on LAPD patrol cars) that police supposedly protect and serve “the people.” The task of revolutionary Marxists is to tell the truth to the masses, that the police defend the interests of capital. The capitalist-imperialist rulers of the United States enforce their world domination with bloody butchery just as they do inside the U.S. A black U.S. president, Barack Obama, a liberal Democrat, kills Muslims and U.S. citizens with his drones with as little regard for the lives of the oppressed as his Republican predecessor George W. Bush. And their killer cops will keep on killing until their bloody rule is overthrown.

Most of the mobilizations against police murder have been led by liberals, black and white, and reformists – that is, leftists who may call themselves socialist and even communist, but whose actual program is only to reform (and thus ultimately uphold) capitalism. While revolutionaries support genuine reforms (from the minimum wage to the right to same-sex marriage), the idea that state repression can be reformed away is characteristic of *reformists*. One of the problems liberals and reformists face in turning the often massive protests into an ongoing “movement” like the civil rights movement they seek to emulate is the absence of any even remotely credible reform demands. Over the last several decades any number of supposed reforms have been tried and all have failed to even put a dent in the rampant racist police terror.

Demilitarize the police? Akai Gurley, Tanish Anderson, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, and most of those murdered by police have been killed by one or two cops on regular patrol.

Disarm the police? Impossible in racist capitalist America, but beyond that, Eric Garner and 20 years earlier Anthony Baez were killed by a cop’s bare hands.

Dashboard cameras on police cars? When Walter Scott was pulled over in North Charleston on April 4 for a supposed broken taillight, the dashcam showed no such thing – but it didn’t stop him from getting shot in the back and killed by the racist cop.

Body cameras on police officers? This is the latest fad. It didn’t stop the shooting of Eric Harris in Tulsa, Oklahoma on April 2, which was recorded by a bodycam, including the remark by the 73-year-old “reserve” cop that he thought he was firing a Taser.

A new police chief? Under Republican plutocrat Bloomberg New York had Ray Kelly, under liberal Democrat de Blasio it has Bill Bratton, but the killing doesn’t stop. And now the Democratic City Council has voted to hire 1,300 *more* cops than under Bloomberg/Kelly.

A black police chief? A black mayor? Philadelphia has

both, and its “stop and frisk” numbers rival New York’s.

More black police? In the case of Baltimore, on top of a black mayor and police chief, almost half the cops are black, but both black and white officers were guilty of Freddie Gray’s murder.

New police policies? “Stop and frisk” is now officially “reformed,” so now it’s back to “broken windows” – harassing black and Latino youth for minor “quality of life” infractions.

Residency requirements? Instead of holing up in white suburbs like Walnut Creek, California or New York’s Rockland County, police will just congregate in cop enclaves like Howard Beach or Eltingville on Staten Island’s South Shore.

Community policing? So instead of patrolling poor black and Latino areas in convoys, like Israeli occupation forces in the Palestinian West Bank, they will increase the number of cops in permanent outposts while assigning a few community relations officers to coordinate with church leaders ... and the SWAT teams are held in reserve.

Civilian review boards? NYC, Philly and Baltimore all have them, and they’re not only utterly worthless in controlling police violence, they actually serve to legitimize it.

A recent article reviewing the experience of civilian review boards noted that this demand going back to the 1950s and ’60s was “sold by liberal reformers as a sort of societal ‘safety valve’ to prevent civil unrest” (Charles Davis, “America’s historic struggle to control its police,” Salon, 25 February). While right-wingers slammed such toothless boards as a communist plot to undermine America, in Philadelphia, which had a review board, then abolished it in 1969, the “police advisory board” was brought back in 1994 as a way to save the city millions of dollars by preventing complaints from going to court. In New York City, where use of the chokehold has supposedly been banned since 1993, the civilian board received over 1,000 complaints of its use from 2009 to 2013 (*New York Times*, 22 July 2014). Only nine cases were raised with the NYPD brass and in only one case was there any action (loss of vacation days).

The Justice League NYC, a project of The Gathering for Justice, Inc., one of the foundation-funded “non-governmental organizations” (NGOs) that quickly became involved in the protests over police killings, put forward a list of demands including calls for the city and state of New York to “draft legislation to clarify the rules of engagement” and to “create a comprehensive NYPD training program”—as if more training or clearer rules would have prevented the use of the deadly chokehold on Eric Garner which was already against NYPD regulations. As for its call on U.S. attorney general Eric Holder and the Obama administration to “expedite the federal investigation into the death of Eric Garner,” Holder’s “investigation” of Ferguson exonerated the cop who killed Michael Brown!

Militarization of the Police

Washington Post reporter Radley Balko in his book *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America’s Police Forces* (Public Affairs, 2014), devotes 300 pages to chronicling the use of heavily armed SWAT teams bursting into homes, killing anything that moves: pets, young children and older women (like Alberta Spruill in Harlem, who was screaming “I can’t breathe,

continued on page 76

If Donkeys Could Fly...

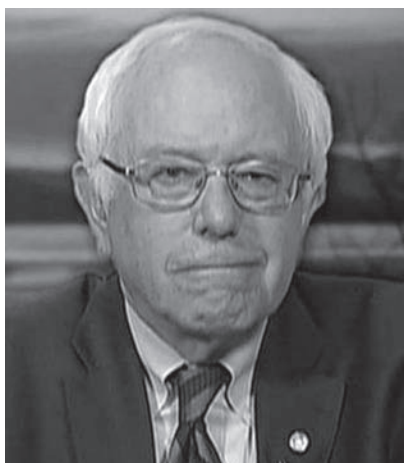
Bernie Sanders and the Pressure Politics of the Opportunist Left

As Barack Obama's second presidential term limps toward the finish line, the promises of "hope" and "change" which his Wall Street sponsors and political marketeers dangled before voters lie in tatters. Bemoaning widespread disillusionment in the American political system is a standard theme from talk-show pundits to academia. The press reports a weighty, "data-driven" Princeton University study finding that the "US is an oligarchy, not a democracy" – oh, what a surprise! – as it is "dominated by a rich and powerful elite." Underlying much of the malaise is the fact that Obama has presided over a continuing economic depression along with the worsening of already spectacular levels of inequality. With Republican flat-earthers sparring over who is the most reactionary of all and warhawk Hillary Clinton dominating the Democratic field, the electoral circus is back again.

The fact is that bourgeois "democracy" is and has always been the class dictatorship of the owners of wealth and property. It's not just about the Koch brothers and Supreme Court decisions declaring corporations to be people. Long ago, Karl Marx "grasped [the] essence of capitalist democracy splendidly when ... he said that the oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class shall represent and repress them," as Russian Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote in *State and Revolution* (1917). Sound familiar?

Entering stage "left" to throw his hat in the ring in this tawdry drama is the senator from Vermont who poses as a loveable progressive, "Bernie" Sanders. Billed as an Independent, Sanders has long been a cog in the Democrats' Congressional machine, including participating in their caucus and committee work. In the 2008 and 2012 elections, he supported Obama, who in turn went to Vermont to campaign for Sanders in 2012. Announcing a bid for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination, Sanders brought in as campaign manager long-time Democratic operative Ted Devine, who got his start in 1988 managing the vice-presidential campaign of Texas Democrat Lloyd Bentsen, notorious for threatening to use nuclear weapons during the Korean War (see the chilling film *Atomic Café*).

Announcing his bid for the Democratic presidential nomination in early May, Sanders grabbed some headlines with the statement: "We need a political revolution in this country involving millions of people who are prepared to stand up and say, enough is enough, and I want to help lead that effort."



Campaign of Democratic Party "socialist" Bernie Sanders (supporter of war on Afghanistan and legalizing NSA domestic spying) aims to bring disaffected "progressives" back to the Democratic fold to vote for war hawk Hillary Clinton.

And what kind of "revolution" does he have in mind? Why, voting for the current government party, the Democrats. For her part, Hillary Clinton tweeted: "I agree with Bernie. Focus must be on helping America's middle class. GOP would hold them back. I welcome him to the race."

Sanders stated categorically that he will, as always, endorse whomever the Democrats eventually choose as their candidate for commander-in-chief of U.S. imperialism. Asked by ABC's George Stephanopoulos, "But if you lose in this nomination fight, will you support the Democratic nominee?" Sanders replied, "Yes. I have in the past as well." Stephanopoulos: "Not going to run as an independent?" Sanders: "Absolutely not. I've been very clear about that." Like innumerable "progressive" campaign bids of the past – such as Jesse Jackson's 1980s Rainbow Coalition, Howard Dean (2004) and Dennis Kucinich (2008), to name a few – the central political function of the Sanders campaign is to round up votes from disaffected voters, keep them in the Democratic fold, and deliver them to the eventual nominee.

It's all a con game, and the first to fall for it is the opportunist left. Their appetites are whetted by the fact that "Bernie" Sanders, along with his man of the people image, sometimes styles himself a "democratic socialist." In a country where the s-word is a no-no for politicians, this is a bit of a novelty. But it boils down to shopworn calls to "tax the rich," a dash of trust-busting rhetoric like that arch-imperialist "progressive" Theodore Roosevelt, an occasional shout-out to the thoroughly capitalist "Scandinavian model," and a heavy dose of "anti-totalitarian" China-bashing.

Meanwhile, Sanders, the Democratic Party “socialist” and reputed antiwar candidate, has repeatedly voted for U.S. imperialist wars. He poses as a defender of civil liberties but has voted for laws extending and legalizing U.S. domestic spying on the citizenry. And this “independent” toes the Democratic Party line whenever it counts. But that hasn’t stopped various self-styled socialists, would-be radicals, former Occupy Wall Street activists and assorted other reformist left groups from jostling each other as they try to climb on the Bernie bandwagon. Challenged on Sanders’ “socialist” moniker a while back, former Vermont governor and then chairman of the national Democratic Party Howard Dean said on “Meet the Press” (22 May 2005):

“Bernie can call himself anything he wants. He is basically a liberal Democrat, and he is a Democrat that – he runs as an Independent because he doesn’t like the structure and the money that gets involved.... The bottom line is that Bernie Sanders votes with the Democrats 98 percent of the time.”

A “Critical” Voice for U.S. Imperialism

The pretensions of Bernie Sanders to be a leftist, let alone a socialist, are a joke. His cheerleaders of the pseudo-left may present him as a friend of “working folks,” but the real record of the Vermont senator is no laughing matter. As a “critical” voice of support to U.S. imperialism, Sanders is an enemy of workers and the oppressed world-wide.

Let’s start with his reputation as an “antiwar” politician. This takes a lot of chutzpah. Yes, he declined to vote for the first Gulf War in 1991 under Republican George Bush the First, as did most Democrats in Congress. But he then supported the murderous “U.N.” sanctions against Iraq which according to the authoritative British medical journal *Lancet* led to up to a million deaths, including over 500,000 children. Once Democrat Bill Clinton was president, Sanders voted for U.S. intervention in Somalia (1993) and Clinton’s war on Yugoslavia (1999). In the wake of 9/11, Sanders voted for the open-ended Authorization for the Use of Military Force, and has repeatedly voted for military appropriations for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

Co-sponsoring a 2007 resolution requiring congressional approval before military action against Iran, Sanders stated: “America’s reputation internationally has been severely damaged and critical military, diplomatic, and intelligence resources have been diverted from the war in Afghanistan – a war I supported, and a country this administration has increasingly neglected.”¹ Currently Sanders is calling on key U.S. ally Saudi Arabia (which has beheaded 85 people so far this year) to run the war against Islamic State. Last July, Sanders joined the other 99 senators in passing a resolution backing Israel’s murderous invasion of Gaza.²

Like his fellow senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Sanders was involved in negotiations leading to the release of U.S. Agency for International Development “contractor”

Alan Gross from imprisonment in Cuba last December, and met with him on the island. Gross was on a spy mission for Washington handing out communications devices to pro-U.S. “dissidents.” The release of Gross was part of an agreement to restore the diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, freeing the last of the Cuban Five who courageously infiltrated gusano terrorist groups in Miami. But while stating that he favors allowing travel to Cuba, Sanders voted in 2001 to maintain the travel ban until Cuba “has released all political prisoners, and extradited all individuals sought by the U.S. on charges of air piracy, drug trafficking and murder.” This is a direct threat to Assata Shakur and others who fled the U.S.’ war on black radicals in the 1970s.

Sanders has also repeatedly supported protectionist and other reactionary measures against China, in line with the Democrats’ saber-rattling campaign against the Chinese deformed workers state.

On the domestic front, an article in *Counterpunch* (27–29 June 2014) noted that while Sanders voted against the original U.S.A. PATRIOT Act legislation, in 2006 he voted for “legislation that made the remaining fourteen provisions of the Patriot Act permanent and extended the authority of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to conduct ‘roving wiretaps’ and access certain business records....” Similarly, “Sanders voted against the original legislation that created the Department of Homeland Security, but by 2006 he had joined the majority of Congress in passing continued funding of that agency.” In July 2014, Sanders was a co-sponsor of the USA FREEDOM Act, which “is being hyped as a prohibition of the N.S.A.’s controversial mass surveillance practices, but it actually extends the PATRIOT Act for years and opens up new avenues for more invasive forms of government spying” (*The Hill*, 21 May).

With Obama racking up new records for the number of people deported (2.5 million so far during his presidency), Sanders has repeatedly used populist demagoguery railing against immigrant workers. In an official statement congratulating the Senate Judiciary Committee on its anti-immigrant immigration “reform” bill of 2013, Sanders “supported provisions in the measure that would strengthen border enforcement, prevent unscrupulous employers from hiring illegal workers and give legal status to foreign workers needed to keep Vermont’s dairy farms and apple orchards in business. Sanders, however, expressed strong concern that large American corporations in the midst of very high unemployment were using immigration reform to lower wages and benefits for American workers.”

Pseudo-Socialist Left Debates the Best Way to Chase After “Bernie”

Before Sanders officially threw his hat in the ring, Progressive Democrats of America set up a Facebook page called “Run Bernie Run! As a Democrat.” Soon “The People for Bernie Sanders” was set up by Occupy activists together with members of the “Left Labor Project,” CODEPINK and

continued on page 10

¹ http://www.ontheissues.org/International/Bernie_Sanders_War+_Peace.htm

² See the video showing the senator yelling “shut up” at critics who protested this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vf2cCdwwgoM>

From Election Boycott to Nationwide Strike

Mexico: Down With Elections Under the Military Boot!

**For Workers Action to Defend the Teachers of the CNTE and CETEG!
Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!**

MEXICO CITY, June 5 – The crisis in national politics that erupted with the police massacre of the *normalista* (rural teachers college) students in Iguala, Guerrero has deepened on the eve of Mexico's midterm elections. Parents of the 43 kidnapped students from the Escuela Normal of Ayotzinapa (and three others who were murdered on the spot) have called for an active boycott of the polls in defiance of the murderous government. Dissident teachers organized in the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (CNTE), principally in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chiapas and Michoacán, have joined the mobilizations to stop the electoral farce with the demand to annul the infamous education “reform” that would persecute teachers and undermine public education.

Now when according to a poll commissioned by the Mexican House of Representatives (*Milenio*, 4 June), two-thirds of the population says that neither the current government of the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), nor its predecessors, nor any popularly elected authority has done anything for their welfare, and three-quarters of Mexicans say that the federal, state and local governments represent their interests “poorly” or “not at all,” the boycott has taken on a mass character in the states where social struggles have been sharpest. Since the beginning of this week, Oaxaca has been convulsed by the strike of Section 22 of the CNTE, which has occupied offices of the National Electoral Institute (INE) and paralyzed strategic points throughout the state. Meanwhile, highway blockades are everywhere in Guerrero and Michoacán.

Some of the most notable events in Oaxaca:

- Hundreds of teachers cut off the Oaxaca airport, and set up barricades cutting the highway to Puerto Ángel and blocking a Pemex (national oil company) fuel depot;

- For days, teachers blockaded the Pemex refinery at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as well as sacking and burning election materials in Juchitán and the other ten district headquarters of the INE; and now,



Reforma

Teachers of Section 22 CNTE confront army in Huajuapán, Oaxaca, June 6.

- Section 22 took over the hydroelectric plant at Temescal, in the Cuenca region, that supplies power to southern and central states of the country.

At the same time in Guerrero, teachers belonging to the CETEG (the state affiliate of the CNTE) took over the state Congress building while Ayotzinapa students on their way to a demonstration in the state capitol Chilpancingo were denied entry to the city by police. Students and parents of the disappeared also blocked highways in Tixtla and Tlapa. In Chiapas, members of Section 7 of the CNTE blocked the entrances to the capital city of Tuxtla Gutiérrez and took over two district offices of the INE. In Michoacán, teachers of Section 18 occupied the state elections offices, while rural police blockaded the highways leading to the Tierra Caliente demanding the release of hundreds of *autodefensas* (rural paramilitaries financed by ranchers) arrested in 2014.

In a vain attempt to cool the protests, the government of president Enrique Peña Nieto (PRI) authorized the Secretary of Public Education to indefinitely suspend the phony teacher evaluations. This provoked grumblings from such notable pedagogical “experts” as senators of the PRD (Party of Democratic Revolution) and the PAN (National Action Party), the smug, fat-headed anchor of Televisa’s evening news, Joaquín López-Dóriga, and the War Secretary, General Salvador Cienfuegos. However, in negotiations with the Secretary of the



Some 500 teachers of Section 22 (Oaxaca state) blocked the Pemex (state oil company) refinery in Salina Cruz for days as part of a boycott of the June 7 elections called for by the CNTE (National Coordination of Education Workers) and the parents of the rural teachers college students of Ayotzinapa who were disappeared and murdered last September.

Interior, the CNTE insisted that the abusive “evaluations” be canceled, that the disappeared *normalistas* be returned alive, and the rest of its ten-point list of demands. Late today, the federal government announced that it was sending hundreds of troops to Oaxaca to “guarantee the vote.”

In this worst crisis of bourgeois “governability” that Mexico has seen in the last half century, the Grupo Internacionalista (GI) stands with, and has participated in, the struggle of the teachers and parents of the disappeared students against the fraudulent elections, at the same time as we warn that an electoral boycott, as justified as it may be, cannot put an end to the bloodbath and the assault on teachers. If mass action is limited to the confines of the mostly rural states of the southwest, the bosses’ government can hold out, and wait for a more propitious time to give the death blow. As we have emphasized since the beginning of the protests, as well as during the “teacher insurgency” of 2013, what’s needed is a working-class mobilization throughout the country, a *nationwide strike* drawing in key sectors of the Mexican proletariat, *on the road to a socialist revolution to bring down the capitalist regime* that has turned the country into a giant cemetery.

During the past week a brigade of GI supporters in Oaxaca joined in a mobilization to support the strike of health care workers in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. They distributed a leaflet calling to “generalize [this struggle] into a public sector workers revolt, in which other sectors must play a fundamental role,” including electrical workers, oil workers, “and the militant teachers who are currently on battle footing.” They also went to CNTE Section 22’s blockade at the nearby refinery of Salina Cruz, where they urged the teachers to call on the oil workers to join them in occupying the plants. At the same time, our comrades (some of whom are health care workers themselves) took part in the blockade of the Pemex depot in the Central Valley.

In Tijuana, comrades of the GI have participated in the

teachers mobilizations, notably the strike in April-May that over three weeks, against the disastrous measures of the education counter-reform. This week, they visited the teachers encampment accompanied by students from the Autonomous University of Baja California (UABC), insisting on the need for a joint defense of education. The GI is leading a struggle against the attempt to raise student fees at the UABC. Spokespersons of the GI emphasized to the press that these exclusionary fees make it impossible for the children of *maquiladora* workers or farm laborers of San Quintín to study at the university (*La Prensa San Diego*, 5 June).

The *normalistas*, teachers and workers of Guerrero have seen with their own eyes that all of the bourgeois political formations are co-responsible for the massacres and starvation policies. The supposed “democratic transition” after seven decades of rule by the PRI is a fraud. Under the presidencies of the clerical-rightist PAN, in compliance with the orders coming from U.S. imperialism, the “war on drugs” was dialed up, leaving a toll of 100,000 dead. As for the PRD, its governor of Guerrero, Ángel Aguirre Rivero, began his six-year term with the massacre of *normalistas* in 2011, and ended it with the abominable crime in Iguala, ordered by his party comrade, Mayor José Luis Abarca.

The three bosses’ parties who have banded together in the “Pact for Mexico” began their coalition government with the approval of constitutional amendments to enable the privatizing “reforms” of public education. For his part, ex-PRI and ex-PRD politician Andrés Manuel López Obrador (known as AMLO), whose Movement of National Regeneration (Morena) presents itself as the “popular” opposition to the PRI-PAN-PRD triad (and its satellites like the PT “labor party”), initially put forward for governor of Guerrero one Lázaro Mazón, the political godfather of the murderous mayor Abarca. Nor should we forget that President Peña Nieto’s first chief of national security, Admiral Mondragón y Kalb, who unleashed the repression against students and teachers, was proposed for the same position by AMLO during the latter’s last presidential campaign.

The fact is that all the governments of the last century, following the aborted Mexican Revolution of 1910-1917, have been *bonapartist* or semi-bonapartist, basing themselves on the military-police apparatus. We have pointed out time and again that Mexico is the world champion of electoral fraud, and not by chance. The decrepit capitalist regime cannot tolerate even a bourgeois democratic regime, which would expose the hated ruling class to mortal danger. As revolutionary Marxists, we insist that the working class and the oppressed should give no



Students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College confront police blocking their way into Chilpancingo, the capital of Guerrero state, where they sought to protest the electoral farce, June 3.

support whatsoever to any bourgeois parties or candidates. The “popular fronts” headed by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas (founder of the PRD) and AMLO, which have chained the workers to sectors of the bourgeoisie, have only served to derail workers’ struggles.

Today the brave students of Ayotzinapa and the battle-hardened Oaxaca and Guerrero teachers are mobilizing to stop these fraudulent elections, taking place under the rifles of the military. On the other hand, the new Movement of Socialist Workers (MTS, formerly LTS) is calling to go out and vote to “annul your vote,” by writing some anti-government message on one’s ballot paper. The difference evidently stems from the fact that the MTS would like to participate in the bourgeois electoral circus as a recognized National Political Association (APN). We of the GI do not reject on principle the use of capitalist elections as a platform for revolutionary propaganda, but the requirements of the bourgeois electoral apparatus (to swear fealty to the bourgeois constitution, hand over lists of members and sympathizers, as well as photocopies of their voting credentials, including photos and home addresses) accepted by the MTS demonstrate a hair-raising faith in the bourgeois state.

Instead of calling for a mobilization aiming at the formation of a workers and peasants (and, in states like Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas, indigenous) government, the MTS and other pseudo-socialist groups have climbed on the bourgeois bandwagon headed by Bishop Raúl Vera, the priest Solalinde and the poet Javier Sicilia, who raise the demand for a *constituent assembly* to “re-found the nation,” (see our article, “Massacre in Mexico: It Was the Murderous Capitalist State,” *The Internationalist* No. 39, April-May 2015). The same refrain is repeated by the Revolutionary Popular Front (FPR) of the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), which has a notable presence in Oaxaca. The arch-Stalinists of the FPR, who in

2012 called to vote for Gabino Cué for governor and even participated in his bourgeois government, today call for no vote to the PRI, PAN or PRD (thus leaving the door open for Morena) and to struggle for a new constituent assembly.

But the pressing problems facing the workers of Mexico will not be solved with another bourgeois “Magna Carta.” The current Political Constitution of the United States of Mexico establishes many rights (such as free education at all levels, the right to the land, to strike, to nationalized ownership of natural resources, among others), which are negated in practice. Instead of proclaiming another misleading document that leaves the capitalist system intact, the GI seeks to build a revolutionary workers party like Lenin’s Bolsheviks, armed with

Leon Trotsky’s theory and program of Permanent Revolution, holding that in the imperialist epoch, even bourgeois revolutionary measures can only be achieved through the seizure of power by the working class, at the head of the exploited peasantry and all the oppressed, which will begin the socialist revolution. Join us! ■

Sanders...

continued from page 7

others, who resurrected the tired lingo of class collaboration to appeal to “progressive forces to unite behind Sanders” in the 2016 campaign. *Jacobin* magazine (1 May) chimed in with a piece by its founding editor, Bhaskar Sunkara, urging: “We should welcome Bernie Sanders’ presidential run, while being aware of its limits.”

As for avowed socialists, with their ever-so-slightly-different formulas chasing after a hoped-for new “movement,” the social-democrats trailing after the Democratic Party “socialist” provide a snapshot of what is wrong with what passes for a left in this country. Two groups that are relatively prominent on the left – Socialist Alternative (SAlt) and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) – stand out, although many other organizations share much the same outlook.

Feeling it had broken into big-time politics since the election of Kshama Sawant as a Seattle city council member, SAlt jumped to get a head start in the Bernie biz over a year ago. In an article hopefully titled “Bernie Sanders for President in 2016?” *Socialist Alternative* newspaper (16 April 2014) wrote that Sanders says that “he wants a dialogue with progressive activists before deciding on whether to run for president and whether he should stand as an independent or within the framework of the Democratic Party.” It helpfully urged Bernie to call a “national conference of progressive, community, and labor organizations” which, “we hope,” would generate



Social democrats go gaga for liberal Democrat Sanders.

enough “momentum” to “persuade Bernie Sanders to take the historic step of running as an independent left candidate for the presidency in 2016.”

Socialist Alternative was practically begging this bourgeois politician and de facto Democrat to run for president, as it earlier did with Ralph Nader. SAlt supporters pushed a Facebook page called “Bernie Sanders, Go Green” (as in Green Party), claiming that this could “radically alter American politics.” To be clear, the Green Party is a minor capitalist party that serves as a home for homeless liberal Democrats who feel that their party has abandoned them. If SAlt was disappointed in its hopes for a Green capitalist Sanders campaign, it nevertheless erupted in rhapsody when he announced his bid: “Bernie Sanders Calls for Political Revolution Against Billionaires,” it wrote (9 May), reveling in the “tremendous wave of enthusiasm” the announcement of his presidential campaign allegedly unleashed.

To cover its rear quarters, the *Socialist Alternative* article added: “Campaign Needs to Build Independent Political Power.” SAlt states that it considers it a “mistake” for Sanders to run in the Democratic primaries, adding that when he fails to win the Democratic nomination, “Sanders should continue running in the general election as an independent.” It waxed poetic about how this fantasy could generate “a huge impetus towards the building of a new political force to represent the 99%” – the populist catch-phrase of the short-lived Occupy “movement.” But it all depends on “how much pressure Sanders comes under from his own supporters.” It’s all about pressure, you see. Yet, Democrat or not, SAlt vows, “We will be campaigning with Sanders supporters against the corporate politicians....”

If donkeys could fly, pressure would transform the likes of Bernie Sanders into the opposite of what is: a capitalist Democratic politician. So these fake-leftists whip up enthusiasm for “Bernie” supposedly to pressure him to the left, as

he helps corral votes for Hillary while ostensibly pressuring *her* to the left. This is the logic of a pressure group on the Democrats, always on the lookout for new opportunities to work with representatives of this party of capitalist oppression. And as a sop for the ranks, it peddles evergreen hopes of ever-bigger “success” through class collaboration. That is precisely how SAlt’s Sawant has functioned in Seattle. Generating illusions in the Democratic campaign of Bernie Sanders is just the most recent embodiment of the policy followed by generations of leftists in the United States who have helped channel discontent and disillusionment back into capitalist politics.

Among the fond hopes voiced by Socialist Alternative is that, if only he would follow their advice, “Sanders’ campaign could play a critical role in helping to lay the basis for a new political party, a third party.” SAlt’s fawning on “Bernie” has provided an opening for the International Socialist Organization, which was caught flat-footed by Sawant’s win in Seattle, an opportunity to pose as a “socialist” alternative

to Socialist Alternative. The ISO argues that Sanders “could have set a very different example, with a far greater chance of success, if he ran for governor in Vermont against the Democratic Party’s incumbent.... In so doing, Sanders could have built momentum for a national third-party alternative to represent workers and the oppressed” (*Socialist Worker*, 5 May).

So for the ISO it’s momentum and more momentum, adding helpfully: “If Sanders had his heart set on national politics, he could have run for president like Ralph Nader as an independent, opposing both capitalist parties, the Democrats and Republicans.” Meanwhile, Ashley Smith, a leading ISOer, gushes about Sanders that “he’s really electrified a layer of newly-radicalizing activists and people on the left,” that “he’s really hitting on all the key notes, and I really identify with all the people who’ve been galvanized by his campaign,” but that “he’s making a mistake in running inside the Democratic party” (Real News Network, 26 May).

So the distinction between SAlt’s approach and that of the ISO amounts to very small potatoes indeed. After all, both fervently threw themselves into supporting the “independent” capitalist campaign of the anti-immigrant millionaire Ralph Nader (see “Capitalist Nader’s ‘Socialist’ Foot Soldiers,” *Revolution* No. 2, October 2004). Both yearn for a “third party,” while presenting this as somehow innately radical. ISO leaders have repeatedly run on the Green ticket, from New York to California. While claiming to oppose the Democrats, the ISO celebrated Obama’s election in 2008 as a “watershed event,” emblazoning its journal with his campaign slogan “Yes We Can!” (*International Socialist Review*, January 2009).

Both SAlt and the ISO are in the business of tailing after whatever excites liberal Democrats, throwing in a little talk of “independence” to cover their fundamental allegiance to capitalist politics.

What's Trotsky Got to Do With It?

Groups like Socialist Alternative and the ISO present themselves as standing in the tradition of Marx and even, when it suits them, of Lenin and Trotsky. Yet both groups teach their supporters to dismiss as “ultra-leftism” the most basic ideas of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, starting with the most fundamental of all: that Marxism stands for *class* politics. For those whose guiding light is “relating to people where they’re at” rather than telling the unvarnished truth to the masses, the very idea of a *class line* in politics is sneeringly derided as sectarian. Yet so long as working people are tied to the parties of the bourgeoisie, whether red, blue or green, they will be chained to the capitalist system of war, poverty and racism.

The question of third parties is a very old one in American politics. Long before “Bernie” came “Teddy” Roosevelt’s 1912 Progressive Party campaign, with a raft of other “third party” capitalist candidates before and since. For Marxists, the fundamental question is not how many parties there are, but what class they represent. While liberals and reformists measure a candidate on a sliding scale of “progressiveness,” *Marxists oppose support to any capitalist candidate or party*. The bottom line for revolutionary communists, as opposed to these social-democratic reformists, is the political independence of the working class.

Marx was emphatic: “Our politics must be working-class politics. The workers’ party must never be the tagtail of any bourgeois party; it must be independent and have its own policy,” he proclaimed in a September 1871 speech to the First International. The following year, he and Friedrich Engels wrote: “Against the collective power of the propertied classes the working class cannot act, as a class, except by constituting itself into a political party, distinct from, and opposed to, all old parties formed by the propertied classes” (“Resolution on the Establishment of Working-Class Parties,” September 1872).

And Trotsky? The ISO has been playing around with talk of Trotsky and Trotskyism in recent years, though its political record and tradition stand entirely counterposed to what the founder of the Fourth International stood for. Meanwhile, those who diligently search SAlt literature can find the occasional reference to Trotsky there.³ Leftists who actually want to be Trotskyists should check out what he had to say on “third parties” in the U.S. Early on in its degeneration, the U.S. Commu-

nist Party got sucked into a “Third Party Alliance” which paved the way for the “independent” Progressive Party presidential campaign of Wisconsin governor Robert La Follette in 1924. (For details on this episode, see Bryan D. Palmer, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* [2007].)

In his fundamental work against Stalinist opportunism, *The Third International After Lenin* (1928), Trotsky denounced how “the young and weak American Communist Party [was drawn into] the senseless and infamous adventure of creating a ‘Farmer-Labor party’ around La Follette.” There can be no two-class party, Trotsky insisted. “The misfortune lies precisely in the fact that the epigones of Bolshevik strategy extol maneuvers and flexibility... as the quintessence of this strategy, thereby tearing them away from their historical axis and principled foundation and turning them to unprincipled combinations which, only too often, resemble a squirrel whirling in its cage.” Indeed, “it was not flexibility that served (nor should it serve today) as the basic trait of Bolshevism,” Trotsky insisted, “but rather *granite hardness*” in the defense of basic class principles, beginning with the revolutionary political independence of the working class.

Trotsky’s 1928 document – smuggled out of Russia by veteran Communist James P. Cannon, which laid the basis for the establishment of the Trotskyist movement in this country – could have been describing SAlt, the ISO and others who justify each new unprincipled maneuver with the claim that it is justified by the need for tactical flexibility.

In 1948, the long-since Stalinized and thoroughly reformist CP backed the “independent” Progressive Party campaign of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s former Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace. U.S. Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon was categorical:

“The Wallace party must be opposed and denounced by every class criterion.... Its differences with the Republican and Democratic parties are purely tactical. There is not a trace of a principled difference anywhere. And by principled difference I mean a class difference.... Bourgeois parties are not the arena for our operation. Our specific task is the class mobilization of the workers against not only the two old parties, but any other capitalist parties which might appear.”

This is the program of authentic Trotskyism which the Internationalist Group stands on in fighting for a *revolutionary workers party*. If the revolutionary party must be “the memory of the working class,” opportunist pseudo-socialists bank on people having a short memory. The allegedly historic Bernie Sanders campaign will go down in history as yet another episode in ruling-class efforts to deceive and subjugate the workers and oppressed in the service of the Democratic Party. The response of the opportunist left is another chapter in its sorry record of doing the donkey work for such campaigns. The work of building a party dedicated to leading socialist revolution depends on sharp *class* demarcation from every form of bourgeois politics, even when dressed up in “socialist” colors. ■

³ The actual politics of both groups are thoroughly social-democratic. The politics of the International Socialist Organization are derived from the current led by the British ex-Trotskyist Tony Cliff, whose “state capitalist” theories served as a “left” cover for support to the anti-Soviet Cold War. Others among the ISO leadership came out of the current founded by Max Shachtman, who denounced Trotsky for defending the USSR in WWII and became a leading right-wing social democrat. Socialist Alternative was established by U.S. supporters of another British social-democratic current, the heirs of Ted Grant, which carried out decades-long “entrism” in Her Majesty’s British Labour Party, claims that police and prison guards are part of the workers movement, and proposed establishing socialism through an act of parliament.

Letter to the Editor: “Is China Now Capitalist?”

20 May 2015

To the Editors:

Both *The Internationalist* and the *WV* [*Workers Vanguard*, newspaper of the Spartacist League] arrived the same day, and I was hoping that with the plethora of news articles reporting the communist elite to be the richest exploiters of Chinese workers at least one of the papers would explain how they can still defend their earlier assertions that China is not capitalist.

As the transition becomes increasingly solidified, it does not appear that China will provide the dramatic (and convenient) Russian-style name change that made it possible to claim 1991-92 as the point of change for something that actually occurred circa 1989.

As a reader of the SL press since 1974, and yours since its foundation, I've always supported much of your politics, and regard both groups as the only entities I know of in this country that have a valid claim to be called Marxist. My central criticism is that both organizations have refused to acknowledge that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary from the standpoint of Marxism – note, that is, the standpoint of Marxism. That does not mean a reversion to capitalism, just that it degraded, much like the half life of an element changes from one substance to another, from that first step toward communism in Russia to the miserable form we've seen until recently. We call that degradation Stalinism, and in that it still is a form of communism, it remained worthy of support against all forms of capitalism.

The *WV* has at times published articles stating that Stalinism is counter-revolutionary only to later print retractions. More recently something by Max Shachtman was published wherein he stated it was counter-revolutionary, and since *WV* didn't state their disapproval, I wondered if this might be some sort of “Chinese” way to gradually institute a change in position. In arguing my position with SL members some years ago I definitely detected some distaste in being stuck with defending an increasingly absurd position.

I realize that changing such a critical political position means a fundamental re-studying of the period immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution, but with world capitalism being in a permanent crisis phase, and its rulers gradually enacting police state measures for crises to come, it's imperative that authentic Marxism comes to the forefront of any movement for change because it is the only politics that has the solution.

Below are statements I believe support my thesis that China is now a capitalist state. I believe your readers deserve a clear statement of the IG's current viewpoint on this issue. I'll be checking your website periodically.

Yours For an Effective Revolutionary Organization, I am –
Jim Pangrazio

China now capitalist:

– Wealth accumulated by Chinese capitalists now theirs to be sent abroad for investment, or stashed away for personal use. Wealth also passed along through inheritance to family

members. The most prominent capitalists are directly linked to the communist elite. That includes Wang Jialin, the richest (\$35 billion) capitalist and communist in China. The transition to capitalism was engineered entirely by the Stalinist elite.

– The Chinese economy is now a market economy. Central planning no longer prevails. In the current world economic crisis the state apparatus makes various adjustments in ways identical to any capitalist state, and has no further control of the economy than they do – thus, the constant necessity for adjustments as the state tries to influence the moving targets of an irrational market economy. Only a third of the economy is still in state hands. Recent reports have the state instituting market-like controls in state industries to make them easily privatized in future.

– Basic needs, like education and health care, that were once provided by the state have now been largely abandoned. Workers and peasants now must pay significant sums for education and health. That in part forced the peasantry into wage labor. The Chinese state forced a large number of peasants off their communal land for the same purpose as the enclosure system in England – To provide wage labor for growing capitalist industries, and to use those lands for other purposes.

– To prevent any possible threat of PLA soldiers maintaining a loyalty to workers and peasants (as some did in 1989), Chinese rulers have increased the income of military recruits at least three times more than the Tiananmen period. Pay is so high that the military is now largely voluntary with bribes up to \$16,000 required just to be able to pass the recruit test.

– Recently Chinese rulers announced the formation of a Chinese dominated World Bank equivalent for Asia. Most of the major European nations agreed to join. The US was upset because of the competition but later said it would also participate. Of course, the purpose of both banks is to improve the rate of exploitation of poorer nations by loans for infrastructure improvements. China has been doing much the same for years in Africa. Recently it announced \$50 billions in loans and grants to Brazil for the same purpose.

***The Internationalist* replies:** The class nature of China is one of the key issues facing revolutionary Marxists today. While most bourgeois economists, imperialist governments and financial institutions, and following their lead the bulk of the left internationally, label it capitalist, we hold that the People's Republic of China continues to be a bureaucratically deformed workers state, albeit one with deep and dangerous capitalist inroads. We defend China against imperialist threats and encroachment and against counterrevolution, both internal and external, while fighting for a proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy which endangers the remaining gains of the revolution. This requires the construction of a Chinese Trotskyist party as part of a reformed Fourth International.

Our basic analysis is laid out our article, “Where Is China Going? Workers Political Revolution vs. Capitalist Counter-revolution” (*The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December

1998).¹ Events since that time have confirmed our analysis and programmatic conclusions, and we continue to stand on them. The 2015 document on “International Perspectives of the League for the Fourth International,” issued in conjunction with the recent National Conference of the Internationalist Group, contains a section on China reaffirming and updating our assessment. That document is reprinted in this issue, beginning on page 36, and the section on China begins on page 50. In addition, we are reprinting a document adopted at the July 2012 fusion conference of the Internationalist Group and the Portland Trotskyist Study Group, “China : Battle Over Capitalist Restoration Looms,” beginning on page 59. We refer readers to those documents for our refutation of claims that China is capitalist.

In response to particular points raised in reader Pan-grazio’s letter, he sums them up with the formula “Stalinism is counterrevolutionary.” Reducing the question to this formula conflates the anti-Marxist, counterrevolutionary program and ideology of Stalinism as a political current with the nature of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste which sits atop and feeds off the material foundations of the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed *workers states*. Trotsky insisted, over and over, on the dual role, function, position and character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which was key to understanding the nature of the Soviet Union under Stalin and his heirs. As he noted in “The Class Nature of the Soviet State” (October 1933), the bureaucracy “defends the proletarian dictatorship with its own methods; but these methods are such as facilitate the victory of the enemy tomorrow. Whoever fails to understand this dual role of Stalinism in the USSR has understood nothing.”

Stalin and his collaborators carried out a *political* counter-revolution but still depended for their existence on the social and economic foundations of proletarian rule even as they undermined it. This understanding lies at the heart of the Trotskyist defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism in spite of and against the Stalinist parasites who endangered its very existence with their bureaucratic misrule and attempts to conciliate imperialism. As we have reiterated, perhaps the greatest danger posed by the “China is capitalist” line borrowed from the bourgeoisie is that it would paralyze the working class, in China and worldwide, when the showdown with actual counterrevolution comes. We saw how leftists who called the USSR capitalist hailed the Yeltsin-Bush coup of August 1991 that led to the final destruction of the Soviet workers state that issued from the 1917 October Revolution.

This issue is directly relevant today as Trotskyists defend China against U.S. imperialism as the Pentagon steps up its provocations in the South China Sea. And using Trotsky’s analogy between the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy at the head of a workers state with the labor bureaucracy that hamstring but derives its privileges from its position atop the trade unions, we face this question here as well as we defend the unions against capitalist attack, no matter how corrupt and sellout the misleaders. Of course, the same pseudo-socialists who refused to defend the Soviet Union during the Cold War claiming it was capitalist are regularly running off to the capitalist courts to sue the unions.

Our reader points to the accumulation of tremendous wealth by Chinese capitalists, some of whom are members of the Communist Party. We have underlined the tremendous danger this represents for the workers state. A number are real estate speculators while others employ thousands of workers, and their presence greatly enhances pro-capitalist elements *within* the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, the widespread corruption and undermining of key social gains including education and health care inevitably undercut defense against counterrevolution among working people who must now pay directly for those services. All these phenomena show how the Stalinists’ reactionary policies threaten the economic foundations of the regime they preside over – which the jailing and even execution of some notoriously avaricious bureaucrats or billionaires will do little to change. They do not, however, show that the Stalinists had carried out a social counterrevolution.

The claim that the Chinese economy is now a market economy, that central planning no longer prevails, that only a third of the economy is in state hands, and “[i]n the current world economic crisis the state apparatus makes various adjustments in ways identical to any capitalist state, and has no further control of the economy than they do” is simply false. We have explained many of the particulars in the documents published in this issue, but the fact that in 2009 when the effects of the world capitalist economic crisis hit, China’s gross domestic product grew at a rate of 9.6% (and industrial production shot up by almost 20%) while the GDP in every single advanced capitalist country plummeted² shows that the Chinese economy is not dominated by capitalist market forces. When exports dried up, the bureaucracy simply ordered the banks and ministries to step up spending on infrastructure and industrial production, which they did. Meanwhile, Chinese workers’ real wages increased sharply during this period, partly to stimulate demand for consumer goods and partly due to the bureaucracy’s fear of worker unrest. In the capitalist countries, workers’ incomes fell sharply.

The reader is correct that *Workers Vanguard* and the Spartacist League have waffled back and forth on the nature of Stalinism, specifically over the key question of whether the Stalinist bureaucracy has the social cohesion and clear class interest to “lead” a counterrevolution. We have documented these repeated turnabouts in several articles, including “Stalinists Led the Counterrevolution? ICL Between Shachtman and Trotsky,” *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001; “ICL Still Caught Between Shachtman and Trotsky,” *The Internationalist* No. 11, Summer 2001; and “Post-Soviet SL/ICL: New Zigzags on the Centrist Road,” *The Internationalist* No. 19, Summer 2004. These periodic line changes were generally fueled by factional considerations, either externally (against us) or internally, rather than new analyses of the class forces. The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International, in contrast, have remained steadfast in our insistence that that Stalinist bureaucrats, for all their corruption and undermining of the workers state, are a contradictory parasitic layer, and that the fundamental battle over counterrevolution will be between the proletariat and capitalist imperialism. ■

¹ Available on the Internet at <http://www.internationalist.org/Internationalist06web.pdf>

² See International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook* (April 2015).

The Crisis of Revolutionary Leadership Is Key



Internationalist photo

Internationalist contingent at New York City May Day 2015 march: "Only revolution can bring justice!"

The Trotskyist Struggle for International Socialist Revolution

(April 2015)

Document of the First National Conference of the Internationalist Group,
U.S. Section of the League for the Fourth International

The First National Conference of the Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International in the United States, takes place in a period of sharpening contradictions for U.S. imperialism and the incessant decay of world capitalism. The Democratic administration of Barack Obama has faced one setback after another internationally, from the Middle East and North Africa to East Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union. Meanwhile, since the 2007-08 stock market crash the U.S. and even more so the European imperialists are mired in a continuing capitalist economic crisis, with persistent long-term mass unemployment. Accompanying this there have been a series of upheavals and explosive social struggles, all of which have ended in defeat. The fundamental reason is the absence of a proletarian vanguard party with the program, determination and capacity to overthrow capitalism. The

central task facing communists, defenders of the program of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, is to resolve this excruciating crisis of revolutionary leadership.

In 1990, George Bush the elder proclaimed a "New World Order" under U.S. hegemony while launching a war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. As the Soviet Union after decades of bureaucratic degeneration was destroyed, along with the deformed workers states of East Europe, in a wave of imperialist-fueled counterrevolution, the capitalist media trumpeted the "death of communism." A U.S. State Department functionary, Francis Fukayama, declared the "end of history" with the supposed victory of American-style "liberal democracy." A quarter century on, this bourgeois triumphalism is gone. The world today doesn't look very orderly, while the American hegemon is in deep trouble from the Middle East to Ukraine. The accelerated decay of U.S. capitalism has meant



Leon Trotsky, founder and commander of the Soviet Red Army at rally in Moscow's Red Square, ca. 1920.

that U.S. “democracy” is increasingly resorting to police-state measures, among other things, pre-emptive steps against “civil unrest,” besieging immigrants, blacks, sectors in struggle and the population in general. And history has hardly ended as the class struggle goes on. For capitalism’s “wage slaves,” the liberating goal of the revolutionary overthrow of this system of endless war and poverty to bring about a classless society, is as urgent as ever.

The establishment of a world of universal abundance and solidarity, in which “the free development of each is the free development of all,” as the *Communist Manifesto* proclaimed, will be the end of humanity’s “prehistory” of oppression and the dawn of the era of human freedom. The continued evolution of capitalism, in which a staggering growth of labor productivity produces mass unemployment and misery rather than an expansion of leisure and creativity, lays the basis. Whether this goal is achieved, or alternatively the world plunges into barbarism, depends on the working people who produce all the wealth appropriated by capital. In particular it is up to those who are fighting to forge a revolutionary party of the proletarian vanguard to lead the struggle for world socialist revolution. That is *our* task, a tall order which we willingly take on. While our numbers today are small, infinitesimal compared to the vast resources of the exploiters and oppressors, we represent a revolutionary program that can realize the hopes of millions around the world. That is our strength, and the basis of unchaining the power of the proletariat.

We Stand on the Program of Lenin and Trotsky

The defining event of the 20th century was the 1917 Russian October Revolution led by the Bolshevik Party under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky. This was the first time in history that capitalism was overthrown and workers rule established aside from the brief experience of the Paris Commune of 1871, which lasted only ten weeks but was extremely rich in lessons for revolutionaries. “Red October” in Russia sent shock waves through Europe and eventually put an end to the vast slaughter of the first imperialist world war, which dragged on for more than four years with upwards of 16 million dead. Revolutionary situations broke out in Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy and elsewhere. In Asia and the Middle East, the overthrow of the tsarist autocracy by revolutionary internationalists spurred national and worker/peasant uprisings against the European colonial powers. Winston Churchill declared that “we must strangle the infant Bolshevism in the cradle.” Fourteen imperialist and capitalist armies tried to do that in the 1918-21 Russian Civil War but failed in the face of Trotsky’s revolutionary Red Army.

But the initial revolutionary wave in Europe receded as insurrectionary attempts failed in Berlin, Munich, Vienna and Budapest, and the moment was lost in Italy. The workers were defeated not by militarily superior bourgeois forces but due to the counterrevolutionary action of the Social Democrats and the absence of a cohered and battle-tested revolutionary leadership. Forging real Communist parties through a fusion of left-wing socialists and syndicalists under the influence of the Russian Bolsheviks had only begun. The Soviet Union which grew out of Red October was isolated, and soon a conservative petty-bourgeois bureaucratic layer led by Joseph Stalin usurped political power in a political counterrevolution in 1923-1924. Lenin’s call for international socialist revolution was replaced with the anti-Marxist, nationalist Stalinist shibboleth of building “socialism in one country” – meaning sabotaging the fight for socialist revolution elsewhere. By the mid-1930s, this was expressed in the policy of “popular fronts” of class collaboration with bourgeois sectors (dubbed “progressive”) and eventually to the dissolution of the Communist International.

In the midst of the worldwide capitalist Depression, in a period of tremendous class struggles in Europe (notably the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39) and great defeats for the working class (Hitler’s unopposed seizure of power in 1933, the defeat of insurrections in Vienna and Asturias, Spain in 1934), Leon Trotsky and his small bands of supporters in various countries founded the Fourth International in 1938. Their purpose was – as is our purpose today – to reclaim and pursue the internationalist program of the 1917 October Revolution which alone can free the working masses from the capitalist-imperialist system that promises more war, more poverty, racism and repression. Trotsky was assassinated by a GPU agent in 1940, and the Fourth International suffered the decimation of its European cadres, in Nazi concentration camps and at the hands of Stalinist murder squads. But the Trotskyists did not waver in the defense of the Soviet Union, despite and against Stalin.



James P. Cannon (center), the founder of American Trotskyism, with Max Eastman and William Haywood in Moscow, 1922.

After the war, the weakened Fourth International was disoriented by developments in Eastern Europe, notably in Yugoslavia as well as in the countries occupied by the Soviet Army. While Trotsky predicted (and Hitler and the French diplomat Coulandre feared) that new revolutions led by the FI would break out at the end of the war, instead the Stalinists expanded their domination. The heroic resistance of the Red Army that smashed the Nazi regime showed that the gains of the October Revolution, though trampled underfoot by Stalin, were not dead. Some among the Trotskyists, led by the International Secretary of the FI, Michel Pablo (Raptis), responded to this by tailing after the Stalinists, while others took refuge in a sterile orthodoxy pretending that Eastern Europe was still capitalist even as bureaucratically deformed workers state on the model of the Stalinized USSR were taking shape. The genuine Trotskyists recovered, however in 1951-53 the Fourth International split and was organizationally destroyed as Pablo liquidated many of the European sections into the dominant Stalinist or social-democratic parties. But the International Committee, and particularly James P. Cannon and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the U.S., maintained the revolutionary continuity by upholding the FI program of fighting for an independent Trotskyist vanguard.¹

We stand with Cannon against Pablo's programmatic liquidation of the Fourth International. As the isolation of the American Trotskyists deepened under McCarthyism, when party leaders who had been in the Communist Party couldn't even get passports to travel and many rank-and-file militants lost their jobs, under the impact of the Cuban Revolution the American SWP leadership faltered and then united with the European Pabloists in tailing after the Castro leadership of the Cuban deformed workers state. The Revolutionary Tendency inside the SWP resisted this course, upholding the Trotskyist program of military defense of Cuba against imperialism while

fighting for a political revolution to oust the budding bureaucracy (which by now is becoming senile) of the guerrillas in power. After being expelled from the SWP in 1964, the RT cadres published the *Spartacist* journal and founded the Spartacist League two years later. For 30 years, the SL/U.S. stood for revolutionary Trotskyism. The founders of the Internationalist Group were won to that program and uphold it to this day. They were in the leading bodies of the SL and ICL, including editing *Workers Vanguard* for 23 years, as well as founding the ICL's Mexican section.

Groups like the sub-Menshevik "International Bolshevik Tendency" have made much of their complaints of the internal life of the ICL, which was not infrequently none too pleasant, and portray Spartacist leader James Robertson as some kind of satanic figure. The members who later coalesced in the IBT either quit the SL or were expelled on grounds of proletarian morality; their personal attacks are worthy of right-

wing scandal sheets like the *National Enquirer* or the *New York Post*; and their ostensible program is a brand of laborite social democracy, including publishing a pamphlet justifying scabbing. Interestingly, for all their complaints of Robertsonite bureaucracy in the SL, a series of individuals have quit the IBT over the years complaining of BT bureaucracy. In fact, for all its flaws, the SL/ICL led by Robertson stood on the program of revolutionary Trotskyism for three decades, and it was this that made it possible to carry out some of its finest work (much of which the SL has since renounced), in resisting counterrevolution in East Germany and the Soviet Union during the crucial period of 1989-92.

This is not the place to describe that work in detail, but in the short period of a few months before the West German bourgeoisie brought the hammer down and rammed through capitalist reunification, the ICL was able to accomplish things no Trotskyists had ever done before. It sparked the formation of soldiers councils, it published a daily news bulletin with a circulation of over 10,000 copies, it initiated a mobilization at Treptow Park of over a quarter million to oppose resurgent Nazis and annexation by imperialist West Germany, it consolidated support in a number of factories, it held forums about Trotskyism attended by hundreds of Soviet army soldiers and officers stationed in East Germany, it ran candidates in the last elections in the DDR (German Democratic Republic). Over a third of the ICL membership traveled to Germany, many at their own expense. The comrades gave their all, and they were defeated. Of course, the East German working people suffered even greater losses, many consigned to unemployment for years afterwards. But the impact of that defeat took its toll on the ICL and SL/U.S., particularly vulnerable after years of Reagan/Bush reaction and the aging, fatigued and increasing white-collar/labor aristocratic composition of the membership.

In a fight that first broke out in the German section, the Spartakist Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SpAD – Spartacist Workers Party of Germany), experienced cadres of the ICL began to pull back from intervention in the class struggle, re-

¹ See Jan Norden, *Yugoslavia, East Europe and the Fourth International: The Evolution of Pabloist Liquidationism* (Prometheus Research Bulletin No. 4, 1993)



Some of the finest work of the Spartacist tendency/International Communist League during the three decades it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism was its intervention fighting counterrevolution in East Germany and the Soviet Union. Above, spokesperson for the Trotskistische Liga Deutschlands addressing the mass mobilization of 250,000 in Treptow Park, East Berlin to oppose capitalist reunification of Germany and Nazi defacing of Soviet Army soldiers tombs.

luctant to reinforce the East, resisting running candidates, and accusing East German SpAD members of *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for East Germany) and not having broken with Stalinism. As the fight escalated with attacks on Jan Norden, who was responsible for the work in Germany, it reached the culmination in a 1996 conference in London at which he was denounced and removed from the international executive committee, and subsequent from one post after another. At that same conference, the ICL passed a motion stating that “for the first time since the Paris Commune, the masses of workers in struggle do not identify their immediate felt needs with the ideals of socialism or the program of socialist revolution.”² As we have noted, this “discovery” came on the heels of the workers struggles in Paris in December 1995, when the French section of the ICL was paralyzed and unable to intervene (because they thought that was the line) while French workers marched with red flags singing the *Internationale*.

The was the precursor of the ICL’s declaration, responding to the IG Founding Statement that the crisis of humanity was still reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership, that there had been a supposed “historical retrogression in the political consciousness of the workers movement and left internationally.” The ICL was expressing here its variant of the demoralization that had spread through the Western Left after the fall of the Soviet Union. Having tried their hardest and suffering defeat, defeatism began to take its toll on the ICL’s program. And the first expression was the expulsion of leading comrades in the U.S., then in Mexico and in France, and stabbing the Brazilian comrades in the back in the midst of

² See “ICL vs. Trotsky on the Crisis of Leadership: In Defense of the Transitional Program,” in *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998.

a hot class struggle. Loss of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat is the hallmark of all forms of revisionism, and the SL/ICL stated it openly: according to it, the workers’ struggles have no relation to revolution, and their consciousness had suffered a great leap backward throughout the world. The response of many on the left to the fall of the Soviet Union was to water down their program to social-democratic reformism, or to close up shop altogether. The SL/ICL’s response was to exit the class struggle, take refuge in theoretical exercises to prove that they are smarter than Lenin or Trotsky, while veering erratically back and forth and bit by bit chopping off one key plank of the revolutionary program after another.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have continued to stand on the Trotskyist program. We have not had to revise and re-revise our program, “correcting correct verdicts” as Chinese Stalinist Deng Xiaoping put it, which negates the party’s role as a revolutionary vanguard and confuses and demoralizes the members. Where the SL/ICL makes a caricature of revolutionary continuity by personalizing it in idealist fashion, the IG

and LFI assert that we represent the programmatic continuity of Trotskyism, and of the Spartacist tendency when it upheld that legacy instead of using it as a talisman. We have sought to carry out that program in the class struggle, accomplishing and contributing decisively to a number of actions the SL/ICL called for but never did (expel police from the unions, workers action for Mumia, strike against imperialist war). We believe, as our Brazilian comrades put it, that for genuine revolutionaries there must be a coherence between words and deeds.

What follows is a review of the activity of the Internationalist Group over the last decade and a half. A separate document analyzes international perspectives.

Black Liberation: Key to Revolution in the U.S.

Black oppression has been key to U.S. society since its foundation through the expropriation and genocide against native peoples and the rooting of capitalist development in chattel slavery. On this basis there arose the characteristic American system of racial oppression, producing the poisonous ideology of “race” and racism central to dividing the working class and holding back its consciousness. For the Internationalist Group, the understanding that the struggle against black oppression is key to socialist revolution here “in the belly of the imperialist beast” has been not only a central tenet of our program but a central part of politically winning and training activists recruited amongst deeply exploited immigrant workers and a new generation of youth. Our worker comrades are well known in immigrant-rights circles for their insistence on this point. In the recent protests over the massacre of Ayotzinapa normalistas in Mexico, it was these comrades who popularized our slogan “From Ayotzinapa to Ferguson, *una sola lucha*”



IG and Brazilian comrades of LQB sparked the first-ever work stoppages for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, by the Rio de Janeiro state teachers union (above) and the ILWU dock workers union in the U.S.

(it is all one struggle), cutting against the nationalism pervasive in the milieu. At the same time, the IG has consistently emphasized the link of racist repression against black people and escalating attacks on immigrants “at home” to the endless imperialist wars abroad. The fact that the IG and our Brazilian comrades of the LFI sparked the first work stoppages in the world for the freedom of Mumia Abu-Jamal in April 1999 is an important part of our history (and one our opponents on the left cynically ignore).

Over recent years, economic crisis has intensified the bourgeoisie’s commitment to strengthening and further militarizing U.S. capitalism’s apparatus of racist repression. While a thin layer of African American professionals gained (always tenuous) benefit from programs launched to stanch the upsurge of black protest in the 1960s, the mass of black youth and workers have experienced the ravages of “rust belt” deindustrialization, mass incarceration, and rampant police terror in the “inner cities,” a term used by the bourgeoisie as a synonym for the entrenched poverty and oppression its system produces for the black population. Racist police and vigilante terror have ignited a series of protests over recent years, including the Sean Bell, Trayvon Martin and Oscar Grant cases. The IG and CUNY Internationalist Clubs attracted a number of immigrant and U.S.-born black youth, together with young Latinos and whites, to our revolutionary contingents in several of those protests.

Beginning in late summer 2014, the vicious police murders of Eric Garner in New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson – and particularly the savage police/military occupation of Ferguson – led to mass protests that made the systemic cop murder of black people by the police a burning issue of public controversy, fueling the politicization of a notable layer of youth of all races. From the first protests in New York City, the IG and CUNY Internationalist Clubs were prominent, soon mobilizing vibrant contingents of black, white Asian and Latino youth chanting “Only revolution can bring justice!” in sharp contrast to the tepid, utopian/reactionary calls of the reformist

left for police “reform.” (See section below on union work for a discussion of the impact of the Class Struggle Education Workers and IG in fighting to mobilize labor against racist police terror, as opposed to the capitulation to racist “defenders of the police” by opportunist union “oppositionists.”)

The 2014 demonstrations against racist police murder from Ferguson to New York have differed from the 2011 Occupy protests. For one thing, like the marches in 2013 denouncing the grand jury decision that let the racist vigilante murderer of Trayvon Martin go free, these protests were heavily integrated, with large numbers of black and white youth in the streets. And when we shouted slogans such as “Only revolution can bring justice” (counterposed to

the liberal “No justice, no peace”), or “Eric Garner, Michael Brown, shut the whole system down,” considerable numbers took up our chants (at least in NYC – it was very different at a march led by Democrat Al Sharpton in Washington, D.C.). There is a definite openness to revolutionary politics among a layer of young people today, but only a vague idea of what that involves. Moreover, when we talk of shutting the system down we mean stopping the wheels of capitalism, while for many activists it just means shutting down some streets for a time. But unlike the populist Occupy movement, this presents a starting point to discuss.

There is another important factor: in protesting racist repression, demonstrators come right up against the key question of the capitalist state. The inescapable fact is that there is no “reform” measure that will significantly limit the police killings of African American and Latino youth. Civilian review boards, more minority police, replacing police chiefs, federal investigations – all have been tried and changed nothing. Opportunist pseudo-socialists who (like Socialist Alternative) grotesquely consider police part of the working class are easily exposed as charlatans. Bourgeois liberal and reformist calls for a “new Civil Rights Movement” (such as by Michelle Alexander) have nothing concrete to propose. When we insist along with Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky that the repressive apparatus of the police, army, courts and jails are the hard core of the capitalist state and cannot be reformed but must be overthrown, this is dramatically proven by recent experience. It is our task to drive home this fundamental truth.

The lack of a Marxist understanding of the state is fatal to the protests over racist repression. This was seen dramatically last fall as marches burgeoned into the thousands, aggressively taking over highways, shutting down bridges and tunnels until two NYPD officers, a Latino and an Asian, were killed by a deranged man. Suddenly the mass protests stopped. Democratic mayor de Blasio called for demonstrations to stop. The Internationalist Group joined hundreds who marched on



It's all about the state: no "reform" measures will limit police killings of African American and Latino youth, which are rooted in the evolution of present-day American capitalism, which must be overthrown by workers revolution. Above: IG and CUNY Internationalist Clubs at demonstration of 50,000 in New York City, 12 December 2014.

December 23 in defiance, but the thousands who came out in previous days stayed home. It is necessary to drive home the understanding that American capitalism has racism in its DNA, that ever since slavery was abolished by the Civil War (the Second American Revolution), the ruling class has found one or another mechanism to keep blacks in thrall – Jim Crow segregation until the mid-1960s, the drive to criminalize all young black men (and kill hundreds of them) today. And no reform will change that.

The protests stopped, members of the New York City Council and U.S. Congress staffers no longer pose for photo ops chanting "hands up, don't shoot," "black lives matter" and "I can't breathe," but the killer cops are still at it. Day after day there are reports of police gunning down unarmed men, even in liberal bastions like Madison, Wisconsin. Mentally disturbed individuals are shot by police with abandon. After Mexican agricultural worker Antonio Zambrano was mowed down in a hail of 17 cop bullets in Pasco, Washington in mid-February, two more Latino men have died at the hands of the local police. In 2014, 1,100 people were killed by police in the U.S. So far in 2015, from January 1 to March 25, by a rough count of cases reported in the media, no less than 268 people have been killed by cops, as always overwhelmingly African Americans. This is the brutal reality of the racist capitalist system we are fighting to bring down.

The Fight for Class-Struggle Unionism

"The trade unions in the present epoch cannot simply be the organs of democracy as they were in the epoch of free capitalism and they cannot any longer remain politically neutral, that is, limit themselves to serving the daily needs of the working class. They cannot any longer be anarchistic, i.e. ignore the decisive influence of the state on the life of

peoples and classes. They can no longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat." –Leon Trotsky, "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (1940)

It has been a good while since the mass of the U.S. population believed in the "American Dream" of ever-increasing prosperity and upward social mobility based on hard work. This mythical ethos never applied to the black slaves and their descendants, for whom social reality has always been an "American Nightmare," as Malcolm X trenchantly remarked. But the living standard of American workers has

fallen for more than four decades, to the point that real earnings are now 15% below their high point in 1972, while labor productivity has quadrupled. There is plenty of discontent in the working class of the United States. Many working-class families were barely able to keep their heads above water financially by a huge influx of women into the workforce (from one-third of working-age women in 1950 to almost 60% today) adding a second income to many households. But since the 2007-08 economic crisis, many male factory workers have lost their jobs and haven't been able to find work since.

And while the Obama administration crows about declining unemployment, supposedly down to 5.5%, this is a mirage created by government statistical manipulation. In 1994, the Democratic Clinton administration redefined long-term unemployment by simply eliminating those out of work two years or more from the labor force, as well as anyone who didn't actually call or physically go looking for work in the previous four months. When you add those the government defines as "discouraged workers," those "marginally attached to the labor force" and the long-term unemployed whom government statisticians simply defined out of existence, the actual unemployment rate increased from about 13% in 2007 to 22% in 2011 and has continued to increase to 23.2% today, according to the Shadow Government Statistics web site.

But while there is plenty of anger among American workers, there has been very little struggle. Certainly fear of being fired is a major factor, but equally if not more important is the dead hand of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy that has prevented the unions – that is, the elemental defense organizations of the workers – from fighting back. Decades of betrayals by the union bureaucracy, and capitulation before the bosses' offensive has brought the rate of unionization down to 11% (and lower in the private sector). Yet every time some group

of workers dared to stand up for their rights they received tremendous support. When the predominantly immigrant workers of Republic Windows and Doors in Chicago occupied their plant in December 2008 the news spread around the country with lightening speed. Within hours there were solidarity actions in New York's Herald Square and Union Square.

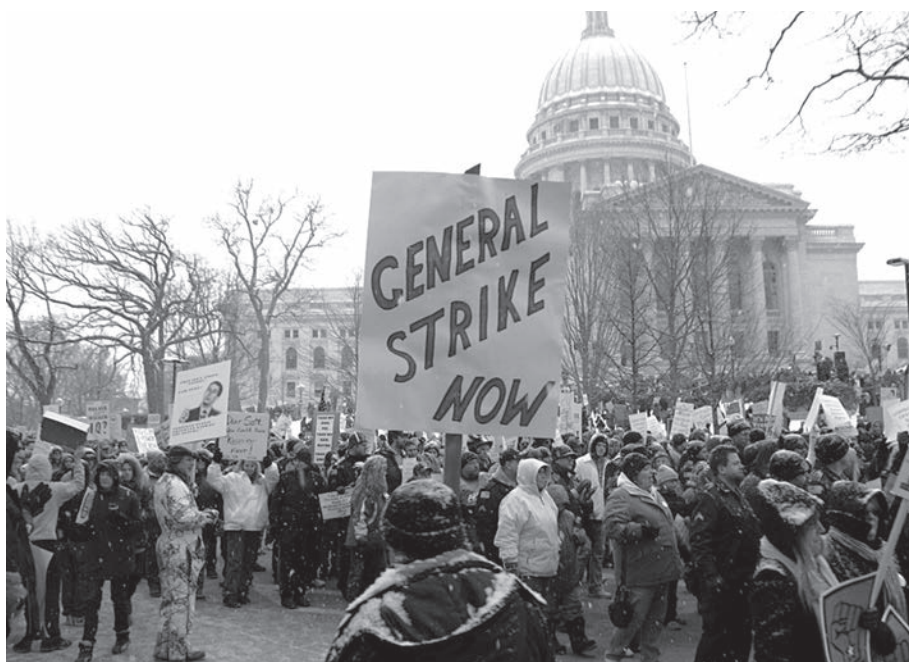
Even more dramatic was the impact of the teachers actions in Wisconsin in February 2011. Faced with a union-busting bill introduced to the state legislature by Republican governor Scott Walker, teachers in the state capital of Madison decided to sick out. By the next day their bold action was so popular that the statewide education association made it official. Within two days there were up to 8,000 and more protesters camped out around the clock in the capitol building while 30,000 marched around the square for the entire working day, every day for the next three weeks.

On the weekends the protests swelled to over 100,000 people, overwhelmingly workers, hard hats, blue collar, office workers, just about every union in the state, and from out-of-state.

The Internationalist Group responded immediately by sending a reporter to Wisconsin and putting out a February 18 leaflet saying, "It will take nothing less than a *statewide general strike* to defeat labor hater Walker," while warning: "But union leaders block militant action as they chain workers to the Democrats. Now is the time to unleash labor's power – it's *use it or lose it!*" A couple of days later, signs began to appear in the capitol calling for a general strike, and the demand became a frequent chant among the 150,000 trade-unionists and their supporters that Saturday. The same day the South Central [Wisconsin] Labor Federation (SCLF) voted that it "endorses a general strike, possibly for the day Walker signs his budget repair bill." They attached a "how to" guide on strike preparations.

What the labor officials were talking about was the kind of phony one-day general strike common in Europe, but not even that has been seen anywhere in the United States for the last 65 years. For the first time in just about every worker's life, a general strike was a real possibility. When D-Day came as the legislature passed the bill eliminating bargaining rights for public sector workers, the local press reported that "Thousands storm Capitol" and "'General strike' has been one of the chants that resounded through the Capitol during massive protests." While state police tried to hold the crowd back from entering the building workers crawled in through bathroom windows and removed door handles to open them from the inside. The IG put out a leaflet headlined "Wisconsin: For a General Strike *Now!*"³ Yet in the end it was called off. The union bureaucrats

³ See *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011.



Yuri Keegstra

A general strike was possible during 2011 workers revolt against union-busting bill. But it required a class-struggle opposition prepared to defy the bureaucrats and break with the Democrats. Above: 150,000 demonstrators outside state capitol in Madison on February 26.

instead called to channel protest into a "recall" election – i.e., to vote for the Democrats, who unsurprisingly were then defeated at the polls.

This was an object lesson in the role of what American socialist leader Daniel De Leon called the "labor lieutenants of the capitalist class." These were not just the do-nothing labor tops like AFL-CIO chief Richard Trumka and AFT president Randi Weingarten who flew in from Washington for a little grandstanding. The call to "endorse" a general strike came from the supposed left wing of union officialdom, the SCLF leaders who were founding members of the social-democratic Labor Notes group. And the same "left" bureaucrats decided to call it off, not because the workers weren't ready to walk out, but precisely they knew that the ranks were "ready to rumble" and the bureaucrats were deathly afraid of the consequences: a showdown with the capitalist state in which the workers might "get out of hand."

At a Labor Notes "Troublemakers" conference in Madison a couple weeks later, the LN organizers didn't have a word of criticism of their SCLF colleagues for ditching the general strike call. And no wonder: the next year *Labor Notes* (May 2012) published another "how to" guide, this one on "How to Bargain Concessions (If You Must)." LN is led by Solidarity, a social-democratic outfit backing Teamsters for a Democratic Union that appealed to the U.S. Labor Department to get the bosses' government (using the anti-labor Landrum-Griffin Act) to help them replace the present entrenched bureaucrats. Once the TDU got into office with the help of the feds, the government owned them. Not surprisingly, they negotiated worse contracts, with more givebacks, and once they had been totally discredited, the government threw them out as well.

Gregory Bull/AP



December 2005 New York City transit strike tied up the center of world capitalist finance. Militants should have shut down suburban trains.

The fact is that a general strike could have happened, despite the capitulation by the left-talking bureaucrats, if there had been a solid core of class-conscious worker cadres prepared to break with the Democrats, defy the bureaucrats and go up against the capitalist state and its web of anti-labor laws. If even a relatively small group of class-struggle militants with a presence in the labor movement had dug in their heels and insisted that the general strike was on for Monday, for sure there would have been sharp clashes with the sellout union misleaders, but for the first time in generations there would have been broad-scale strike action. It would have shaken the official labor movement to the core, not to mention the capitalist ruling class. What was missing was above all the indispensable revolutionary leadership.

Madison was crawling with ostensible leftists during this time: Socialist Alternative (SALT), Socialist Appeal, Socialist Equality Party, Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL), Workers World (WWP), Spartacist League, Progressive Labor Party (PLP), Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and above all the International Socialist Organization, which had several dozen activists, both local and quite a few from Chicago. A number of these groups took up the call for a general strike as it became popular. But when the word came down from the labor bureaucrats, they all folded. As we have noted, the ISO was publishing articles in favor of a general strike right up to that day, and then suddenly switched gears to say that such a radical step requires years of preparation, etc. The wannabe bureaucrats in training of the ISO and the rest of the social-democratic crowd are truly the labor corporals of capitalism.

The upheaval in Wisconsin was not a unique event. In December 2005, a strike by New York City transit workers likewise posed the urgent need for revolutionary leadership. The walkout had been forced on a reluctant leadership, itself the product of a union caucus (New Directions) – backed by Solidarity and

other social-democratic outfits (Socialist Action) – which sued the union in order to get into office. As the governor and mayor went to court demanding that TWU Local 100 leader Roger Toussaint be jailed (he later was), a judge imposed million-dollar-a-day fines on the union and thousand-dollar-a-day fines on the members individually for breaking the state's no-strike Taylor Law. Under the concerted ruling-class attack, and backstabbing by other union leaders, notably United Federation of Teachers president Weingarten, on Day 3 Toussaint called it off.

The result was a bad defeat, which sapped the militancy of this powerhouse of NYC labor. But it didn't have to be that way. Despite the union-bashing media blitz, the NYC population supported the transit workers throughout. The strike was tremendously effective, tying up the capital of world capitalist

finance in knots. Traffic on Manhattan streets was at a standstill, people walked for miles. Yet there was one weak point: the suburban trains. A leader of the Teamsters union local representing Metro North workers let it be known that his members would respect transit pickets. But the TWU tops wouldn't send the pickets. At that point, a class-struggle opposition in the union could have sent pickets, authorized by the exec or not, and the trains could have been shut down. But as the union misleaders "respected" the bosses' laws, the would-be oppositionists bowed to the bureaucrats.

During the 2005 NYC transit strike the Internationalist Group put out a daily bulletin with 2,000-3,000 copies which comrades distributed at numerous picket sites throughout the day. Strikers snapped them up, eager for news of what was happening but kept in the dark by the union leadership.⁴ In contrast, the Spartacist League did little beyond issuing a pro-forma leaflet in defense the strikers leaflet while supporters in the union did nothing beyond walking the line like any other union member. This passivity in what was by far the biggest and sharpest class struggle in New York City in years reflected the SL's overall flight from the class struggle that lay behind its expulsion of the founding cadres of the IG.

The Internationalist Group since its inception in 1996, along with our comrades in other sections of the League for the Fourth International, has sought to carry out Trotsky's policy, quoted at the beginning of this section, of transforming the unions into instruments of revolutionary struggle of the working class. In a bulletin of our series of Marxist readings, *Trotskyism and Trade Union Struggle* (2001), we reproduced articles we had published in the SL calling to build class-

⁴ These bulletins and other *Internationalist* articles on the 2005 strike are available on the Internet at <http://www.internationalist.org/nyctransitstriketoc.html>.

struggle oppositions in the unions to fight the pro-capitalist bureaucracy on the basis of a Trotskyist transitional program including the struggle for workers rule. This is in sharp contrast with the usual reform caucuses sponsored by various social-democratic and Stalinist groups which aim at building blocs with liberal out-bureaucrats seeking to get into office on a program of slightly more militant simple trade-unionism (which they soon abandon once elected).

Internationally, already in mid-1997, our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) initiated the Comitê de Luta Classista (Class Struggle Committee) which functions as a pan-union trade-union tendency in the steel city of Volta Redonda and state of Rio de Janeiro on a program calling among other things for a class-struggle fight against racist oppression and the oppression of women, union control of hiring, workers control of production and for a revolutionary workers party and a workers and peasants government. While virtually the entire reformist and centrist Brazilian left supported police “strikes,” the LQB/CLC called for cops out of the unions, and uniquely waged a struggle to carry this out in the Volta Redonda municipal workers union.

Class-Struggle Education Workers

In the U.S., the Internationalist Group politically supports a union tendency, Class Struggle Education Workers, with sustained activity in two NYC teachers unions (the UFT in the city schools and the Professional Staff Congress representing City University faculty and staff) and with members in other education workers sectors. The CSEW has actively fought for working-class independence from the stranglehold of the capitalist parties; to mobilize union power against racist school closings; to oppose the corporate “education reform” program backed by billionaire financiers and spearheaded by Democratic president Obama; to show solidarity with striking students and adjuncts in Quebec; for solidarity with Mexican students and teachers under attack, most recently the nearly 50 Ayotzinapa student massacre victims; and to bring out union power in protest against racist police murders of African Americans from Ferguson to New York.

Since it was founded in 2008, the CSEW has initiated protests against the placement of unassigned NYC teachers in a “reserve” pool; played a leading role in CUNY Contingents Unite (CCU), defending adjunct faculty and staff within the PSC, where they are treated as second-class members; held study groups on Marxism and education. When various reformists supported unionizing security guards at the City University, we insisted on the principled demand of cops out of the unions and out of CUNY, and no support to the rent-a-cop guards. This defining struggle was reflected in a major article on the long history going back to the Pinkertons of such private auxiliaries to the uniformed agents of capitalist repression (“Campus Protest, Capitalist ‘Security’ and the Program of Class Struggle,” in issue 4 of the CSEW Newsletter [Summer-Fall 2014]).

The CSEW has made a point of defending *all* education workers. So when the predominantly Haitian and Dominican NYC school bus drivers were forced out on strike in early 2014, the CSEW together with the CUNY Internationalist Clubs



March to protest NYPD murder of Kimani Gray in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, 25 March 2013.

and the Internationalist Group repeatedly brought groups of supporters to the strikers’ picket lines. The UFT leadership, at the head of 100,000 education workers, in the largest union in New York, barely lifted a finger to support the drivers. For its part, the opposition Movement of Rank-and-File Educators (MORE) – in which almost the entire reformist left is active (ISO, SALT, PLP among others), rubbing shoulders with Democratic and Republican would-be bureaucrats – was “missing in action.” This is another example of how the opportunist leftists basically share the economist, “professional” outlook of the incumbent bureaucracy that they (vainly) hope to replace.

When the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), led by the Caucus of Rank and File Educators (CORE, on which MORE is modeled), struck in September 2012, a CSEW supporter went to Chicago to show solidarity. But when the CTU/CORE “reform” bureaucrats shoved a sellout contract down the throats of the members, we headlined: “Chicago Teachers: Strike Was Huge, Settlement Sucks” (*The Internationalist*, September 2012). We also noted that while Democratic Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel, Obama’s former chief of staff, led the attack on the teachers, the CTU regularly endorses Democrats. In NYC, CSEW member Sándor John led a fight inside the PSC delegate assembly to oppose affiliation with the Democratic Party front, the “Working Families Party,” and to oppose endorsement of Obama. CSEW member Marjorie Stamberg has repeatedly fought in the UFT delegate assembly against endorsing Democrats, Republicans or any capitalist politicians, while the various pseudo-socialists were silent.

The CSEW has frequently been the only organized presence of educators at protests against racist repression, such as over the March 2013 police murder of Kimani Gray in East Flatbush, Brooklyn and the mass marches over the vigilante murder of Trayvon Martin that summer. Last summer, the CSEW defended



CSEW at Staten Island march against police chokehold murder of Eric Garner, 23 August 2014. Reformist MORE caucus grotesquely called to work with cops!

and mobilized a contingent in a union-endorsed protest denouncing the racist police murders of Eric Garner in Staten Island and Michael Brown, while the MORE refused to protest and issued a disgusting pro-police statement calling to work together with the “brothers and sisters” of the NYPD. The CSEW comrades’ emphatic and insistent denunciations of this betrayal threw the MORE lash-up of pseudo-socialists, Democrats and Republicans into crisis, from which it has not recovered.

Education has been at the center of American politics and a focal point in the class struggle as at no other time in U.S. history. The forces pushing for corporate education “reform” are led by Wall Street financiers who control both major capitalist parties. A major reason for their assault is that teachers are one of the few strongly unionized sectors of the workforce (98.5% in the state of New York). Moreover, the union-busting, privatizing assault on public education is an international drive pushed by imperialist financial agencies such as the World Bank and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. It has set off revolts by dissident teachers in Mexico in 2013 and is behind the 2014 massacre of rural teacher college students in Ayotzinapa. The IG and LFI have devoted considerable attention to the issue, including our special supplement on *Marxism and the Battle Over Education* (2nd edition, January 2008) dealing with current struggles and reviving the lessons of the early Soviet experience.

The IG and CSEW have put forward a revolutionary program for education, including calls for student-teacher-worker control of the universities and teacher-student-parent-worker control of the public schools. Despite our prominence in fighting for a class line on this key issue, opposing the union-busters and privatizers and their political backers while combating racism, recruitment to the CSEW has proven difficult. While

in other countries (Brazil, Mexico, France) teachers are a major bastion of the socialist left, this is not so in the U.S. (Nor was it in Russia, where even after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution teachers remained a bastion of reaction.) Teachers, a petty-bourgeois layer, are generally imbued with bourgeois liberal ideology. But under relentless attack, among those who are not driven out we seek to win the most advanced elements to revolutionary Marxism. Such potential cadres can play a vital role in all the work of the revolutionary party.

Outside of the education sector, the Internationalist Group has also worked with activists in unions to undertake important class-struggle actions, notably in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). One important case was in mobilizing labor’s power on behalf of class war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, something we had advocated for years. Building on the initiative of the comrades of the LQB/CLC in Brazil, and working together with militants in the ILWU, the IG and LFI played a key role in sparking the first-ever work stoppages demanding freedom for Mumia on 23 and 24 April 1999, first by Brazilian teachers in the state of Rio de Janeiro and the next day by U.S. dock workers who shut down all 27 ports on the West Coast.⁵ Rio teachers, once more on the initiative of the CLC, struck again for freedom for Jamal in May 2008.⁶

The IG had also been calling for dock workers to “hot cargo” war materiel being shipped to the Middle East since Bill Clinton’s 1998 bombing attack on Baghdad. In October 2002 we dispatched comrades to the West Coast to agitate for this as maritime bosses locked out ILWU longshoremen, and again that December at a San Francisco labor conference against Taft-Hartley and union-busting. In April 2003, after police launched a vicious attack on antiwar protesters at the Port of Oakland, injuring a number of dock workers in the process, the IG began pushing for a dock strike against the war. We collaborated with ILWU militants as resolutions calling for this were passed by the Bay Area Local 10 on several occasions, only to be nixed at a higher level. But in 2007, as Democrats gained control of both houses of Congress and did nothing to stop the war, opinion began to shift and it seemed that it could actually happen.

To build support and ensure that Local 10 would not be isolated, working with ILWU militants we played an important role from the outset in helping to build a national Labor Conference to Stop the War that October. We published a special 56-page supplement to *The Internationalist* (October 2007) on “Why We Fight for Workers Strikes Against the War (and the Opportunists Don’t).” In February 2008 the ILWU officially voted to “stop work to stop the war,” and on May Day 2008 the union again shut down every West Coast port in the *first-ever strike by American workers against a U.S. imperialist war*.⁷

⁵ See “Brazil Education Workers Stop Work Demanding: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!” *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999; and “ILWU West Coast Port Shutdown Showed Labor’s Power in Fight to Free Mumia,” *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000.

⁶ See “Brazilian Teachers Strike Again for Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal,” *The Internationalist* No. 27, May/June 2008.

⁷ See “May Day Strike Against the War Shuts Down All U.S. West Coast Ports,” *The Internationalist* No. 27, May-June 2008.



Internationalist photo

ILWU May Day 2008 shutdown of all West Coast ports to stop war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Internationalist Group played important part from the beginning in building first-ever U.S. workers strike against imperialist war.

Although it was only for one day, this small show of labor's power was an unprecedented event in U.S. labor history, and one in which the Internationalist Group and its union supporters played an important part from the beginning.⁸

In late 2011 and early 2012 a battle built over the attempt by some of the world's top shippers to build a non-union export grain terminal (EGT) in the small port of Longview, Washington. Hundreds of ILWU rank-and-file dock workers blocked trains and stormed the EGT site in July and September, sending shock waves around the country. As the facility neared completion, Longview ILWU Local 21 vowed to stop it, and was supported by longshoremen from other locals (notably San Francisco/Oakland Local 10) as well as the Occupy movement. The Internationalist Group traveled to Portland, Longview and Seattle to help build solidarity and work with union militants amid preparations to mobilize and occupy the site.⁹ In New York, the IG initiated a united-front demonstration protesting Obama's use of the Coast Guard to protect scab cargo and aid union-busting at EGT.

IG Extended Through Portland Fusion

On the West Coast, the Portland comrades have played a key role in building solidarity against attacks by the employers and the capitalist state. Even before joining the Internationalist

Group in the summer of 2012,¹⁰ the labor militants who formed the Portland Trotskyist Study Group were key organizers of the December 2011 port shutdown in the Columbia River hub, and fought against scabbing by construction trades unions at the EGT site. A few months later, they fought for and succeeded in getting the Portland May Day 2012 march to raise among its demands a call for a six-hour day, with no cut in pay; free contraception and childcare for all; and full citizenship rights for all. The next year, after their fusion with the IG, the Portland comrades got seven area unions to pass resolutions pledging to help build mass pickets in defense of the ILWU against the union-busting attacks and lockout of grain terminal workers (a projected action that the ILWU International misleaders squelched).

In addition, we were able to get the endorsement of five Portland-area unions to a resolution condemning the July 2012 FBI raids and connected grand jury proceedings, defending the targets of this politically motivated witch hunt (syndicalist supporters of the Industrial Workers of the World), and calling for union action to resist federal repression against the left and labor, which has a long history in the area. These solidarity efforts are particularly significant as Portland is the main center of the IWW in the U.S. today and the local left is dominated by anarcho-syndicalists rather than ostensibly socialist groups, as elsewhere in the country. There is also something of a "labor left" milieu locally, distinct from NYC (and much of the U.S.) where traditional "business unionism" is dominant, and the Bay Area popular-front milieu. But as everywhere, the entire Portland labor movement is bound hand-and-foot to the Democratic Party and capitalism.

The Portland IG comrades have been in the forefront of labor solidarity *action*, mobilizing on different occasions to support locked-out Vancouver, WA dock workers facing armed professional scabherders at a local grain terminal. In addition, we have

⁸ While the Spartacist League lyingly dismissed this action as a "flag-waving" action to "support our troops," the ILWU bureaucracy was stopped from turning it into a social-patriotic event (after earlier failing to prevent the work stoppage) as the ranks controlled the action. In San Francisco there were no American flags (and quite a few red flags) to be seen among the numerous union banners carried by the thousands of demonstrators, and not by accident. It was pointed out that Iraqi dock workers had endorsed the strike, and to them any U.S. flags would symbolize the occupying power.

⁹ "Longshore Workers, Truckers: Shut the Ports, Coast to Coast!" *The Internationalist* supplement, January 2012.

¹⁰ See "Portland Trotskyist Study Group Fuses with Internationalist Group," *The Internationalist* special issue (Summer 2012).

taken the lead in fighting efforts to pass union-busting “right-to-work” laws in the area, putting forward resolutions at union meetings including the Oregon AFL-CIO convention (over the objection of the leadership that has sought to duck the issue or rely on backroom deals with Democratic politicians) and mobilizing to protest a forum by a local right-wing lobbying outfit in Vancouver. As a result one of our labor supporters was arrested and faced a year in jail on trumped-up charges. But by mobilizing union support, we were able to defeat the frame-up prosecution in the courts while gaining respect for our principled stand for militant labor action against union-busting.

Several Portland comrades had been active for some time in a group of younger construction workers, Cross Trades Solidarity, which fought to unite workers in different craft unions. This was an important initiative, but not being a programmatically based caucus or union tendency, its supporters had differing orientations. Some have gone in the direction of the bureaucracy, while others have seen the need for an organization based on class-struggle principles to combat the debilitating class collaboration which is sapping the unions. Recently, we initiated Class Struggle Workers – Portland, including some of the Cross Trades militants as well as some workers active in the IWW. The CSWP held a forum (with a film about the Minneapolis 1934 strike of Trotskyist-led Teamsters) and passed a resolution of solidarity with immigrants in the Pasco, WA area following the police killing of an unarmed Mexican worker in February. Comrades went to Pasco earlier this month to show their support for the embattled immigrant community.

In these various labor struggles, the Internationalist Group and the fraternally allied “transitional organizations” of the CSEW and CSWP have not ignored basic economic issues, such as agitating against sellout contracts. But in opposing the pro-capitalist misleaders we have fought to uphold basic class principles, insisting that picket lines mean don’t cross, opposing suing the union in the bosses’ courts or seeking the aid of the bosses’ government against the entrenched bureaucracy, opposing support to any capitalist party or politician and calling for a workers party to fight for a workers government. In doing so, and underscoring the importance of fighting racism, defending victims of police repression and demanding full rights for all immigrants, we seek to put into practice Trotsky’s call to transform the unions into part of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

Winning a New Generation of Youth to Revolutionary Marxism

We also seek to carry out Trotsky’s admonition in the Transitional Program, on which the Fourth International was founded: “The Fourth International pays particular attention to the young generation of the proletariat. All of its policies strive to inspire the youth with belief in its own strength and in the future. Only the fresh enthusiasm and aggressive spirit of the youth can guarantee the preliminary successes in the



Internationalist photo

Internationalist Group Portland has been in the forefront of organizing militant labor solidarity. Above: union support was key in defeating attempt to jail Wyatt McMinn for protest against “right-to-work union-busters, June 2014.

struggle; only these successes can return the best elements of the older generation to the road of revolution. Thus it was, thus it will be.

“Opportunist organizations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the women workers. The decay of capitalism, however, deals its heaviest blows to the woman as a wage earner and as a housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class; consequently, among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness and readiness to sacrifice.”

—*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* (1938)

From early on, the Internationalist Group has been active seeking to win student youth at the City University of New York, whose 480,000 students at 23 sites around NYC make it the largest urban university in the U.S. The Internationalist Clubs on different campuses have been active in a number of struggles, from opposing exclusionary tuition increases to organizing cafeteria workers, driving military recruiters off a CUNY campus, and mobilizing solidarity with victims of racist police terror.

Our first action was to initiate a united-front protest in November 2001 against an anti-immigrant “war purge.” Amid the hysteria following the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, CUNY officials responded to right-wing politicians who sought to kick out “illegal immigrant” students by drastically raising tuition for undocumented students. The demo received dozens of endorsers and over 300 students, faculty, unionists, leftists and opponents of the war on Afghanistan came out to protest this racist attack.¹¹ A few months later, partly in response to this

¹¹ See the IG pamphlet, *Defend Immigrant Students – Stop CUNY’s War Purge* (December 2001).



Internationalist Group organized November 2001 united-front protest against CUNY's post-9/11 "anti-immigrant war purge" of undocumented students. Hundreds came out. NY legislature subsequently passed bill for in-state tuition for many immigrants.

mobilization, state legislators passed a bill providing in-state tuition for undocumented students who had graduated from New York high schools.

The 2001 struggle against the anti-immigrant war purge was carried out in conjunction with the Revolutionary Reconstruction Club, that brought together young Marxist activists at Bronx Community College. In August 2002, the leading activists of the RRC joined the IG and the next year the CUNY Internationalist Clubs began publishing its newspaper, *Revolution*, which has continued to appear yearly, and sometimes more often, since then.¹² Its early issues focused on building class opposition to U.S. imperialism's wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, fighting repression at CUNY, exposing the role of various reformists who sought to sucker students into supporting dissident bourgeois politicians such as Ralph Nader, and other topics.¹³ We also launched a campaign against a "homeland security" program at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, which was eventually canceled because of the protests.¹⁴

At the same time as agitating against the war the CUNY Internationalist Clubs took up the defense of Miguel Malo, an immigrant student leader at Hostos College (CUNY's main campus oriented to Latinos) who was falsely accused of assaulting campus cops by holding up a sign protesting fee increases and budget cuts affecting bilingual and English as a second language programs. For four years CUNY officials went after Miguel, to serve as a lesson to other students not to dare to protest. Al-

though we couldn't stop a conviction on the frame-up charges, through two years of building united-front demonstrations, obtaining endorsements from faculty and mobilizing for court hearings we were able to win broad support on campuses that prevented the imposition of jail time. Without the IG's effort there Miguel Malo would surely have gone to prison.¹⁵

A high point of the IG's work at CUNY came in 2005-07, at the height of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, when the CUNY Internationalist Clubs were able to drive military recruiters off a campus for a period of several months. Earlier there had been sporadic protests against recruiters by small groups of leftists at City College, resulting in arrests. We adopted a different approach, going into cafeterias on working-class campuses to agitate and win mass support to oppose the presence of these agents of imperialist war trying to snare students to kill and be killed on behalf of Wall Street. Where the popular-front antiwar movement sought to ally with Democratic Party "doves," the Internationalist Clubs fought on a class program, calling for workers action and opposing all the capitalist-imperialist parties and politicians.¹⁶

More recently, in 2013, the Internationalist Clubs undertook a united-front campaign, together with the Maoist-led Revolutionary Student Coordinating Committee (RSCC) and other leftists, against the hiring of former CIA director David Petraeus, who had also been commander of the Pentagon's Central Command and commander of U.S. occupation forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. Petraeus is a war criminal of the first order, responsible for bringing death squads to Iraq using "experts" trained in the U.S.' dirty wars in Central America. In the course of the protests, we insisted on upholding the principles of the united front – march separately, strike together – combining joint action with sharp polemics against Maoism.¹⁷ Several protests brought out over a hundred demonstrators, but David "Death Squad" Petraeus continues to give his seminar at an elite "honors" college. Our prominent leading role in the campaign brought an attempt incite a McCarthyite witchhunt by the Fox News channel, which backfired when its target, Sándor John, effectively turned the tables on the "ambush interviewer."

From before the first day of the Fall semester 2014, the CUNY Internationalist Clubs began agitating against the racist police murders of Eric Garner on Staten Island and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. A first speak-out on September 3 drew upwards of 75 participants to show solidarity with the besieged African American population and to denounce the racism that is endemic in American capitalism going back to its origins based on chattel slavery, whose heritage is still

¹² See "Revolutionary Reconstruction Group Joins the Internationalist Group," *The Internationalist* No. 14, September-October 2002.

¹³ See "Bloody Conquest of Iraq, Racist Attack on CUNY," *Revolution* No. 1, September 2003; "Capitalist Nader's 'Socialist' Foot Soldiers," *Revolution* No. 2, October 2004; and "The Clash of Slogans: Revolutionary vs. Reformist," *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2013.

¹⁴ See "Abu Ghraib 101 at BMCC? 'Fatherland Security' Hits CUNY," *Revolution* No. 2, October 2004

¹⁵ See "Miguel Malo Is Innocent!" *Revolution* No. 3, November 2005.

¹⁶ See "'For Militant Mass Mobilization to Drive Military Recruiters Out of CUNY!" *Revolution* No. 3, November 2005; and "CUNY and the Imperialist War," *Revolution* No. 7, September 2007.

¹⁷ The entire issue of *Revolution* No. 10, October 2013, is devoted to this struggle.

Internationalist photo



In the fall of 2013, CUNY Internationalist Clubs undertook a united-front campaign against the hiring of former CIA director David Petraeus, a certified war criminal who commanded U.S. occupation forces in Iraq and Afghanistan where he set up death squads with “experts” left over from U.S.’ dirty wars in Central America.

present today in the hundreds of black youth murdered every year by the modern-day slave catchers. When grand juries refused to indict the killer cops in Ferguson (on November 24) and a week later in Staten Island, the Internationalist Club at Hunter College organized a second vibrant and militant speak-out with over 100 participants and then a third of more than 200 protesters. A boisterous, striking Internationalist-led contingent of African-American, Asian, Latino, immigrant and white students then participated in angry marches that wound through city streets and occupied highways for hours.

Since the 2007-08 economic crisis and election of black Democrat Barack Obama as president there has been an upsurge of activism and protest among young people. There is broad sentiment against imperialist war, reflecting the fact that a young person of 20-24 years of age has hardly known a year when the United States wasn't at war or bombing one or another country around the world. On top of this, the current depression has made it extremely difficult for even highly educated young graduates to find jobs. This fact of soaring youth unemployment was behind the phenomenon of Occupy Wall Street in the U.S. and the movement of the Outraged (*Indignados*) in Spain, Portugal and Greece in 2011. Masses of youth are open to the Marxist analysis that the capitalist system is putrefying and that it puts their own future at grave risk. At issue is what conclusions are drawn from this.

At the time of the 2011 Occupy mobilizations, the Internationalist Group and Internationalist student clubs sought to intervene in the demonstrations. However, we confronted an aggressive anarcho-liberal ideology and bourgeois populist program sharply at odds with the struggle for socialist revolution to overthrow capitalism. Occupy leaders pushed such capital-

ist nostrums as reviving the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act to increase regulation of banks, while insisting that cops are “part of the 99%” because they aren’t rich. When we countered this bourgeois nonsense with the Marxist understanding that the police are the armed fist of capitalism and shouted slogans against racist repression, demonstration marshals tried (unsuccessfully) to silence us. When IG speakers got up at assemblies, “facilitators” kept trying to cut us off. Occupy’s anti-democratic procedures made any real debate of program impossible. We sold a great deal of literature, mostly to tourists looking for the “dangerous reds” that the media told them were there, but had little success in making contacts among the overwhelmingly white, often better-off Occupiers.

The Internationalist Club at Hunter College is preparing a

forum on “State and Revolution 2015,” in which a series of presentations will analyze the systematic police murder of African Americans and Latinos and related issues in terms of Lenin’s classic work. In addition to emphasizing the question of the state, we have underscored the international character of the repression and how it is linked to the capitalist assault on public education. In demonstrations CUNY Internationalist Clubs signs have declared: “Solidarity with Mexican Students,” “Ayotzinapa, Ferguson, NYC: One Struggle, One Fight – Workers of the World Unite!” “From Ayotzinapa to Ferguson and NYC: For Workers Mobilization to Smash Racist Cop Terror!” and “Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!”

For a number of years we have had regular weekly English and Spanish-language study groups, with substantial regular attendance, while the weekly meetings of the Hunter Internationalist Club have also included a large educational component. An important aspect of our student youth work is that most of our contacts are women. This is also true of the largely Mexican demonstrations of solidarity with the Ayo-tzinapa students, where we met several women workers and students who are now attending the Spanish study group. We have had sharp polemical exchanges with the Maoist RSCC, which presents a hybrid mishmash of “proletarian feminism” that is nothing but bourgeois feminism with a few Marxist-sounding phrases thrown in. This includes calls for “wages for housework” which accepts the family as a given while applying capitalist logic, where Marxists are for breaking the confines of the family, replacing its domestic slavery with voluntary social institutions, and favor the full integration of women in social production.

In general discourse, the word “feminist” is often used as

shorthand for anyone who is against the oppression of women. One of the ongoing challenges we face is combating the different varieties of the bourgeois ideology of feminism with the Marxist program for women's liberation through socialist revolution. This includes denouncing bourgeois figures such as Hillary Clinton who poses as a defender of women while siphoning money from Haiti relief funds to set up a sweatshop employing women workers at starvation wages of less than \$5 a day. It also means exposing the anti-communism of bourgeois feminists like Gloria Steinem, who worked with/for the CIA against the Soviet Union during the Cold War. But there are also many varieties of petty-bourgeois feminism that abound on campus and elsewhere. Many who call themselves "socialist feminists" such as Barbara Ehrenreich are in fact supporters of Clinton and Obama's Democratic Party. More radical varieties of feminism claim to be fighting "patriarchy," but in reality accept the bounds of capitalism.

Our Internationalist Group pamphlet on *Bolsheviks and the Liberation of Women* with writings of Kollontai and Zetkin, Lenin and Trotsky – a popular item on our literature tables in both English and Spanish – has been an indispensable tool in this struggle. A pamphlet on *Liberación de la mujer mediante la revolución socialista*, available only in Spanish, contains a speech by comrade Xóchitl in Mexico going over a lot of the material first published in the Spartacist journal *Women and Revolution*. We are preparing a second, more extensive pamphlet in English with key Marxist classics, texts of W&R articles and materials published by the IG.

In our student work we are overwhelmingly recruiting young people with no prior experience of left politics. As we noted in the case of the Occupy movement and protests over the murder of Trayvon Martin, many were excited by the election of a black Democratic as president, but later became disillusioned as he served as imperialist commander in chief in continuing U.S. wars in the Middle East, doing the bidding of the Wall Street tycoons who backed him early on as the Democratic candidate, and the myth of a "post-racial America" went up in the gun smoke of murderous police and racist vigilantes. Continuing mass protests against racist repression have led to radicalization for many, though not on a class program.

As the most conscious militants are won to proletarian communism, the central task we face is the transformation of young radicals into Trotskyist cadres through systematic Marxist education and intervention in the class struggle. This will not occur overnight, but a number of Internationalist club members have demonstrated great fighting spirit and are rapidly developing the skills they will need as professional revolutionaries. As young comrades are recruited to the IG, we look forward to founding a youth section of the Internationalist Group according to the guidelines laid out by the Third Congress of the Communist International: organizationally independent while politically subordinate to the revolutionary party. Organizational independence will aid the political maturation of youth cadre, while abiding by democratic-centralist discipline helps ensure that the youth section is contributing to the building of a single Leninist vanguard party of the proletariat.

Immigrant Workers: A Key Sector of the Working Class

From the outset, the Internationalist Group has had a particular focus on winning immigrant workers to the revolutionary vanguard. Not only must class-conscious workers oppose the anti-immigrant hysteria whipped up by the reactionary right and the push toward police-state repression supported by conservatives and liberals alike, the recently arrived strata of immigrant workers are the newest and most downtrodden sector of the U.S. proletariat, and potentially one of the most militant. The officially estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants – most likely closer to 15 million – are often paid the bare minimum – or even subminimum – wage and have few rights. For that reason employers figure they can hire them as low-paid docile wage slaves. But that can change dramatically. For no other group of workers do the closing words of the Communist Manifesto ring so true: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." But it is up to the revolutionaries to draw these lessons.

The very first action of the Internationalist Group as an organization was to distribute a leaflet at an October 1996 immigrant rights rally in Washington, D.C., "Mobilize the Working Class to Smash Anti-Immigrant Offensive!" (reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 1, January 1997). From that point on we went to every immigration demonstration we could find with our program calling for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. Over the next months these efforts brought together a group of immigrant workers who for number of years were the majority of the membership of the IG. It was notable that every one of them had prior experience in seeking to organize unions or immigrant worker groups. Several had been active in the Garment Workers Solidarity Committee in the garment district in Manhattan. They also appeared in the award-winning film *La Ciudad* (The City) by David Riker about immigrant life in New York. One of the most experienced and talented of these worker organizers was Fernando López, who later died in a tragic accident after he was arrested in a factory raid, imprisoned and then slated for deportation. We still feel his tremendous loss today.

Our 1996 article on the anti-immigrant "backlash" emphasized that "The need for genuine *internationalism* is central to a program to defend immigrants' rights." The comrades who were won to the IG were internationalists even before the met us. In a fight inside an immigrant workers center, a comrade who later became one of our first immigrant worker members had defended a Jewish woman organizer against a move by opportunists to replace her with a Latina using demagogic nationalist arguments. Another point made in our article was that the black question is central to the American socialist revolution:

"While today in many areas, undocumented Latin American and in some cases Asian workers are among the lowest paid and most brutally exploited, historically the black question is key to all political and social questions in racist America. The capitalists, in their perennial effort to set one sector of the oppressed against another, will always try to pit blacks

Fernando López: Comrade, Internationalist, Revolutionary (1973-1999)

The Internationalist Group conference was dedicated to the memory of our comrade Fernando López. The conference was held not far from where Fernando, together with other “undocumented” immigrant workers, was seized in a raid by the hated Migra immigration police on the garment sweatshop where he was working in early 1999. Released from an immigration prison and scheduled for deportation, Fernando died in a tragic subway accident that April, 16 years ago.

Born on 15 July 1973 in the town of Huajuapán in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, and raised in Tlaxcala, Fernando followed an uncle to work in the garment factories of New York City. As in real life, it is as a sewing-machine operator that he may be seen in David Riker’s *La Ciudad* (1998), an award-winning film based in part on episodes from Fernando’s life.

As a young immigrant worker with an avid thirst for knowledge and determination to changing the world, Fernando devoted his talents and unbounded energy to organizing fellow workers of all nationalities. He often remarked on how much he had learned from a Korean American labor organizer fluent in Korean, Spanish and English. Meeting the IG as an activist in the labor, immigrant-rights and (initially) Zapatista solidarity milieus, Fernando stood out for his rejection of nationalism and patriotism of every variety and attraction to revolutionary ideas.

In this sense, Fernando’s path to Trotskyism – the proletarian, revolutionary and internationalist Marxism of our time – was deeply connected to his own life experience, together with his avid desire to absorb and assimilate the lessons of the workers movement worldwide. Becoming



a remarkable propagandist for our internationalist outlook and program, Fernando symbolized his dedication to the cause of black freedom with a pin of Frederick Douglass. After intensive study and participation with the Internationalist Group, he had begun to lead some of our Marxist study sessions at the time of his death at the age of 25.

As noted in a report to the conference on the history of our tendency, Fernando’s loss was a severe and deeply painful setback to our organization, yet his work was central to bringing forward a crucial layer of immigrant worker comrades key to making the IG what it is today. A new generation of emerging young cadres can learn much from his example and the story of his life, outlined in “Fernando López, 1973-1999: Comrade, Internationalist, Revolutionary” (*The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999).

versus whites versus Hispanics in a struggle for crumbs from a shrinking pie. A communist vanguard would win Latino workers to the understanding that that their own liberation must be inseparably linked to the fight for black liberation through socialist revolution.”

The immigrant worker members of the IG have fought for this crucial programmatic point in every way, raising it in forums, supporting unionizing struggles by black workers, and also on the job, working to defuse tensions between Latino and African American workers cynically stoked by the bosses. Despite the sneering racism of the Spartacist League, which treated them as ignorant and probably male chauvinist, the IG has today, and has had for a number of years, a cadre of immigrant worker Bolsheviks, the only such group in any left organization in the U.S. Now in recent months we have been drawing in a group of combative immigrant women workers that already represents a tremendous addition to our revolutionary capacity. Success in this effort, although on a small scale given the size of our party, would be a fulfillment

of a commitment that founding members of the Internationalist Group had formulated years before.

Over many years in the leadership of the Spartacist League, the cadres expelled from the SL in 1996 had sought to orient the organization to recruiting immigrant workers. Spanish-language study groups were set up in two or three locals, but were treated with often openly expressed suspicion. One example: a proposal was presented at the 1994 SL national conference to have youth members get jobs allowing them to work with unionization campaigns like that carried out by the militant janitors union in Los Angeles, whose struggle was the subject of the film by Ken Loach, *Bread and Roses*. The janitors protested under the guns of the National Guard during the 1992 state of siege imposed on L.A. following the upheaval after a court let off the racist cops who beat Rodney King. The proposal was bumped to the Central Committee, from there to the Political Bureau and then to a committee to study. When the answer came back, it was “no,” with a main argument being that those engaged in this work, as well as immigrant workers they might recruit, would

not be able to pay enough sustaining pledge on the miserable wages they would earn!

As in every other aspect of the class struggle, there have been ebbs and flows in our work among immigrants. When right-wing Republicans in Arizona and Wisconsin proposed Nazi-like laws aimed at pushing immigrants out of the country, there was a wave of repudiation culminating the million-strong immigrant workers strike in 2006 that brought May Day back to the United States. When immigrants believed Obama's promise to push through immigration reform, there was a wave of hope. Denouncing the Democrats' "reform" as an anti-immigrant fraud, we sold almost 700 copies of a tabloid special issue of *The Internationalist* at a 2009 demo in Washington, D.C. When Obama's promise went up in smoke, many immigrants lapsed into despair and activism dried up. Even so, it is noticeable that a majority of the street sales of *The Internationalist* are to immigrants.

Immigrant workers are key to revolutionary struggle in the U.S. Whole sectors of the economy depend on immigrant workers, many of them undocumented. Occupations where immigrants are a majority or close to it include agricultural workers, garment workers, various construction trades (plasterers, drywallers), taxi drivers, beauty salon workers. In many other industries immigrants are a third or more of all workers, including most construction trades, packinghouse workers, textile workers, grounds maintenance workers, food service workers and (at much higher pay) computer hardware engineers. Racist reactionaries would have a hard time getting produce at the grocery store, eating a steak or having a meal at a restaurant, getting a taxi, having a house built, buying clothes, getting their nails done or their lawns mowed if it were not for the immigrant workers they so despise. And it should be noted that it's not a crime to be undocumented in the U.S. Overstaying your visa is not even a misdemeanor but a civil infraction like a traffic offense.

An important struggle in which the IG supporters played a substantial and sustained role was the organizing of a union of immigrant workers at the Hot and Crusty bakery in New York in the fall of 2012. The unionizing effort was undertaken by the Laundry Workers Center, which won a legal case for wage theft, giving the workers confidence and a financial cushion for a hard fight. A group of Occupy activists staged a one-day media event when the owners announced they were closing the shop rather than bargain with the union. The Internationalist Group played a supportive role in several ways: first, in helping build a daily picket that held out for 55 days until victory; second, by building



Immigrant workers at Hot and Crusty bakery in New York won union contract including union control of hiring. IG and CUNY Internationalist Clubs played key supportive role.

support among students at nearby Hunter College; third, with a labor solidarity demonstration that brought representatives of a number of New York's most powerful unions; and fourth, in emphasizing the importance of a union hiring hall.¹⁸

Although the number of workers was small, the importance of immigrant workers winning a union through their own picketing is enormous. This was one of the very few labor struggles in New York in recent years that actually won, instead of losing badly. More important, with millions of immigrant workers, documented and undocumented, playing an increasingly vital role in the U.S. economy, the Hot and Crusty workers pointed the way for breaking out of low-wage bondage. The gain of union control of hiring – harking back to the union hiring hall won by West Coast dockers in the 1934 strike that formed the ILWU – is not only unprecedented in recent years, it is a key defense against arbitrary firings and threats by the immigration police.¹⁹ The victory of the Hot and Crusty workers led by the LWC and the important role of the IG in winning this victory have been noted by many leftists and labor militants. These gains could still be threatened, which would pose the need to mobilize labor support to defend them.

The immigrant issue intersects that of organizing low-wage workers. In view of the fact that most supposed "strikes" by fast food and Wal-Mart workers have involved very few

¹⁸ See "'Hot and Crusty' Workers Show the Way," *The Internationalist* (September 2012) and "NYC Unions Back Hot and Crusty Workers at Labor/Immigrant Rights Solidarity Rally," *The Internationalist* (October 2012).

¹⁹ See "Hot and Crusty Workers Win With Groundbreaking Contract," *The Internationalist* special issue (November-December 2012).

actual workers and are mainly media events, the IG put out a leaflet last year calling to organize workers assemblies in areas where there are numerous businesses paying minimum or sub-minimum wages. This had little impact, but there are other possibilities on the horizon that could have a tremendous impact. We have also supported struggles to organize day laborers, but those too have had limited success. In New York City, where over 40% of the population is foreign-born, our street sales of *The Internationalist* have focused on areas with high numbers of immigrants and blacks. We look forward to founding a transitional organization of class-struggle immigrant workers from around the world on the model of the CSEW and CSWP at an appropriate time.

Next Tasks for the Internationalist Group

Three years ago, it was decided that we needed to make a concerted effort to solidify the U.S. section of the LFI. After a period of successful student work during the height of the Iraq war, student activism was falling off and becoming narrower, focusing heavily on CUNY-specific issues. Activity among immigrant workers had also died down, as many believed Obama's phony promises of immigration reform. A reformist opposition current had arisen in the New York City teachers union encompassing almost all the left groups active in the UFT on a program of simple trade unionism with a few "social justice" slogans thrown in, diametrically opposed to the class-struggle unionism of the CSEW. As a result of concentrated efforts we were able to build up the CUNY Internationalist Clubs on one campus and to make the Spanish and English study groups into regular weekly activities deepening the comrades' capacities as Trotskyist cadres.

When struggles broke out this fall against police murder in both the U.S. and then Mexico, the IG reacted quickly and effectively, calling the first solidarity protest outside the Mexican consulate and having a very visible presence at the first marches on Times Square. Our revolutionary slogans made us stand out from the tired reformist/nationalist response, and found an echo among the radicalizing protesters. This brought us a new layer of militant contacts eager to fight, and through our study groups and club meetings, many of these new comrades are quickly becoming revolutionary organizers. The next step is to deepen this understanding and skills to become real cadres, professional revolutionaries, who would dedicate their lives to bringing down this capitalist system of untold misery and open the way to a communist future. That is not something that happens overnight, and requires much study and tempering in the class struggle.

In that respect, the IG put together a bulletin of readings from Lenin, Trotsky and Cannon under the title: *Marxist Study Bulletin: The Struggle for Communism – Workers Revolution in the United States* (January 2013). We also reissued the pamphlet we published in the Spartacist League on The Stalinist School of Falsification Revisited under the title *What Is Trotskyism*. In addition, we have a collection of Marxist Class Readings in English and Spanish on topics including trade-union struggle, black liberation, the popular front and basic

texts which are now out of print or hard to get, except on the Internet. As Marxists we know that education of the conscious vanguard is key, and can never stop. We also know that when a revolutionary crisis breaks out, it may not always be possible for comrades to get in touch and they will be called on to think for themselves, unlike SL/ICL members who require an umbilical cord to an all-knowing center.

A particular task we face is to intensify our work on the woman question, elaborating the Marxist program for women's liberation through socialist revolution and doing political battle with the various brands of feminism, which accept the capitalist framework, whether explicitly or implicitly. We should make use of the fact that our tendency includes one of the founders of the radical women's movement (and one of the very few who became revolutionary communists). The new pamphlet will be an important step. We must also continue our efforts to win African American cadres, without which a revolution in this country is impossible: this is what it means to say that the black question is key. This will require patient and sustained work, such as the current 15-part series on "Marxism and Black Liberation" in the English study group and reviewing new literature on slavery and black struggle. Issuing a second expanded edition of the pamphlet on the *Communist International and Black Liberation*, which comrade Lazarus has prepared, can be an important contribution as well as issuing as a pamphlet Claude McKay's *Blacks in America*. Historically, Caribbean militants have played an important role in black struggle in the U.S., and we should reinvigorate our activities in the Haitian and Dominican areas of New York.

The most important step we must take at this point, building on the work that has been done with students and immigrant workers over the last several months, is to regularize the appearance of *The Internationalist*. With the tremendous gap between our tasks and our limited resources, there will always be for the foreseeable future a tension between different aspects of party work. After having consciously decided to focus on recruitment over several years, now that this is occurring we must reassert the centrality of the party press as the "collective organizer," in Lenin's words. This will mean concretely that party leaders and cadres will have to regularly write articles for the paper. Assuring the regular appearance of *The Internationalist* on its announced five times a year schedule is a precondition to more frequently publishing *Revolution*, which despite its once-a-year frequency has served us well. That in turn will require developing young writers. If we are able to consolidate the CUNY clubs, win our new youth activists to the party and found a youth section, this will be their project and spur them on to combine active intervention with Marxist study.

When the arrogant Yankee imperialist rulers proclaimed their New World Order and the death of communism, many on the left lost hope and conviction in the revolutionary capacity of the world working class. As Marxists we know that the class struggle does not stop, and that if it is necessary to go through a dry spell, our efforts would be rewarded as the bourgeois illusions of eternal supremacy dissipate. We will not overcome the terrible effects of exploitation and oppression by

remaining stationary, “like a tree standing by the water,” but only by actively intervening in that class struggle. It is through such intervention that the LFI has grown in Mexico, and as we are now experiencing in the U.S. In doing so, we have also shown, through exemplary action, what even a small group of revolutionary Marxist fighters can achieve armed with Leninist organization and a Trotskyist program.

–Draft presented for discussion to the First National Conference of the Internationalist Group, 1 April 2015

–Approved by the First National Conference of the Internationalist Group, 5 April 2015

IG National Conference...

continued from page 15

strike against the government of murder,” much of the left has thrown itself into campaigning for a constituent assembly – as if a new constitution would change the nature of Mexico’s murderous regime.

This was the opportunist left’s most recent pretext for their long-standing popular-frontist collaboration with sections of the same Mexican bourgeoisie that carried out the Ayotzinapa massacre. On the strike by the overwhelmingly indigenous farm workers (many from the state of Oaxaca), the speaker emphasized the importance of a clear understanding of corporatist pseudo-unions in Mexico, which have been a crucial tool of successive bourgeois regimes as “cops against the labor movement.” One of the key demands of the farm workers in San Quintín has been for the right to throw out the corporatist labor groups who have been the main support for the agribusiness bosses. The Mexican Trotskyists’ fight for genuine unions independent of the capitalist state and of the bourgeois parties is key to the struggle for revolutionary leadership.

In accordance with Leninist norms, the National Conference is the highest decision-making body of the Internationalist Group. The conference discussed two documents, printed here in their final form: a national document evaluating the work of the IG and laying out tasks for the future, and a document on international perspectives of the LFI. The first was approved by the conference while the second was subsequently approved by the executive committee of the LFI. While only IG members had decisive votes, we invited supporters who have been working closely with us to participate. Their input enriched the discussions, which in turn have a direct impact in the work of the allied transitional organizations.

The activity of the IG discussed by the conference has centered on the struggle against racist repression, work with immigrant workers and with students, as well as weekly study groups in English and Spanish. A layer of young militants, mostly women, has been won to the CUNY Internationalist Clubs through our mobilizations this past fall against racist police murder of African Americans from Staten Island to Ferguson, and the kidnapping and murder of some 50 students from Ayotzinapa, Mexico. The Clubs held speak-outs on three different occasions drawing up to 200 students, and drew attention with their chant, “Only revolution can bring justice,”

which was picked up by many around us in the mass protests in New York.

The IG’s weekly English-language study group has been going on for several years and recently held a 15-session series on “Marxism and Black Liberation,” and perspectives of black recruitment were an important topic at the conference. The Spanish-language study group dates back even further, reflecting the fact that not long after its foundation the IG began to win a layer of immigrant worker cadres that is unique on the U.S. left. The IG called the first international protests around the massacre of Ayotzinapa teachers college students in Iguala, Guerrero last September (as we did around the 2006 repression of teachers in Oaxaca). There we met a number of women workers who have since been participating in the work of the IG while studying. As one of them put it at the conference, “I am learning consciousness, and creating consciousness.”

Class Struggle Education Workers has been a revolutionary pole in NYC teachers unions, which has not only relentlessly fought the sellout union bureaucracy but also waged polemical struggle with reformist oppositionists particularly in the Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE). Not only do the pseudo-socialists as well as Democrats and Republicans in MORE refuse to oppose Obama’s Democratic Party which is leading the attack on teachers, but they went along with MORE’s denunciation of the United Federation of Teachers for

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.
Tel. (212) 460-0983 Fax: (212) 614-8711
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 80 97 21, 21007 Hamburg, Germany

Grupo Internacionalista/México

Mexico: write to Apdo. Postal 70-379, Admón. de Correos No. 70, CP 04511, México, D.F., Mexico
E-mail: grupointernacionalista@yahoo.com.mx
Tel. Mexico, D.F.: 55-3154-7361; Guadalajara: 33-1752-6643; Oaxaca: 951-129-2086; Tijuana: 664-112-5423

endorsing a key march against the cop murder of Eric Garner in Staten Island, and its call for unity with the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, the racist cop protection outfit. The CSEW's hammering away on this betrayal was instrumental in sparking the implosion of that opportunist lash-up.

In Portland, the IG comrades have played a key role in spearheading union solidarity efforts, particularly in support of the ILWU, which was locked out of local grain terminals for over a year, but also in defense of anarchists in the Industrial Workers of the World targeted by the FBI. This work was capped by the formation last December of Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP), including several construction workers and members of the IWW. The IG local and CSWP comrades took up the cause of immigrant workers facing murderous police repression in Pasco, Washington, participating in several demonstrations there. They also invited activists from Pasco to come to Portland for May Day, where they marched in the union contingent against police murder.

Discussion of the main conference document centered on analyzing the plague of police murder in terms of developments pointing in the direction of a bonapartist (military-police) or semi-bonapartist regime. An amendment was adopted to clarify that while the U.S. as a whole is not today a police state, although that is essentially what immigrants and the black population of the ghettos are subjected to, U.S. capitalism is increasingly resorting to police-state measures, including against the general population. This is not only the result of the phony “war on drugs” and “war on terror” which target oppressed sectors, but also reflects social changes with the hollowing out of the middle class and growth of a large population of working poor along the lines of Latin America, with a corresponding change in police practices.

There was also discussion of the supposed historic regression of workers' consciousness claimed by the Spartacist League and its International Communist League in connection with the counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union and East European deformed workers states. The impact of this world-historic defeat for the proletariat has differed significantly

between South Africa and Latin America, for example, and Western Europe, while in the U.S. workers' consciousness has never broken from the stranglehold of the capitalist parties. It was underlined that the SL/ICL thesis was a reflection of bourgeois “death of communism” propaganda, and used as a justification for rejecting the central thesis of Trotsky's Transitional Program, that the crisis of humanity is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership, and in practice abandoning the class struggle.

Another topic of discussion was on the fight against special oppression, especially of blacks and women. For the Internationalist Group, the fight for black liberation is the essential and key distinctive feature of the struggle for workers revolution in the U.S. Immigrant worker comrades spoke on this at the conference, as they do at every opportunity, and there was discussion of the historical experience of the communist movement in winning African American cadres. There was discussion also of our program of women's liberation through socialist revolution, in contrast to the various strains of feminism, which are all based on a bourgeois ideology. A comrade in Portland remarked that we are facing what you might call “neo-Victorian feminism.” Thus a woman construction worker in CSWP was accused of “hating women,” for refusing to quit her job because her union is supposedly too reactionary. For all the talk of fighting “patriarchy” and the “call-out culture,” various feminists end up reinforcing the family, rather than fighting to smash and replace the structure of the oppression of women under capitalism.

The document on international perspectives reaffirmed the position of the IG and LFI that China remains a bureaucratically deformed workers state and we continue to defend it against counterrevolution from within and without. It critiques bourgeois economists who have declared China capitalist on the basis of distorted statistics, and denounces the opportunist left which terms China “state-capitalist” to justify refusing to defend it against U.S. imperialism. That line serves to undermine workers resistance as the decisive battle against capitalist counterrevolution arrives, as it did in the Soviet Union. There was also discussion of growing counterrevolutionary pressure on Cuba, notably in light of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with the U.S.

After a period of several years in which it was decided to emphasize work among students and immigrant workers, which has now borne fruit, the main task put forward in the document and approved by the conference was to regularize the party press (*The Internationalist* for the IG and the CUNY Internationalist Clubs' *Revolution*) as the “collective organizer” of the Internationalist Group, as Lenin put it, the scaffolding around which the revolutionary party is built. The conference was a significant step forward not only for the IG but for the League for the Fourth International as a whole. It ended with the singing of *The Internationale*, the revolutionary workers anthem, in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian and a call to go forward in the struggle for international socialist revolution and a communist future for humankind. ■



Orquesta Skarroñeros band during party at the IG conference.

International Perspectives of the League for the Fourth International

(April 2015)



AP

Pentagon airstrikes in Kobanê, Syria, November 2014. The imperialists are the most barbaric mass murderers of all. Drive U.S./NATO out of the Near East – For workers action to defeat Obama’s Syria/Iraq war!

U.S. Imperialism Still Stuck in the Quicksands of the Near East

Around the turn of the century, back when U.S. imperialism had uncontested supremacy in a “unipolar world” and Democratic secretary of state Madeleine Albright declared the United States to be the “indispensable nation,” the Republican administration of George Bush the younger used the shock of the (anticipated) September 2001 attacks to launch a punitive war against Afghanistan (which had nothing to do with the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks) and then a “preemptive war” against Iraq (on the pretext of weapons of mass destruction which Baghdad didn’t have and wasn’t developing). The Rasputin-like vice president Dick Cheney promised “decades of war” against “terrorism,” a war that “may never end, at least in our lifetime.” The Pentagon’s 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* focused on “fighting the long war,” including the military’s role at home, under a new Northern Command for the U.S., Canada and Mexico, and “defending the homeland in depth,” with “civil support” of supplying police with the kind of weaponry deployed against protesters in Ferguson, Missouri last summer.

But the “war without end” isn’t going so well for U.S. imperialism these days. After pulling out of Iraq in 2011 and leaving the country to the Shiite sectarian regime it installed in power in 2003, last summer the Pentagon-trained Iraqi army

fell apart and fled before an attack by a few thousand fighters of the Islamic State (I.S., sometimes referred to as ISIS) who seized Mosul and most of northwestern Iraq. Now the U.S. is back to bombing I.S. targets with little effect. After a propaganda campaign exploiting the crimes of the I.S. as a justification for imperialist intervention, U.S. imperialism nonetheless takes a dim view of the Iraqi regime successfully mobilizing Shiite military forces against the I.S. The imperialist strategy of “divide and rule” seems increasingly like mere improvisation.

In Afghanistan, despite an official “end of combat operations” ceremony at the end of December 2014, some 11,000 U.S. troops remain in-country (along with almost 1,000 from the German Bundeswehr). With a new puppet Afghan president installed through fraudulent elections, U.S. forces have stepped up raids against “Islamist militants.” Even so, the Taliban Islamists are on the offensive and control most of the southern countryside and even areas around the capital Kabul. The reality is that 13 years of fighting by up to 400,000 Afghan and U.S./NATO troops in by far the longest war in American history, has amounted to a defeat for the U.S. military juggernaut.

Meanwhile, Barack Obama’s supposed victory in Libya, where a U.S./NATO bombing campaign smashed the forces of the Qaddafi regime leading to the assassination of the flaky nationalist strong man, has blown up in Washington’s face. Not only was the U.S. ambassador killed in a 2012 attack in

Benghazi by some of the same Islamist gangs the imperialists had armed and bankrolled, leading to endless recriminations in Washington over the role of then-secretary of state Hillary Clinton, the puppet government (Council of Deputies) favored by the West took refuge on a Greek car ferry in Tobruk, close enough to the Egyptian border to escape; an Islamist regime (National Congress) led by the Muslim Brotherhood holds sway in Tripoli; a rival Islamist regime (Shura Council) runs Benghazi; and the Libyan branch of the Islamic State controls areas in the center and south. Libya as a country no longer exists, and is well on the way to becoming another Somalia, where the U.S. also intervened (in 1991), with similar disastrous effects but one big difference: Libya is less than 200 miles by sea from Italy.

In Syria, Obama is apparently under pressure from the upper echelons of virtually his entire administration (and Hillary Clinton) to try to attack the nationalist government of Bashar Assad, which has held out through four years of civil war and controls all but one provincial capital. Such a move would not bring down the Syrian regime, which has considerable support from Alawites, Shiites, Druzes, Christians and many Sunni Muslims fearful of an Islamist victory, but would send the whole region up in flame – which may be what crazed Zionist hawks want so they can attack Iran. In Israel, the hard-line anti-Arab racist Benjamin Netanyahu just won reelection by the unprecedented provocation of attacking the U.S. president's policies from the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives (over negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program) and announcing formally that he would never permit a Palestinian state. This puts an end to the charade of the Palestinian "peace process," which was all process and no peace, and virtually guarantees a new Israeli war against the Palestinians.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have repeatedly protested against the Israeli attacks on the embattled Palestinian Arab people, which has been driven from its lands since the birth of the Zionist state and today is confined in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which amount to giant concentration camps. We defend the Palestinian people and oppose the very existence of a "Jewish state," which is inherently undemocratic for the non-Jewish population (25% of the total in Israel), as we oppose the Islamic Republic of Iran or the officially Christian states of Pétain's France or Franco's Spain. Unlike most of the left, however,



The League for the Fourth International calls for a binational Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state in a socialist federation of the Near East. Unlike appeals to the imperialists to "divest" from Israel, the LFI calls for workers action to drive the U.S. out of the region and Israel out of Gaza and the West Bank. Above and below right: IG at 9 August 2014 NYC protest of Israeli war on Gaza.



we reject the characterization of Israel as a "settler-colonial state," such as French Algeria, or simply equating Zionist Israel with the South African apartheid regime based on superexploitation of black labor. The Hebrew-speaking population is not the extension of an imperialist metropolis, and the Israeli economy is increasingly based on the exclusion of Palestinian labor. This is not to amnesty the Zionists' crimes: the final logic of their policy is the expulsion (euphemistically called "transfer") of all Palestinians and ultimately genocide.

In Palestine Marxists are faced with the existence of two nations contesting for land and scarce resources on the same territory. The formation of Israel through expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Arabs was a crime, as is the vicious occupation of the West Bank and cruel blockade of Gaza. Yet both national groups have the right to exist. We recognize the right of self-determination of both the Palestinian Arab and Hebrew-speaking nations, as well as the right to return of all residents of historical Palestine and their descendents. But under capitalism there can be no equitable solution for the competing claims of these interpenetrated peoples: the strongest (Israel) will prevail. Thus we do not support the “two-state” formula of the Oslo Accords – which in any case are now dead – as they are inherently discriminatory towards the Palestinians. A single “secular, democratic” capitalist Palestine with a majority Arab population, as many reformist leftists propose, will not come about, if only because Israelis know full well the crimes they have committed against the Palestinian, and expect the same if the tables are turned.

The IG and LFI call instead for a *bi-national, Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state in a socialist federation of the Near East*. We have written extensively on the Palestinian question, including an issue devoted to the origins of Zionism, its links to imperialism, and the history of joint Arab and Hebrew workers struggles in Palestine.¹ Although Zionism continues to poison the consciousness of Israeli workers, they are exploited by a vicious ruling class, dominated by a handful of billionaires seeking to privatize everything in sight, in a society marked by sharply increased inequality. Moreover, in addition to the over 2 million Palestinian Arabs who are second-class citizens subject to endless discrimination and exclusion, there are increasing numbers (at least a quarter million) of migrant workers from East Europe, Asia and Africa without any rights at all. And many Israeli Jews despise the fascistic West Bank settlers while yearning for a peaceful future rather than living in a permanent garrison state waiting for the next war to break out. Even within the Zionist fortress there is potential for class struggle.

Currently the vast majority of the left is promoting the campaign for “boycott, divestment and sanctions” (BDS), calling for imperialist pressure on the Zionist regime. This is a “strategy” premised on the illusion that the imperialists could be convinced to drop their backing for their Israeli ally, which will not happen. Moreover, it is based on a misreading of the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa, which was *not* due to American universities divesting from South African gold

¹ See “Defend the Palestinian People! For an Arab/Hebrew Workers Republic in a Socialist Federation of the Near East!” in *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001, which puts forward the Marxist position on interpenetrated peoples. See also “Zionism, Imperialism and Anti-Semitism,” and “Arab/Hebrew Workers’ Struggles Before the Birth of Israel” in the same issue.



LFI calls for targeted labor boycotts of Israeli ships in response to Zionist attacks. Above: ILWU Local 10 boycotted ZIM Line ship in September 2014. Most of opportunist left refused to join picket because it was labor-led, didn’t call for “BDS.”

mines, toothless sanctions and the like, but rather a response to the militant struggles of the South African black workers, and the imperialists’ judgment that with the fall of the Soviet Union, the South African Communist Party no longer represented a danger. The superexploitation of black labor continued, as shown by the August 2012 Marikana massacre of miners by the neo-apartheid regime. The IG/LFI do not support the pro-imperialist policy of “BDS”² and instead call for targeted labor boycotts of Israeli ships in response to a Zionist attack, such as by ILWU longshoremen in San Francisco/Oakland in 2010 and again in 2014.³

Meanwhile, imperialist and Zionist pressure on Tehran over its nuclear power program continues. While Israeli “hawks” with their arsenal of hundreds of nuclear weapons are itching to “bomb, bomb Iran,” the Obama administration is attempting to achieve a negotiated “solution” in Iran, while not-so-covertly aiding internal opposition movements and resorting to cybersabotage. During the 2009 upsurge of protests by dissident Islamists, the League for the Fourth International demanded that Washington keep its hands off while politically opposing all wings of the theocratic regime and calling for “Workers Revolution Against the Islamic Dictatorship!” We noted how in 1979 virtually the entire left supported Khomeini in the name of the “Iranian Revolution,” only to have Kurds, women, homosexuals and tens of thousands of leftists jailed, stoned to death and executed by the victorious mullahs. In contrast, authentic Trotskyists stood for a class program: “Down With the Shah! Don’t Bow to Kho-

² In an exceptional case where a call for BDS might otherwise be defeated by pro-Zionist forces, and the debate becomes a referendum on Israel and its criminal treatment of the Palestinians, we might give critical support to a BDS motion against a Zionist offensive, while forcefully spelling out our disagreement with this policy of begging the imperialists.

³ See “International Workers Action to Defend the Palestinians: Oakland Picket Blocks Israeli Ship!” *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010.

meini! For Workers Revolution in Iran!” While politically opposing the Islamic Republic, the LFI has insisted:

“Iran has the right to obtain nuclear or any other kind of weapons to defend against intervention or invasion by U.S. imperialism – or its Israeli Zionist allies, who have hundreds of nuclear warheads and are crazed enough to use them.”
–“Mass Protests Rock Iran,” *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009

In early 2011, following popular uprisings that toppled Western-backed dictators in Tunisia and Egypt, the left internationally was cheering what they (and the bourgeois media and rulers) called “revolutions” and the advent an “Arab Spring.” Now the generals are openly governing in Cairo, after an interval in which the Muslim Brotherhood held office but not state power. Leftist protesters are being killed, as they were both under the “Pharaoh” Mubarak and the Islamist Morsi. In the latest case, military spokesmen said a leftist protester died after being blasted point-blank by birdshot from a police shotgun because she was “very thin”! Many petty-bourgeois leftists pretend that an “Arab Revolution” is still underway, just suffering from some hiccups along the road. The reality, as we warned at the time, was that there never was even a political revolution, much less a social revolution, since the military which was the backbone of both regimes was still running the show.⁴

Today the military strongmen are back, the supposed “moderate” Islamists are in retreat, *jihadi* (holy warrior) Islamists are in the ascendant but divided (between the I.S. and Al Qaeda), pro-Saudi Sunni and pro-Iranian Shiite Islamists are slugging it out in Yemen, the U.S. imperialists are bombing away in Iraq and Syria, while the Zionists are creating more “facts on the ground” with their West Bank settlements, and what is left of the left is under attack from all sides. In this witches’ brew of murderous conflicts, for revolutionary Marxists the overriding aim is to drive the imperialists, the biggest mass murderers of all, from the region. In the squalid sectarian butchery in Iraq, proletarian internationalists are opposed to all sides: whether Shiites, Sunnis or Iraqi Kurds win, the result will be a bloodbath. In Syria, we oppose the authoritarian Assad regime and *all* the cutthroat Islamist gangs who are the *entirety* of the armed opposition, while upholding the right of communal self-defense. While defending the Syrian Kurds, Assyrians and other minori-

⁴ See the various articles on “Arab East in Upheaval” in *The Internationalist* No. 33 (Summer 2011), including “Egypt, Tunisia: Turn Popular Uprisings Into Workers Revolution!” “Imperialist Marauders in the Quicksands of North Africa,” and “Libya and the Opportunist Left.”



Lines of vehicles of civilian residents of Mosul, Iraq fleeing city after takeover by Islamic State. A blow against imperialism? Not hardly. Victory for either side in Shiite-Sunni civil war in Iraq has led to communal slaughter. Any actual blow against imperialist intervention is in the interest of workers and oppressed, yet imperialist-armed I.S. is not waging anti-imperialist struggle but mainly a sectarian jihad (holy war) against local “apostates” and “infidels.”

ties under attack by the Islamic State, we have warned against any alliance with imperialism, which would use them as pawns, to be discarded when convenient.

The deadliest enemy of all the peoples and the toilers of the Middle East is imperialism, particularly the U.S. imperialists who murdered millions of Koreans and Vietnamese, are responsible for the death of over 1 million Iraqis in their nine-year invasion/occupation, hundreds of thousands more due to “U.N.” sanctions, tens of thousands of Afghans and thousands killed by American drones from Pakistan to the Arabian peninsula. Yet when Obama launched air strikes against the Islamic State last September, and again when he formally declared war against the I.S. this February, *there was not a single antiwar protest of any size in the United States*. The reformist left is split between a Stalinoid minority that supports “Third World” nationalist strongmen like Assad and a large social-democratic majority that tail after “rebels” who seek the support of and are armed/financed by imperialism, both in Libya and then in Syria. These opportunist pseudo-socialists are nothing but cat’s paws for the imperialists. But both the Stalinoid and social-democratic wings are always seeking class-collaborationist alliances with bourgeois liberals, and since Democratic “doves” support Obama’s war, the “antiwar movement” does nothing.

Some centrists including the Spartacist League (SL) and its International Communist League (ICL) take a “military side with ISIS against the U.S.-led coalition and its local adjuncts.” These fakers invent an anti-imperialist struggle where it doesn’t exist. The declaration announcing the Islamic State as a reincarnation of the caliphate in June 2014 says almost nothing about the West and imperialism. Its *jihad* is mainly directed against local “apostates” and “infidels.” Moreover, the forces of the I.S. have been armed for years by the imperialists, using the Gulf monarchies as intermediaries, as proxies to attack the Assad regime. The predecessors of the I.S., like Osama bin Laden, were operatives

for U.S. imperialism in its war in Afghanistan, where Trotskyists hailed the Soviet Red Army for opposing the imperialist-backed *mujahedin*. Yet to argue, as some other leftists do, that the I.S. is simply an agent of imperialism, and U.S. attacks on it are a charade, is to be willfully blind to reality. The Islamic State (like bin Laden and Al Qaeda) is a Frankenstein's monster created by imperialism that then "went rogue."

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have insisted that by far the most dangerous enemy facing the workers and oppressed peoples on the Near East is U.S. imperialism, whose bombing attacks in Syria and Iraq and drone strikes from Afghanistan to Yemen are part of a broader war for world domination. The IG/LFI calls to "Drive U.S./NATO Imperialists Out of the Middle East," adding: "As Leninists and Trotskyists, we stand with the oppressed fighting to free their lands from colonial and imperial domination. This includes siding with the struggles even of reactionary-led forces fighting against imperialism," as Marx and Engels did in the 1857 Sepoy Revolt against British rule in India, William Morris did with the 1880s Mahdi revolt in Sudan and Lenin did with the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China. We added:

"Any actual blow against imperialist intervention and domination is in the interest of the working class and oppressed peoples of the world in the fight to drive the U.S./NATO imperialists out of the Middle East. Yet the Islamic State, while posing as defenders of Islam against Western 'crusaders,' is not seeking to unite the oppressed masses of Iraq and Syria to throw off the imperialist yoke. The immediate targets of the I.S. 'holy war' are the Kurdish, Shiite, Yazidi, Syrian and Iraqi Christian populations, as these Sunni *jihadis* seek to impose the oppressive social norms of an 8th-century nomadic tribal society on modern urban secularized populations."

—"For Workers Action to Defeat Barack Obama's Iraq/Syria War," *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014.

The I.S. has continued to massacre Shiites, Kurds, Christians (most recently executing 21 Egyptian Copts in Libya and kidnapping hundreds of Assyrians/Syriacs in Syria) while enslaving Yazidi women, accused of being pagan "devil worshippers."

The fundamental character of the fighting in Syria and Iraq continues to be a sectarian civil war in which Trotskyists oppose all sides, while supporting the right to communal self-defense and calling to drive out the imperialists. The victory of one side or another means a bloodbath of the conquered community. To claim that the Islamic State with its snuff videos is fighting imperialist domination, to pretend that an I.S. victory against Syrian Kurds would be a blow against the U.S., reeks of imperialist indifference toward the fate of the populations that would suffer the consequences of the Sunni Islamists' rule.

We denounced leftists who joined the chorus calling for NATO governments to arm Kurds in Kobanê.⁵ The ICL,

⁵ See "Operation Kobanê in Germany," *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014.



Ali Atmaca/Anadolu Agency

May 2015 strike by workers in Turkey at Renault (above), Ford, Fiat and tractor plants against employers and corporatist Türk-Metal "union" shows power of the Turkish proletariat.

however, asserts that the Syrian Kurds are simply imperialist proxies. The Kurdish bourgeois nationalists of the PYD, like their mentors of the PKK, would like to come to an arrangement with the imperialists, and to use their temporary military alliance against the I.S. to achieve this. But this is blocked above all by the hostility of the Turkish bourgeois state, a far more important imperialist ally in the region. Recoiling from their social-chauvinist support for U.S. imperialism in Haiti in 2010, the ICL nonetheless still refuses to raise the defeat of U.S. imperialism as a proletarian task. "Outsourcing" this task to the I.S. is yet another example of looking to reactionary social forces after writing off the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat as a result of counterrevolution in the Soviet Union.

Notably, nowhere in its articles on Syria and Iraq does the ICL call for workers revolution in the Middle East. Yet the key to carrying out a real fight for social liberation in this pivotal region, as throughout the world, is to mobilize the working class on an internationalist program of socialist revolution. It was when the Tunisian unions came out and the Egyptian workers entered the fight in 2011 that the dictators fell (although their military-based regimes did not). To defeat imperialism and Zionism requires a sharp fight against all forms of Islamism, nationalism, militarism and bourgeois politics of every stripe. The sole force that can do so is the international working class, especially in Egypt and Turkey. As we have emphasized, the "Turkish Proletariat Is Key." Turkish workers have a long history of leftist militancy and strong union organization, although weakened in recent years. A real struggle to throw the imperialists out of the Near East and put an end to communal/sectarian slaughter would look to the industrial workers of Istanbul, the miners of Anatolia, the Kurdish workers of Diyarbakir, the Alevi and Alawi workers of Adana (the latter two cities near major NATO military bases), on a program for international socialist revolution.

The toxic conflicts between reactionary forces besetting

the region are a vivid expression of the barbarism of the decaying capitalist order. The rise of Islamism and continued Zionist domination are the direct result of the bankruptcy of Stalinism and the inability of the bourgeois nationalists it promoted to break the imperialist stranglehold. In the absence of internationalist proletarian revolutionary struggle, the Middle East will remain a seething cauldron of national, religious and communal strife and an object of imperialist aggression which could set off a conflagration of unfathomable consequences the way strife in the Balkans led to the first imperialist world war. The authentic communism of Lenin and Trotsky offers the only road to liberation for the toilers of the Middle East so that its vast resources can serve to make the region bloom rather than being booty to be fought over by predatory rulers and invaders.



Fascist shock troops of U.S./EU-backed coup in Kiev, February 2014, sport Nazi “wolf’s hook” armbands.

Ukraine: Imperialist Anti-Russia Offensive Backfires

While U.S. imperialism continues to be beset by the consequences of its invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, the European imperialists have become increasingly aggressive in seeking to dominate their “hinterland” (backlands), as the German imperialists viewed the resource-rich regions they conquered and then lost in World Wars I and II, and to increase exploitation of European workers in the heartland. After swaggering British and French rulers bombed Libya to smithereens in 2011, they set their sights on extending European Union (EU) clout in East Europe bordering Russia, particularly Ukraine. Within the EU, they have sought to drive down wages and drive up profits through anti-worker austerity policies, provoking resistance in France (worker and youth mobilizations in 2004, 2006 and 2010), Spain (miners revolt in 2012) and particularly Greece, from 2011 to today. But while the Eurobosses have met resistance, the Euroleft has confined struggles to nationally limited attempts to preserve past gains, which are doomed to failure, rather than waging a Europe-wide fight for socialist revolution, which is the only way to defeat the rapacious bankers and austerity-mongers.

The upheaval in Ukraine that exploded in late 2013, leading to a bloody coup by fascist and other right-wing Ukrainian nationalists in February 2014, provoking Russia’s annexation of Crimea (with overwhelming popular support), the subsequent revolt in Eastern Ukraine in March-April and the ongoing war against pro-Russian rebels, was the product of the imperialist rulers’ *Drang nach Osten* (drive to the East). While the vast majority of the Western left bought the lying imperialist propaganda (a few have subsequently shown some buyer’s remorse) about courageous dissidents camped out in Maidan Square in Kiev resisting a brutal and corrupt Russian-backed “oligarch,” the IG and LFI warned that this was a U.S.- and E.U.-instigated

and funded operation from the outset and the “freedom-loving” campers were shot through with fascist provocateurs. We also noted how top-flight U.S. imperialists, including notably the Clinton family and its appointees in the Obama administration, were up to their necks in this attempt at a second edition of the 2004 Western-engineered “Orange Revolution.”⁶

In the aftermath, leading imperialist think tanks have sought to figure out how things went so wrong. Western rulers did not expect Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovitch to refuse at the last minute to sign the “cooperation” accord with the EU, even though it included demands for draconian economic cuts which would have provoked mass protest and most likely his overthrow. When the U.S./E.U. backed Ukrainian nationalists and their fascist allies seized power, overthrowing the elected Kiev government after carrying out a massacre in the Maidan (which they blamed on Yanukovich), the imperialists didn’t expect Vladimir Putin to react strongly, even though the Russian leader had sent in troops when U.S.-backed Georgia attacked South Ossetia in 2008. The British House of Lords has issued a massive 500-page document, *The EU and Russia: before and beyond the crisis in Ukraine* (February 2015), concluding after extensive hearings that “there has been a strong element of ‘sleep-walking’ into the current crisis,” with EU leaders “being taken by surprise by events in Ukraine.”

Currently there are sharp disputes in Washington over arming the Kiev regime to fight the Russian-backed rebels in the Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics in Eastern Ukraine. As over Syria, most of the administration as well

⁶ See our in-depth analysis “Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine” (March 2014), and subsequent articles on “Fascist Pogrom in Odessa, and the Aftermath” (May 2014) and “From Ukraine to Middle East: U.S. Imperialism Strikes Out” (June 2014) all printed in *The Internationalist* No. 37, May-June 2014. On 2004 see “U.S.-Sponsored Coup d’État in Ukraine,” *The Internationalist* No. 20 (January-February 2005).

as the American commander of NATO forces Gen. Breedlove and left-over Cold Warriors in various think tanks, are reportedly pushing for U.S./NATO military action against “Russian aggression,” while Obama is reluctant. Saner voices among imperialist policy makers have pointed out that such provocative action would achieve nothing while inevitably producing a muscular Russian response, possibly setting off a wider war. The fact is that there is nothing the West or its Ukrainian oligarchs (who are now squabbling among themselves) can do to reconquer Eastern Ukraine, which by now is a militarized state with well over 10,000 fighters (mostly former workers) and hundreds of main battle tanks (some estimates as high as 500). West Germany, in contrast has 250 main battle tanks. But even though U.S./NATO military intervention would backfire, that doesn’t mean it won’t happen.

In the background to the Ukraine crisis are sharpening contradictions between the imperialist powers. From the beginning, the European capitals have been far less eager than Washington to impose economic sanctions on Russia, and they’re wary about sending arms to Ukraine. The reason is West Europe’s dependence on Russia energy supplies. The United States, in turn, wants to use this opportunity in order to wean the Europeans off Russian natural gas and instead make them dependent on the U.S.’ newly plentiful supplies of shale gas (which, however, it will not be able to export until 2018 for lack of terminal facilities). As in the Middle East, this is not just about money, energy or even striking a blow against the Russkies. While environmental activists are trying to stop “fracking” in the U.S., geopolitical strategists and capitalist politicians want to use natural gas from shale deposits to further the global hegemony of U.S. imperialism.

The 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, pub-

lished three weeks after the 9/11 attacks, highlighted the U.S.’ interest, as a “global power,” to maintain “access to key markets and strategic resources,” such as oil. Reformist leftists frequently referred to the invasion and occupation of Iraq as a “war for oil.” But very little of the oil from Iraq and the Persian/Arabian Gulf is destined for the American market (less than 5% of exports from the region go to the U.S.), which is mainly supplied by domestic production, Canada, Mexico and Venezuela. Rather, Middle Eastern oil goes overwhelmingly to Europe and East Asia. Washington wants to keep its hand on the oil spigot primarily in order to be able to control its imperialist allies and potential rivals. Now it is trying to do the same over natural gas. It’s all about imperialist world domination, and the main ideologist for this drive is one General David Petraeus.

Echoing the imperialist governments and media, the social-democratic reformist left screamed bloody murder when Crimea broke away from Ukraine with the support of Russian troops stationed on the peninsula. The fact that with virulent Ukrainian nationalists in power in Kiev the large majority of the overwhelmingly Russian-speaking Crimean population supported secession and joining Russia meant nothing to the supposed “democrats” of the West, who denied their right to secede. The IG and LFI denounced the Kiev coup, called for U.S./EU hands off Ukraine, supported self-determination for Crimea and autonomy for eastern Ukraine, and stood for military defense of the Donetsk/Lugansk rebels. Responding to leftist denunciations of supposed “Russian imperialism” in Ukraine, we denounced imperialist sanctions and in a detailed analysis demonstrated that despite Putin’s imperial ambitions, capitalist Russia today is not imperialist but an intermediate regional power under assault by the real imperialists (see “The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism’,” *The Internationalist*, May 2014).

We also reiterate our disagreement with Trotsky’s 1939 call on the eve of World War II for an “independent Soviet Ukraine.” Trotsky’s stand was principled, opposing any compromise with imperialism or concession to Ukrainian nationalists, but inappropriate at a time when Ukrainian nationalists were overwhelmingly anti-Soviet and pro-imperialist and there were virtually no left-wing Ukrainian nationalist forces, unlike at the time of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and in the 1918-21 Civil War. The position in disagreement with Trotsky’s policy was taken by the International Communist League (see “On Trotsky’s Advocacy of an Independent Soviet Ukraine” and “Fake Trotskyists on the Ukraine: Why They Misuse Trotsky,” in *Spartacist* No. 49-50, Winter 1993-94) at a time when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism, after a discussion in which cadres who later founded the IG and LFI played leading role.

The latter-day ICL, which has lost its bearings in the aftermath of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and is adrift on the choppy seas of centrism, responded to the Ukraine crisis by declaring in a front-page headline that “Crimea Is Russian” and calling to “support Russian intervention into Crimea” so long as Moscow pro-



IG at May 2014 NYC protest against U.S. war drive.

vided special rights for the Crimean Tatar minority.⁷ (This conditional support was later changed to unconditional.) The IG/LFI took an internationalist stand of support for Crimean separation from Ukraine, including incorporation into Russia, based on the right to self-determination, while noting that Russian intervention aided that. The SL/ICL, in contrast, put forward a *Russian nationalist* policy. Even Putin did not declare Crimea to be Russian but called for its right to join Russia, which it did following a referendum. And since there was (and is) no fighting in Crimea, calling to support Russian intervention amounts to political support to Moscow rather than military defense. Moreover, and typically, in its articles on Ukraine the SL has not presented a program for class action by the working class.

In sum, this is one more example of the post-Soviet SL/ICL casting about for non-proletarian forces to substitute for the working class, which it has written off as having suffered a qualitative regression in its consciousness, when the real problem remains that of leadership, intensified by the disorientation accompanying the 1989-92 counterrevolution in East Europe and the USSR whose effects were felt in different ways around the world. It remains a vital task to build communist workers parties in the lands of the former Soviet Union, which can only be parties grounded in the Trotskyist analysis of the bureaucratic degeneration of the October Revolution under Stalinism and its anti-Marxist, nationalist dogma of “socialism in one country.” Where neo-Stalinists make blocs with monarchists and even fascists on the basis of Russian nationalism, Trotskyists fight to build a resolutely internationalist proletarian vanguard opposed to every variety of class collaboration with bourgeois sectors, from “popular fronts” to so-called “red-brown coalitions,” all of which are roadblocks to revolution.

The League for the Fourth International has paid particular attention to Ukraine, although our early efforts were frustrated in a bizarre case of political/financial fraud by a crew of political impostors associated with the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) of Peter Taaffe.⁸ While extreme rightist and Nazi-fascist Ukrainian ethnic nationalism has dominated in Western Ukraine, in the South (Odessa) and Eastern Ukraine ostensibly communist tendencies (such as Borotba) have a certain presence, although on the basis of a contradictory and eclectic program. Meanwhile, the nationalist/fascist coalition in Kiev may have begun to unravel as the competing oligarchs and their private armies go after each other. In fighting for independent *workers militias* and for occupying and imposing *workers control* of enterprises of *all* the oligarchs, Trotskyists can appeal to working people throughout Ukraine facing horrendous economic conditions and vast destruction as a result of the imperialist offensive. The LFI will continue to fight for the rebirth of Trotskyism in Trotsky’s birthplace in close collaboration with the workers of Russia and East and West Europe.

⁷ See *Workers Vanguard*, 7 March 2014.

⁸ See “A Band of Political Impostors and Swindlers in Ukraine,” *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003.

Western Europe: Against Austerity and Anti-Immigrant Racism – Fight for Europe-Wide Socialist Revolution

In Western Europe, bankers and bosses – along with the capitalist and social-democratic politicians who do their bidding – have been intent on driving up the rate of exploitation in the name of maintaining international competitiveness. This sparked several waves of mass protests of millions of youth and workers in France, the latest (in 2010) getting close to a general strike. However, the politics put forward by the various “far left” groups, including three sizeable organizations described by the media as Trotskyist (the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, Lutte Ouvrière and the Parti des Travailleurs) were purely reformist. Even when the NPA agitated for a “general strike,” it did so in trade-union terms. Our LFI produced propaganda in French for each of these periods of mass struggle, calling for a mobilization on a transitional program leading to a fight for workers revolution, and traveled to Paris to intervene.⁹ However, in the absence of a leadership fighting to turn these defensive struggles against attacks on workers’ past gains into a proletarian offensive against capitalist rule, the mobilizations dissipated after several weeks and the bourgeoisie prevailed.

Meanwhile, over the past several years, the persistence of mass unemployment has fueled the growth of anti-immigrant racism in Europe. This has been capitalized on both by outright fascist parties like the National Front in France, and by rightist immigrant-bashing populists, notably in Northern Europe. Starting last December, in Germany there was a mushrooming of a movement known as Pegida, an acronym for “Patriotic Europeans Against Islamization of the West.” While these reactionary protests were not directly fascist in character, they included quite a few Nazis, including in the leadership. Pegida’s weekly demos of up to 30,000 marchers in Dresden chanted “*Wir sind das Volk*” (We are the people), a take-off on the nationalist slogan chanted in Leipzig during 1989, “*Wir sind ein Volk*” (We are one people), in support of capitalist reunification of Germany. Unions and leftists have staged peaceful counterprotests of several thousand and the government called a few large civic marches for “harmonious coexistence” with immigrants. Pegida dissipated when it was revealed that its spokesman had posted pictures of himself as Hitler. But no one in the left or labor movement sought to bring out the power of the working class against this racist offensive.

Recently, a grotesque terror attack by Islamist gunmen on the satirical weekly *Charlie Hebdo* and a kosher supermarket in Paris in January of this year was used by the Socialist government of François Hollande to line up the left behind the bourgeoisie in the name of secularism. As 4 million people marched “against terrorism” in the biggest demonstrations in French history, the bulk of the French reformist left chanted along with the ruling class, “*Je suis Charlie*” (I am Charlie).

⁹ For example the articles under the headline “France: Workers and Youth Revolt,” in *The Internationalist* No. 23, April-May 2006; and the articles on France from November 2010 printed in the issue headlined “Focal Point Europe: Capitalism in Crisis, Class Struggle Erupts,” *The Internationalist* No. 32, January-February 2011.

Louisa Gouliamaki/AFP



While the vast majority of the left internationally supports SYRIZA in Greece, this supposed “Coalition of the Radical Left” is actually a bourgeois populist party governing together with a right-wing clerical-militarist junior partner. The LFI calls for workers action including strikes and occupations to impose workers control and stop privatizations by SYRIZA, which is now enforcing the anti-worker austerity dictated by the Eurobankers. Above: health workers march on Greek parliament, May 20.

The immigrant population of the working-class suburbs did not join this celebration of “republican values” that has served as a launching pad for increased repression and in support of this magazine that has often run overtly racist cartoons. The IG/LFI published an article denouncing the racist anti-immigrant backlash, the equation of Muslims with terrorists, and French/U.S. imperialist aggression in the Middle East and Africa, while emphasizing the urgent need for mass workers action against unemployment and in defense of the embattled immigrant/Muslim population.¹⁰

Currently the battle over anti-worker austerity is focused on Greece, where the January election victory of SYRIZA (the Coalition of the Radical Left) sent shock waves around Europe and the world, both among the capitalist rulers and media and the ostensibly socialist left. While bankers were dismayed, leftists cheered. Yet immediately the supposedly radical left SYRIZA formed a government with the rightist pro-military ANEL. Then after three weeks of acerbic exchanges with the Eurobankers, the new Greek government capitulated to demands of the hated “Troika” for more austerity and privatizations. We published an article in favor of a critical vote to the Communist Party (KKE) in the elections, since its campaign – though far from breaking with Stalinist reformism – did sharply oppose the illusions being spread by SYRIZA. Analyzing the nature of the “radical left” SYRIZA, we explained that in reality it is a bourgeois populist formation

based on petty-bourgeois sectors, similar to PASOK which governed Greece on behalf of NATO and dutifully implemented the IMF austerity “reforms,” as SYRIZA is now doing.¹¹

Various leftists inside (Left Platform) and outside (AN-TARSYA) the governing party have criticized Prime Minister Tsipras and his flamboyant finance minister Varoufakis for their concessions to the Eurobankers, and favor leaving the euro. But a “Grexit” under capitalism will mean drastic cuts to the incomes of Greek workers, who have already had their living standards slashed by more than was the case for American workers during the 1930s Depression. As we stressed in our article, there will be no reversal of austerity for the workers under capitalism. What is needed is a Europe-wide workers mobilization against capital in a *class* struggle for international socialist revolution. In the absence

of this, the murderous Nazi fascists of Golden Dawn (XA) are waiting for disenchantment with the phony radical leftists to set in, while a new military dictatorship to put an end to “chaos” cannot be excluded, especially as SYRIZA, like Allende in Chile, has guaranteed it will not touch the police/military apparatus.

The efforts of the LFI to intervene in struggles in Europe have been hindered by the lack of personnel on the spot and, in the case of Greece, by language limitations. We lost the comrades of the Permanent Revolution Faction in France as a result of debilitating medical problems, and the pressures of isolation facing these immigrant cadres in a country that has been the world capital of pseudo-Trotskyism. We must continue to seek opportunities to intersect struggles and engage revolutionary-minded militants with our Trotskyist propaganda wherever and whenever we are able to do so. Ultimately what will be required is revolutionary regroupment(s) of cadres breaking from opportunist organizations to embrace authentic Trotskyism. While the immediate prospects may be limited, it is possible that in the next crisis leftists may split from the major “far left” groups which, although diminished, together still have several thousand members and whose limitation to parliamentary politics and simple trade-unionism must be clear to any genuine revolutionary. Given our language capacity and attractive Mexican press and Brazilian press, we should be particularly attentive to possibilities of intervening in Spain and Portugal.

¹⁰ “Defend Muslims in Europe Against Racist ‘War on Terror’,” *The Internationalist*, January 2015.

¹¹ See “Greece: The SYRIZA Illusion Exploded,” and “What Is SYRIZA?” *The Internationalist*, March 2015.

Latin America: For Permanent Revolution Against Yankee Imperialism and Bourgeois Populist Regimes

If the European imperialists consider North Africa and East Europe their “hinterland,” a source of natural resources and cheap labor, the U.S. imperialists still see Latin America as their “back yard,” as Obama’s secretary of state John Kerry blurted out last year. For the most part, this has involved following a policy of “malign neglect,” paying little high-level attention to events south of the border aside from spying on the private communications of presidents, legislators and any other “persons of interest” to the NSA/CIA/DEA/DIA/FBI, etc. However, a particular thorn in the side of Washington has been the Venezuelan government of Hugo Chávez and his successor Nicolás Maduro. Since **Venezuela** supplies a little over 8% of U.S. oil imports, for the last decade and a half successive U.S. governments have waged constant efforts to bring down the bourgeois nationalist/populist regime in Caracas, to no avail. The latest ploy of the Obama administration, cancelling visas and imposing sanctions on top Venezuelan officials and their relatives, backfired as various Latin American governments protested and Maduro called up and armed 100,000 members of a civilian militia to guard against any coup attempt.

The IG/LFI have defended Venezuela, whose populist regime is the kind of government Trotsky called “bonapartism sui generis” referring to the government of Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico in the 1930s, against the economic strangulation and coup-plotting of the Yankee imperialists and their local bourgeois flunkys, aptly nicknamed “*escuálidos*” (the squalid) just as Cuban counterrevolutionaries earned the sobriquet “*gusanos*” (worms). At the same time, we have defended leftist union leaders against sometimes deadly repression by the Venezuelan government, which despite talk of “21st century socialism” presides over and defends a capitalist economy. And we call for revolutionary working-class mobilization on a transitional program for workers control, plant occupations, independent workers militias and building a Leninist workers party on the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution. Only through international socialist revolution can the imperialist stranglehold be broken.

The mounting tensions in the country pose the possibilities of another explosion of imperialist-directed reactionary agitation, but also of independent workers mobilization pointing to revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. A new article on the situation in Venezuela should be produced soon for *The Internationalist* and *Revolución Permanente*.

In different countries of South America, left-posturing populist governments have arisen over the past dozen years. We have defended Bolivia and Ecuador as well as

Venezuela against the depredations of U.S. imperialism. At the same time, these bourgeois governments have come to power and remained in office in order to head off a revolutionary upheaval by the militant workers, peasants and indigenous peoples. In **Bolivia**, we have chronicled (including with on-the-spot coverage) the massive worker-peasant-Indian uprisings of 2003 and 2005 which brought the Andean country to the brink of revolution, only to be thwarted by the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) of Evo Morales.¹² And when Bolivia’s left-talking vice-president Álvaro García Linera spoke at the Left Forum in New York in 2013, we organized a protest against the populist government’s repression of striking miners.¹³

Bolivia is important not only for its militant miners, and more recently the mobilization of indigenous peasant forces, but also because of the historical tradition of Trotskyism among the mining proletariat. The fact that a leading supporter of the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International is the foremost authority on Bolivian Trotskyism is something we must highlight, internationally and Bolivia. However, given our limited numbers we are obliged to pick and choose where and when we intervene, and cannot be present at every key juncture. Given the militancy of Bolivian workers with a significant continuing presence of ostensible Trotskyists, it is possible that an opportunity will arise to intersect a leftward-moving current and seek to win them to the authentic Trotskyism of the LFI. In any case, we must include more coverage of

¹² See the collection of articles on “Bolivia: Workers Uprising Knifed,” in *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003; and “Bolivia Explodes in Sharp Class Battle,” in *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005.

¹³ See “Brutal Repression by Evo Morales Against Bolivian General Strike,” *The Internationalist* No. 35, Summer 2013.



Silvia Izquierdo/AP

The LFI calls for worker-peasant-Indian governments in the Andean region of South America and heavily indigenous states of Mexico. Above: indigenous women march on Ecuadoran capital of Quito demanding ouster of right-wing president, January 2000.

AFP



Cuban president Raúl Castro and U.S. president Barack Obama meet at summit meeting of the Americas, Panama, April 11. Reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Havana and Washington poses new dangers. For workers political revolution to defend Cuba from counterrevolution, from without and within.

Bolivia in our press, in particular on the indigenous question.

We have written a number of articles on **Ecuador**, reflecting personal ties and experience of our comrades, although the possibilities of direct visits have been limited. In particular we have written about the Indian question in this country where up to 40% of the population belongs to the various indigenous peoples (and where non-Spanish speakers were excluded from voting into the late 1970s). After an extensive investigation and review of past Marxist writings on the subject, we formulated the call for *worker-peasant-Indian governments* in Ecuador and Bolivia (as well as in the heavily indigenous states of Oaxaca and Chiapas in Mexico).¹⁴ While many left groups in the Andean region historically gave short shrift to the Indian question, when they awoke to the importance of the issue with the rise of indigenous movements in the late 1970s and '80s, their response was to tail after the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois indigenous organizations and parties, like Pachakutik in Ecuador. The distinctive feature of the slogan of the League for the Fourth International is our insistence that, given their social centrality in these regions, the core of any revolution must have an indigenous character rather than the issue being reduced or relegated to regional autonomy.

In recent months, Washington has attempted a new tack by officially recognizing the government of **Cuba**, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, after more than half a century of economic blockade. U.S. rulers, and various business groups such as grain exporters, are wary of losing out to competitors as the Havana government of Raúl Castro opens the door to capitalist investment. But given the hammerlock of Cuban *gusanos* on the U.S. Congress, formal diplomatic recognition and lifting some annoying bureaucratic travel restrictions will not affect the embargo which has hobbled the Cuban economy

¹⁴ See "Marxism and the Indian Question in Ecuador," *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2013.

for decades. Meanwhile, the U.S. and other capitalist regimes, notably Spain and Brazil, seek to use the opening for capitalist investment, so far in the form of joint enterprises, to foster counterrevolutionary political forces and economic pressure aiming at the restoration of capitalism. Although long-time Cuban president Fidel Castro has reportedly resisted measures threatening the bureaucratic regime that rules in the name of "socialism," the governing bureaucracy has spawned a growing layer of pro-capitalist elements who threaten the gains of the Cuban Revolution.

Latin American nationalists have long embraced the Castro regime, but some leftist currents falsely claiming to be Trotskyist, notably followers of the late Nahuel Moreno and Ernest Mandel, have joined the imperialist chorus denouncing the repression of pro-capitalist Cuban "dissidents." The Morenoites have embraced *gusano* counterrevolutionaries, put forward

a program of purely democratic demands aimed at facilitating blocs with bourgeois dissidents, and claim that capitalism was restored in Cuba years ago (without anyone but them noticing). The Morenoite offshoot, Fracción Trotskista, claims to be defending the gains of the Cuban Revolution, but refers to the "restorationist bureaucracy" and claims that the Cuban regime is leading the counterrevolution, "like in Vietnam and China ... where it was the 'Communist bureaucrats' who led the return to capitalism" (FT, 22 December 2014). This not only conjures up an already triumphant counterrevolution in China and Vietnam, it denies the fundamental Trotskyist understanding of the contradictory character of the brittle, parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy, and instead gives it the power of a class capable of carrying out a social counterrevolution.

There is no doubt that the establishment of diplomatic relations with the U.S. will greatly increase the dangers of counterrevolution in Cuba. Many of the reforms put forward by the Castro regime, including the great expansion of *cuentapropistas* (independent entrepreneurs) and of individual and cooperative agricultural marketing, as well as mass layoffs of government employees, seriously undermine the collectivized economy and would create a potential social base for counterrevolution. The fact that these measures have only been haltingly implemented indicates considerable resistance within the bureaucratic regime. If and when such market-oriented reforms and semi-privatizations hit key sectors that have been symbolic of revolutionary gains, notably education and health, there could be mass opposition. Trotskyists would intervene fighting against the increasingly assertive pro-capitalist bureaucratic sectors and to build a Cuban Trotskyist party that would lead the fight for political revolution to replace Stalinist bureaucratic rule with revolutionary organs of workers democracy committed to defense and extension of the gains of the Cuban

Revolution, on the island and internationally.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have opposed all pro-capitalist forces in Cuba, both among oppositionists championed by imperialism and within the bureaucracy itself. We supported the repression of dissidents sponsored and financed by the U.S. Interests Section in 2003, who staged provocations just as the U.S. launched its invasion of Iraq,¹⁵ and have denounced the Damas en Blanco (Ladies in White) formed by family members of those jailed at that time. Leading comrades of the LFI from the U.S. and Mexico have traveled to Cuba over the years, and we were able to meet and discuss with Cuban Trotsky supporter Celia Hart before her tragic death in 2008, which represented a huge loss for revolutionary prospects on the island. The Mexican hip-hop group Intifada, whose leading comrades of the Activistas Revolucionarios del Hip Hop (ARH) fused with the Grupo Internacionalista at its first national conference in 2012, had previously traveled to Cuba where they publicly proclaimed “*Viva la Cuarta Internacional!*” (Long live the Fourth International) during a performance. They also have sharply criticized the counterrevolutionary politics of some Cuban hip-hop groups.

Given the frequency with which New York-area universities have sponsored pro-imperialist dissidents like the blogger Yoani Sánchez and pro-capitalist academics, the IG should more systematically intervene there (as we have occasionally done in the past) to defend the Cuban Revolution and its gains against those who would undermine or overthrow them. We should take advantage of the increased opportunities to travel to Cuba to deepen understanding of the “reforms” underway which dangerously open the door to ever greater intervention by international capital (notably from Brazil). Overall, we should have regular coverage of Cuba in the press of the LFI at this crucial time of great danger, but also revolutionary possibility. The Mexican section of the LFI in particular can play an important role in this.

The IG and LFI have given particular emphasis to work around **Haiti** and the **Dominican Republic**. As we have repeatedly underlined, American working people owe a special debt to the Haitian Revolution of 1792-1804, which inspired slave revolts in the U.S. presaging the Civil War. The first black republic in history also sent shivers down the spines of the slave owners, who dominated U.S. politics in its first decades, not unlike the effect of the Cuban Revolution of 1959-60. Struggles in the two nations on the island of Quisqueya (Hispaniola) also affect those who live in the U.S., and vice versa, due to the large emigrant population living in New York City: over 400,000 Haitians and 600,000 Dominicans. This could be seen in the 2013 NYC school bus drivers strike, in which 80% of the drivers were Haitian or Dominican. Haitians also make up a large percentage of school bus drivers in Boston, whose left-led union has been the target of vicious anti-labor attacks.

Continuing a focus we had already pursued in the Spartacist League, the IG wrote about and joined in protests against the U.S. intervention in Haiti in 2004 when the Yankee impe-

rialists brazenly kidnapped populist president Jean-Bertrand Aristide and dumped him in the middle of Central Africa.¹⁶ When Brazil took over from the U.S. with its troops, serving as a mercenary occupation army under U.N. auspices (the MINUSTAH), our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil were able to pass motions in the Rio de Janeiro state and national teachers unions denouncing the occupation, pointing out that the same murderous “counterinsurgency” tactics used by the military in Haiti were being applied by the military police against the impoverished black population of Rio’s *favelas*, and calling for workers action to drive Brazilian troops out of Haiti and the military and paramilitary police out of the *favelas*. We covered the uprising in Port-au-Prince against the U.S./U.N. attempt to rig the 2006 elections in Haiti, and also the wave of xenophobic violence and lynch mob attacks on Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic.¹⁷

For the next three years, the IG participated in regular monthly pickets together with the Haitian syndicalists of Batay Ouvriye outside the Dominican consulate in New York’s Times Square denouncing the persecution of Haitian workers (as well as of youths born in the D.R. of Haitian parents, who were denied Dominican citizenship). In August 2008, we proposed a united-front demonstration of Haitian-Dominican Solidarity Against Deportations, which brought out leftists from both halves of the island to protest the racist treatment of the 1 million Haitians living in the Dominican Republic. This unique event, in the face of decades of government-instigated hostility, was given prominent (negative) coverage in Santo Domingo highlighting the presence of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Junot Díaz.¹⁸ While engaging in united-front action with Batay Ouvriye we also publicly denounced on several occasions B.O.’s receipt of U.S. funds of the National Endowment for Democracy, the outfit that replaced the CIA’s secret funding of “non-governmental organizations,” via the AFL-CIO’s “Solidarity Center.” No matter what the “labor” cover, this is imperialist blood money which no leftist should touch.

With the January 2010 earthquake, events in Haiti reached world attention as the U.S. government under Barack Obama invaded the devastated island republic on the pretext of providing earthquake relief. In reality, U.S. forces blocked the delivery of relief aid and focused on keeping the hard-hit population from protesting. The IG helped initiate and organize pickets outside the U.S. Mission to the United Nations that brought together a number of left groups on a principled united-front basis demanding the U.S. and U.N. occupation forces get out of Haiti. One group that did not participate was the Spartacist League/U.S., which scandalously *supported the Yankee imperialist invasion*. We sharply denounced this grotesque “social-imperialist”

¹⁶ See “Throw the Imperialists Out of Haiti!” and “Organize Worker-Led Resistance Against Death Squad Invaders!” in *The Internationalist* No. 18, May-June 2004.

¹⁷ See “Attempted Election Theft in Haiti” and “Stop Persecution of Haitian Workers in the Dominican Republic!” in *The Internationalist* No. 23, April-May 2006.

¹⁸ See “New York Protest Against Persecution of Haitian Workers in the Dominican Republic,” *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009.

¹⁵ “For Revolutionary Internationalist Defense of Cuba!” *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003



Internationalist Group initiated August 2008 united-front demonstration in New York that brought out Dominican, Haitian and U.S. leftists to protest racist treatment of people of Haitian origin in the Dominican Republic.

betrayal of everything Lenin and Trotsky stood for, while for several months the SL sneeringly termed our call for imperialist troops out “IGiocy.” But after an intermediate stage of surreptitiously backing off, the SL/ICL finally repudiated its shameful pro-imperialist line (while pointedly refusing to look at its origins), confirming the IG’s characterizations. We pointed out that this betrayal was not a “mistake” but the product of years of capitulation to the pressures of U.S. imperialism and confirmation that the SL/ICL was no longer a revolutionary organization but an outfit of vulgar centrist opportunists.¹⁹

In recent years, we have continued to follow developments in Haiti, including initiating a united-front protest outside the NY headquarters of Hanes (a leading clothing manufacturer in Haiti) and Macy’s department store in December 2013 in solidarity with a strike by the overwhelmingly female garment workers in Haiti. This action, which brought out several dozen activists, was organized in conjunction with the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, who also organized a small rally and march from Hunter College to Bloomingdale’s the next month in solidarity with our sisters and brothers in Haiti.²⁰ We also periodically sell *The Internationalist* and *L’Internationaliste* in the Little Haiti area of Brooklyn and have sold as well in the Little Santo Domingo area of Washington Heights. To have a greater impact among the émigré Haitian and Dominican population in NYC, which is key to any intervention on the island, will require recruiting some militants from these two

¹⁹ See “Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti” and “Open Letter from the Internationalist Group to the Spartacist League and ICL,” *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010. See also “Haiti Earthquake: Capitalism, Occupation and Revolution,” “Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes! Imperialist Occupation, No!” and several other articles in this issue focused on Haiti.

²⁰ See “Haiti: Women Workers Strike Against Starvation Wages,” *The Internationalist* No. 36, January 2014.

communities. This would be a step toward overcoming the murderous nationalism that has rent this birthplace of black freedom in the Americas.

The Internationalist Group/U.S. has also paid particular attention to **Puerto Rico**, the largest remaining colony in the world. While a number of left groups, including the latter-day Spartacist League and the social-democratic International Socialist Organization, limit themselves to recognizing Puerto Rico’s *right* to independence, this in no way distinguishes them from the imperialist rulers, all of whom (including Barack Obama and George Bush) piously declare their support for the Caribbean island nation’s right to self-determination. But since the time of the foundation of the

Communist International, Leninists have insisted that the only “colonial policy” for proletarian revolutionaries is the demand for *unconditional independence* from the colonizing power, and support to those fighting to free themselves from the colonial yoke.²¹ Otherwise, whether colonial status is disguised as “free associated state” in Spanish or “commonwealth” in English, or via statehood, the subjugation of Puerto Rico would remain – and these supposed revolutionaries are in reality colonialist “socialists.”

The Internationalist Group has called from the outset for *unconditional independence for Puerto Rico* from the United States, while fighting for *workers revolution* and the establishment of a voluntary *socialist federation of the Caribbean*. In this framework we have published articles on the struggle to drive the U.S. Navy out of Vieques, on the 2005 assassination of Puerto Rican independence fighter Filiberto Ojeda by an FBI death squad, and on FBI raids across the island in 2006. We have also actively supported every important class struggle on the island, both with propaganda and solidarity action. When Puerto Rican telephone workers struck in 1998, in a movement that led to a two-day general strike, the IG traveled to San Juan and published a leaflet, “Puerto Rico General Strike: Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!” (*The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998) hundreds of copies of which, in Spanish and English, were sold on the picket lines. We also published, in the same issue of *The Internationalist* an analysis of the betrayal of the strike by the labor leadership.²²

In subsequent years we have published articles with on-the-spot coverage on the 2008 strike by the Puerto Rican

²¹ See “ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence,” *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998.

²² See the collection of Internationalist articles on Puerto Rico at our Internet site: <http://www.internationalist.org/internationalist-archivepuertorico.html>

Teachers Federation (FMPR), including attacking the labor colonialism of the U.S. labor federations and providing a sober analysis of the reasons for the defeat of that pivotal class battle. We also went to San Juan to cover and participate in the important 2010 student strike against exclusionary tuition hikes at the University of Puerto Rico. In both cases we emphasized the need to mobilize the power of the industrial working class, including the key electrical workers. In addition, the IG participated actively in New York in building united-front strike solidarity demonstrations. As the class struggle continues in Puerto Rico, and the issue of its colonial “status” won’t go away, the Internationalist Group will continue its efforts to engage with revolutionary-minded militants in building a Puerto Rican section of the League for the Fourth International, a key pending task for the LFI, aid to which is a fundamental obligation for any organization in the United States standing on the program of Leninism and Trotskyism.

The LFI has also paid special attention to the **struggle against women’s oppression** in Latin America. In addition to publishing the pamphlet on *Los bolcheviques y la liberación de la mujer* and a second pamphlet on *Liberación de la mujer mediante la revolución socialista* containing a speech by comrade Xóchitl of the Mexican section dealing in particular with the measures undertaken by the early Soviet Union, we have highlighted the demand for “free abortion on demand,” in articles on Mexico, El Salvador and Ecuador.²³ In June 2013, at a time when the “left” bourgeois government of El Salvador (of ex-guerrillas of the FMLN) was refusing a young woman the right to terminate a pregnancy of a deformed fetus that was a threat to her life, we protested this atrocity outside the Salvadoran Mission to the U.N.

South Africa: For an Authentic Communist, Leninist-Trotskyist Party to Bury Neo-Apartheid Rule with Workers Revolution

In the aftermath of the counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc deformed workers states, one country where the watchword of communism continued to inspire the working masses was South Africa. Although the South African Communist Party (SACP) was thoroughly Stalinist, schooled in decades of class collaboration and directly cooperating with the top mining bosses such as Anglo American’s Harry Oppenheimer, it was seen by black workers as leading the struggle to bring down the edifice of apartheid slavery through its influence in the African National Congress (ANC) and the unions. But following the 1994 election and the establishment of an ANC government under anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela, the SACP supplied many of the cadres who staffed the state apparatus, including police and intelligence agencies. This caused some unease among those party members who mistak-

enly thought that the “national democratic revolution” was but a way station on the road to communism. We sought to bring out this contradiction with an early article on “Debate in the South African Left: In Defense of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,” *The Internationalist* No. 3, September-October 1997.

Since Mandela & Co. presided over a capitalist government and South African capitalism continued to be based on super-exploitation of black labor, the governmental “communists” of the SACP soon became the chief enforcers of neo-apartheid wage slavery. For a number of years they were able to continue their charade, while enjoying the “gravy train” of ministerial privilege. But in August 2012, the acute contradictions of this regime came to a head as the South African Police of the black capitalist ANC government murdered three dozen striking platinum miners in Marikana. In the face of mass outrage over a massacre reminiscent of Sharpeville and Soweto, SACP leaders in the government and at the top of the National Union of Mineworkers defended the killers. The popular-front “Tripartite Alliance” of ANC, SACP and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) began to crumble.²⁴ A year later, at the end of 2013, Marikana found its political expression as the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), the largest union in Africa, broke from the ANC regime calling for a new workers party fighting for a “socialist South Africa.”²⁵

The NUMSA leadership has not broken from the Stalinist scheme of “two-stage revolution,” and still upholds the ANC Freedom Charter for a “non-racial” capitalist South Africa as the path to socialism. If realized, after some cleansing of the most egregious corruption, their program would just lead to a repeat of the trajectory of South Africa under the ANC. But NUMSA’s break opened a huge breach in the neo-apartheid edifice, an opening that cries out for intervention by Trotskyists. Yet the response of the main group claiming to represent Trotskyism in South Africa, the Democratic Socialist Movement of the CWI, has been to initiate a new social-democratic party, the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP), on the basis of a thoroughly reformist program. The small Spartacist South Africa group, on the other hand, dismissed the NUMSA split from the ANC as a tempest in a teacup, as the union tops are still bureaucrats and have not broken with their Stalinist heritage.

Class-conscious workers in South Africa must build a genuinely communist party capable of fighting for socialist revolution against the new black bourgeoisie and its SACP advisors, as well as the old-line white rulers. The LFI has sought to enter into discussion with South African leftists and has published articles on South Africa in each of our most recent issues. We have also traveled to meet with NUMSA representatives and with South African leftist trade-unionists. Effectively intervening in this extremely important situation, however, cannot be done at a distance and we must find a way for LFI representatives, including notably from our Brazilian section, to engage in person and

²³ On Mexico, “¡Por el aborto libre y gratuito!” *El Internacionalista* No. 6, May 2007; “Contra la prohibición del aborto en El Salvador,” *Revolución Permanente* No. 3, October 2013; and “Ecuador: Correa ataca el derecho de la mujer al aborto,” *Revolución Permanente* No. 4, May 2014.

²⁴ See “Bloody South Africa Mine Massacre Unmasks ANC Neo-Apartheid Regime,” *The Internationalist* special issue, December 2012.

²⁵ See “South Africa: Workers Slam ANC Neo-Apartheid Regime,” *The Internationalist* No. 37, January-February 2013.



Members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa on strike, July 2014. NUMSA's break with the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance could fracture the popular-front neo-apartheid regime. But to open the road to socialist revolution it is necessary to break with the Stalinist-reformist dogma of "two-stage" revolution and build a Trotskyist party on the program of permanent revolution.

on the scene with South African leftists from a number of currents and unions. This will be a difficult undertaking given our limited cadre resources, and will likely require repeated efforts.

China: Proletarian Political Revolution vs. Threat of Counterrevolution

Following the counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc, China has been the most important of the remaining bureaucratically deformed workers states, and a particular focus of U.S. imperialism's ire. In 2012, the Obama administration announced it was reorienting its entire foreign policy with a "Pivot to East Asia" where it has harassed China with naval and aircraft encounters in the South China Sea and with provocative actions directed against Chinese ally North Korea in the Yellow Sea. For Pentagon war planners, China is the principal "rival" and potential "adversary" they are preparing to confront. Liberal geostrategists like Robert Kaplan (who provided the rationale for Democrat Bill Clinton's wars on Yugoslavia and is now head of the Center for a New American Security and member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board) write detailed articles on "How We Would Fight China" (*The Atlantic*, June 2005), while scoping out China's military vulnerabilities:

"China is highly vulnerable to naval force because of the configuration of its coastal waters, which provides choke points for access to its shores. The ultimate Chinese fear is an American blockade, which the weak Chinese navy would be unable to counter, but this is a distant fear. Still, it is the ultimate American advantage."

—George Friedman, "The State of the World: Explaining U.S. Strategy," *Stratfor Global Intelligence*, 28 February 2012

China is also a significant issue on the left, the large majority of which, like the centrist Fracción Trotskista quoted above, holds that China is capitalist. Many of these opportunists openly refuse to defend China against imperialism. Many of them also claim the Soviet Union under Stalin and his heirs was "state capitalist," as claimed by the renegade from Trotskyism Tony Cliff, or another new form of class society, as in the case of the Morenoites who now claim that social counterrevolution in the USSR occurred in 1928. It seems, though, that these pseudo-Marxist "theoreticians" neglected to inform the imperialist bourgeoisies, who continued to try to overthrow the Soviet Union and Soviet bloc deformed workers states until, after decades of Stalinism undermining the legacy of the revolution, they succeeded in 1989-92, leading to a massive

impoverishment of the population. But on China today, most of the world bourgeoisie agrees with opportunist leftists that China is capitalist (even as U.S. imperialism seeks to "engage" and confront Beijing). Their common counterrevolutionary position leads them all to fundamental misunderstandings about China today.

In fact, *capitalist rule has not been restored in China*, but with tremendous capitalist inroads – in the export industries of the special economic zones, in the Hong Kong special administrative region and within the bureaucracy itself – *the danger of counterrevolution is ever-present and growing*. Not only is the "state capitalist" theory anti-Marxist and contradicted by the actual functioning of the Chinese deformed workers state, it is especially dangerous because it serves to justify passivity or even support for actual counterrevolution when the show-down occurs. This is precisely what happened in the USSR, when at the time of the August 1991 coup and counter-coup, "state capitalist" leftists along with various pseudo-Trotskyist groups which in practice had abandoned Trotsky's policy of Soviet defensism either did nothing or actually joined Boris Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary barricades. Genuine Trotskyists stood at their posts, as the then-revolutionary ICL did, issuing a leaflet, 50,000 copies of which in Russian were distributed in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere, calling: "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!" (*Workers Vanguard*, No. 533, 30 August 1991).

In our article on "Where Is China Going?" (*The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998), we wrote:

"Ever since the Chinese Revolution of 1949, Washington has thirsted to 'take back' the country that the U.S. and its

Carlos Barria/Reuters



Striking workers at Hi-P factory in Shanghai, manufacturer of computer and mobile devices, block entrance to plant in protest over layoffs, December 2011. Leftists who claim China is capitalist are looking for excuse not to defend it, undercutting struggle when showdown with real counterrevolution comes.

imperialist allies and rivals avidly sought to carve up in the first half of the century. Capitalist conglomerates have long been ravenous to sink their teeth into this huge market and cheap labor pool of 1.2 billion people. They have already made heavy inroads. A large percentage of all toys, shoes and electronics components sold by the world's capitalists are produced in China's 'Special Economic Zones' where some 170,000 foreign enterprises have been set up. Over 200 of the Fortune 500 top corporations in the world are present in China, ranging from McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken (their biggest and most profitable outlets are in Beijing) to AT&T and Ford Motors....

"As the imperialists turn the screws economically and politically, they have been greatly aided by the Stalinist bureaucracy that has run the People's Republic of China since its birth.... The Chinese Revolution was made not by the working class under the leadership of a genuinely Marxist party, but instead by the nationalist Stalinists under Mao Zedong at the head of the peasant-based People's Liberation Army (PLA). Thus the workers state which resulted from smashing the bourgeois state and capitalist class rule was bureaucratically deformed from birth....

"Trotskyists have always stood for *unconditional military defense* of China against any capitalist state and against counterrevolution from without or within.... China remains a deformed workers state today: socialized property, although seriously undermined, has not been overthrown; while capitalism has made ominous inroads, the bourgeoisie has not returned to power; the state apparatus of the deformed workers state has not been dismantled.... But by opening wide the door to capitalist penetration, the bureaucracy is bringing the country to the brink of an abyss."

This analysis still holds true today ... and with it the mounting danger of capitalist counterrevolution.

Various bourgeois economists have produced elaborate analyses claiming to show that the Chinese economy is heavily or even majority capitalist. This false portrayal is done by sleight of hand, in particular by defining companies owned and administered by local governments, the so-called township and village enterprises (TVEs), as "non-state." This is absurd because the TVEs are neither owned by private capitalists nor is their production determined by a capitalist market – which is why many of them run chronic deficits, which would put any capitalist company out of business. These misrepresentations are particularly significant with regard to Chinese banks. The Western economic press is filled with stories about Chinese banks

being loaded with "non-performing loans" and predicting that this "bad debt" could topple the whole banking system, like the subprime mortgages did in the U.S. in the 2007-08 crash. But Chinese banks are not commercial enterprises, they are simply administrative bodies which the state uses to discipline state-owned companies through loans. If those loans are not repaid they can be, and routinely are, simply stricken off the books with no effect on the system whatsoever.

Moreover, since the 2008 world capitalist economic crisis, which reduced Chinese exports of consumer goods to the West, the indisputably state-owned enterprises (or SOEs) have been growing. While the capitalist world plunged into a deep economic depression, China's production continued to increase, without significant increase of unemployment or loss of income for working people. This happened because as a deformed workers state China has a (bureaucratically) planned economy, and the bureaucracy simply decided to shore up the SOEs, which dominate machinery, auto, information technology, steel, chemicals and other basic industries, producing a boom in infrastructure investments. As the leading U.S. newspaper reported, the Chinese government:

"pumped public money into companies that it expects to upgrade the industrial base and employ more people. The beneficiaries are state-owned interests that many analysts had assumed would gradually wither away in the face of private-sector competition.

"New data from the World Bank show that the proportion of industrial production by companies controlled by the Chinese state edged up last year, checking a slow but seemingly inevitable eclipse. Moreover, investment by state-controlled companies skyrocketed, driven by hundreds of billions of dol-

lars of government spending and state bank lending to combat the global financial crisis.”

—Michael Wines, “China Fortifies State Businesses to Fuel Growth,” *New York Times*, 29 August 2010

In addition, by also sharply increasing wages, the government has increased consumer spending, leading to an expansion of consumer goods industries to replace the lagging export production.

At the time we wrote our 1998 articles on China, there had been numerous workers’ protests, in a number of areas reaching the level of near-revolts over working conditions, layoffs, low wages and failure to pay wages. Moreover, the imperialists were actively mucking around in the special economic zones through such channels as the *China Labour Bulletin*, an “NGO” funded by the U.S. NED (read, CIA). Many leftists who label China capitalist do so on the basis of the low wages paid to workers in the foreign-owned factories producing for export. The bureaucracy evidently got the wake-up call, for the official “unions” began demanding higher wages and organizing in capitalist enterprises (including McDonald’s and Kentucky Fried Chicken, entirely non-union in the U.S.). Of course, these are still controlled by the state bureaucracy rather than being genuine workers unions, and they have not prevented hideous working conditions such as at Apple computer supplier Foxconn. But it is notable that from 2004 to 2013, “Blue-collar pay has soared between fivefold and ninefold in dollar terms in the last decade” (*New York Times*, 10 January 2014). Average factory workers’ wages in China are now 25% higher than in Mexico.

Ecology is another area where China has been notorious, with cities clogged by pollution from coal-burning energy plants and smoke-belching heavy industry factories. This was a direct result of the government decision to make China the world’s factory. But as conditions reached crisis level, the bureaucracy switched gears and in a matter of months China became the world’s biggest investor in “green” technology, spending \$275 billion over five years, twice the size of its annual defense budget, while it is reducing carbon emissions faster than any other country (“Can China clean up fast enough?” *Economist*, 10 August 2013). While bureaucratic control means that harmful decisions are often made, the collectivized economy makes it possible to correct these. Overall, what is needed in China is not a social revolution to overturn a predominantly or heavily capitalist industry producing for profits, but rather a workers political revolution to put an end to the capitalist incursions, defeat counterrevolutionary forces, establish organs of workers democracy to prevent such bureaucratic abuses of the collectivized economy and fight for proletarian revolution internationally.

In recent months, the imperialist drive for counterrevolution in China intensified again with the explosion of protests in Hong Kong last September-October. These protests were hailed by the remnants of Occupy Wall Street in the United States. The fact that the leaders of the Hong Kong protests, organized by



Sam Tsang/South China Morning Post

Face of a counterrevolutionary: Hong Kong University law professor Benny Tai Yiu-ting, a main leader of Occupy Central, is a regular speaker at events held by CIA front National Endowment for Democracy.

a group calling itself Occupy Central, were directly tied to the U.S. government via the NED (CIA) and its offshoots (such as the National Democratic Institute) has been amply demonstrated. The *Wall Street Journal* (25 September 2014) quoted pro-Beijing media in Hong Kong noting that 17-year-old protest leader Joshua Wong had been invited by the American Chamber of Commerce to Macau for briefing. In addition:

- Jimmy Lai, the newspaper magnate, founder of Next Media and owner of *Apple Daily* in Hong Kong, was a prominent funder of Occupy Central.
- Benny Tai, another prominent figure in Occupy Central, has regularly attended NED and NDI events, including speaking at a September 2014 NDI-funded conference in Hong Kong on political reform.
- Martin Lee, also an Occupy Central leader, spoke at an April 2014 NED forum in Washington, D.C. on “Why Democracy in Hong Kong Matters.”

Trotskyists oppose this U.S.-funded and advised “pro-democracy” movement whose ultimate aim is counterrevolution in all of China. Not surprisingly, even the imperialist media reported that in the circles its reporters in Beijing travel in, “On social media and over shared meals at restaurants, many young professionals express suspicion and even hostility toward the students and the Occupy Central protest movement” (*New York Times*, 10 October 2014).

The question of China has loomed large in polemics between the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International and the International Communist League. In the fight over Germany that led to the expulsion of the founding cadres of the IG, the SL/ICL proclaimed that the restoration of capitalist rule was led by the bureaucracy. In a document written for the 2012 fusion of the IG and the Portland Trotskyist Study Group, we noted:

“The ICL’s abandonment of Trotskyism on the centrality of the crisis of revolutionary leadership went hand-in-hand with a fundamental revision of the Trotskyist analysis of the nature of the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed

workers states. In the struggles inside the ICL against us, they declared that the Stalinist bureaucracy led the counter-revolution in East Germany and the Soviet Union and they were leading it in China. We called them on this ('Stalinists Led the Counterrevolution? ICL Between Shachtman and Trotsky,' *The Internationalist* No. 9, January February 2001; and 'ICL Still Caught Between Shachtman and Trotsky,' *The Internationalist* No. 11, Summer 2001), pointing out that Trotsky always insisted that the bureaucracy, while paving the way for counterrevolution, opening the door to it, digging the grave of the revolution, was still a contradictory layer and that the battle would ultimately be between the proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie. ...

"Some years later, the ICL leadership flipfopped again and declared that the statement that the bureaucracy led the counterrevolution in East Germany and was leading it in China was a polemical exaggeration in the struggle against us. However, to this day they do not seem to have revised their statement about the bureaucracy leading the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union."

—"China : Battle Over Capitalist Restoration Looms" (28 July 2012)

Unlike the latter-day SL/ICL, the League for the Fourth International has not had to revise and re-revise its political line on a whole series of questions ranging from Puerto Rico (independence) to Mexico (popular front), Middle East (bi-national Palestinian workers state), a host of domestic issues and the most fundamental questions of all for Trotskyists, calling for the defeat of your "own" imperialist rulers in war, and the analysis of Stalinist rule in the bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states. We continue to stand on what we wrote concerning China in 1998:

"It is still possible to prevent the catastrophe brought about by Stalinist betrayal and imperialist onslaught. The restoration of capitalism in this vast and turbulent country must first break the resistance of the workers, who would be the prime victims of a counterrevolution. Indeed, it is the spectre of an awakened Chinese working class that terrifies both the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie. ... What's needed above all is to forge a Trotskyist party that can lead the working class, supported by the poor peasants together with all those who seek a socialist future, to oust the bureaucracy and take the reins of power into its own hands, through *proletarian political revolution* to stop the looming *capitalist counter-revolution*."

—"Where Is China Going?"

And to those who have declared the battle already over, and thus would abandon Chinese workers as the decisive hour arrives, we would respond with Trotsky's admonition in his April 1940 "Letter to the Workers of the USSR":

"But fortunately, among the surviving conquests of the October Revolution are the nationalized industry and the collectivized Soviet economy. Upon this foundation workers' soviets can build a new and happier society. This foundation cannot be surrendered by us to the world bourgeoisie under any conditions. It is the duty of revolutionists to defend tooth and nail every position gained by the working class, whether it involves democratic rights, wage scales, or so colossal a

conquest of mankind as the nationalization of the means of production and planned economy. Those who are incapable of defending conquests already gained can never fight for new ones."

Building the League for the Fourth International

As the U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, much of the Internationalist Group's work is directly tied in with that of the other sections of the LFI. This was seen, for example, in organizing the work stoppages demanding freedom for Mumia in Rio de Janeiro and the U.S. West Coast in April 1999, and this past year with the mobilizations against police murder from NYC to Ferguson and Ayotzinapa. Much of the work of the CSEW has concerned the struggles of teachers in Mexico and Brazil, which have been the subject of forums and the CSEW's recent workshop at the conference of the New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE). And the work of the Latino comrades constantly intersects that of the Mexican section. In street sales and at demonstrations *Revolución Permanente* is sold along with *The Internationalist*.

The Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico has grown greatly since it started out as a couple of people at the National University (UNAM), one of whom was unable to be active publicly. Today the GI Mexico is larger than the IG in the United States. The most notable characteristic of this growth is that it has been the direct result of social struggles. The first growth came with the intervention in the ten-month UNAM strike of 1999-2000, over the attempt by the government to introduce tuition in this, the largest university of Latin America. Under the Mexican Constitution, education at all levels is supposed to be free, but the World Bank and other imperialist agencies thought differently. During that key event – involving a quarter million students on strike, marches of up to 500,000, and an occupation of the enormous main campus, Ciudad Universitaria, by some 10,000 to 40,000 students every day around the clock – the GI distributed leaflets, intervened at strike assemblies and insisted on the urgent need to mobilize the working class in support of the students, who by themselves did not have the social and economic power to win against the government and its imperialist patrons.

In fact, the independent electrical workers union (SME) supported the strike from the outset, at least formally. The key development in that strike was the formation of *worker-student defense guards* that held off a threatened invasion by the army for several weeks at a crucial juncture, and thus enabled the strike to last as long as it did. That signal event was the direct result of the work of the Grupo Internacionalista. The comrades of the GI had been pushing for worker defense guards from the very beginning, but their motions were routinely voted down or ignored, with remarks about how the Trotskyists always keep saying the same thing, like a broken record. But as the date of the government's ultimatum threatening to send in the army approached, student assemblies first at the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature and then campus-wide, approved our motion. As soon as they got the official go-ahead, the comrades began organizing brigades of students to visit near-by power plants to

SME



Members of the 400-strong defense guard of the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME) who came out at crucial moment in July 1999 to defend National University (UNAM) strike against threatened army invasion. The Grupo Internacionalista led the fight for worker-student defense guards that were key to continuing the strike for ten months. Despite the arrest of more than 1,000 students, strike successfully prevented the imposition of tuition as ordered by the World Bank.

talk with the workers. They established contact with members of the SME central committee to ask them to participate.

Then on the day the ultimatum expired, with reports that the *tanquetas* were forming up, the comrades went to the SME headquarters. Soon after they left they received a call that several hundred electrical workers were heading out to the University. There they were joined by students and library workers, with whom the GI had also been working. Some 400 SME members participated in the round-the-clock defense guard. The government backed off because they knew the union had power: if the army invaded the campus, the union could just *bajar el switch* – throw the switch – and Mexico City would be blacked out. As a result of the militancy of the strike and this visible worker support, when the government finally sent in hundreds of the newly organized Federal Preventive Police (formed to deal with the strike) backed up by Mexico City riot police, arresting over 1,000 student strikers, it did not dare to introduce tuition. The students won, and to this day there is no tuition at the UNAM (although like everywhere else they keep trying to introduce more and more administrative fees).

By the end of the strike and in the aftermath, we had six members and supporters of the Grupo Internacionalista in jail. One, comrade Buenaventura, was singled out by the police and the press as a strike leader and placed on a different bus. A young woman comrade, along with other arrested women strikers, was stripped naked and doused with cold water in 40° temperature over night. A third comrade, by prior arrangement, made the rounds of the jails along with SME union leaders to locate our

people. The Grupo Espartaquista, part of the ICL, in contrast, had no one arrested, reflecting the fact that they basically did not participate in the strike aside from occasionally reading a statement at a meeting and then leaving.²⁶

The next big growth in membership of the GI came with the uprising in Oaxaca during 2006. When the police attacked striking teachers on the morning of June 14, comrades in Mexico alerted the IG in New York and by that afternoon an emergency picket had been organized outside the Mexican consulate. For five months, by their militant struggle, the teachers, workers and indigenous peoples managed to kick the entire Oaxaca government and state apparatus out of the state capital: the police did not return (except for occasional incursions in the dead of night and a “caravan of death” in late August) until November 25. There were hundreds of barricades in the

city. Over a period of several months the Internationalist Group initiated several united-front protests in New York in solidarity with the struggle in Oaxaca, bringing out up to 150 protesters including a number from the NYC teachers unions (UFT and PSC). In Mexico, the GI sent every youth comrade and virtually the entire membership to Oaxaca at one point or another, so that over the five months the struggle lasted we were present almost every day. Comrades from the IG visited Oaxaca in August and in November when the police and army attacked.

A particular focus of our struggle in Mexico has been opposition to the class-collaborationist popular front, originally formed around Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and the bourgeois Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), and more recently around ex-PRD leader Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his latest vehicle, Morena. The bulk of the left has tailed after or joined this popular front, while the GEM denies it exists, in order not to have to fight it. In recent months, Mexican politics have been dominated by the consequences of the horrific massacre in Iguala, Guerrero of some 50 students from the Rural Teachers College in Ayotzinapa. Mass marches of tens of thousands shouting, “They took them from us alive, we want them back alive” and casting the blame on the governments (“it was the state”) urgently cry out for a revolutionary program and leadership. As was the case over Oaxaca in 2006, the GI has been distinguished by its insistence on the burning need to extend the struggle to the working class nationwide by means of a “national strike against

²⁶ See “ICL Clueless and Gutless in the UNAM Strike,” *The Internationalist*, August 2013

the government of death” on the road to socialist revolution.²⁷ However, in the inter-university assemblies, reformists have been the dominant force.

Through the experience of the sharp class struggles of 1999-2000 and 2006, the Grupo Internacionalista grew substantially. Since then it has doubled in size, so that today the GI has locals in four cities: Mexico City, Oaxaca, Guadalajara and, most recently, in Tijuana. A key moment came in 2012 when the GI had its first national conference where it fused with the Permanent Revolution Study Group in Oaxaca and with the Revolutionary Hip-Hop Activists (ARH). The Oaxaca group included comrades who were active in the 2006 upheaval and with whom we had held study groups since 2007. It includes several health workers who are active oppositionists in the corporatist pseudo-union of health workers, which is very difficult as the “union” functions as labor cops to prevent the emergence a real workers union. (For an explanation of corporatism, see “SL on Corporatism in Mexico: Games Centrists Play,” *The Internationalist*, July 2013). We are also present in the militant Section 22 of the CNTE dissident teachers union.

In Mexico City we have students at the UNAM and an Internationalist Committee at the CCH-Sur junior college, as well as workers and teachers. In Guadalajara we have student and worker members, and in Tijuana students and teachers. The GI has supporters in other cities as well, including Tepic, Nayarit where a group of young comrades of the Permanent Revolution Committee split from the youth group of the Party of Mexican Communists (PCM) to join the Grupo Internacionalista. Their document rejecting the politics of the PCM’s ideological godfather, the sinister Stalinist union leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano who organized the murderous campaign against Trotsky in Mexico, is printed in *Revolución Permanente* No. 3 (October 2013). The GI’s newspaper is an important tool of intervention, whose professional layout is done by a comrade who studied publication design. Although the Grupo Internacionalista distributed more than 15,000 copies of a leaflet on Ayotzinapa and intervened in numerous assemblies, as well as working with striking students at the National Polytechnical Institute (IPN), the latest issue of *Revolución Permanente*, featuring articles on Mexico and Greece, came out belatedly, and the GI intends to regularize

²⁷ See “Massacre in Mexico: It Was the Murderous Capitalist State,” *The Internationalist*, March 2015.



Lenin Ocapmo Torres/EPA

Taking care of business. Teachers of the militant CNTE (National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers) in the state of Guerrero as they wrecked offices of the PRI, PAN and PRD, bourgeois parties that pushed through the anti-teacher education “reform” law, as well as the state headquarters of the corporatist pseudo-union SNTE, April 2013. Clarity about the nature of these labor cops of the capitalist state is vital for revolutionary strategy in Mexico.

its propaganda.

The largest opponent group we face in Mexico is the Movimiento de Trabajadores Socialistas (MTS, Socialist Workers Movement), part of the centrist Fracción Trotskista. The MTS’ program, reflecting its background in the Moreniste current, is basically democratic, seldom raising any socialist demands, and certainly no reference to communism, and constantly seeking to position itself just one step to the left of whatever the current petty-bourgeois movement of the moment is (Zapatistas, #YoSoy132, etc.). Another main opponent has been the Militante group, now divided in two, one still calling itself Militante and the other Izquierda Socialista, which is still part of the International Marxist Tendency of Alan Woods. Both wings have been deeply embedded in bourgeois parties, first the PRD, and since that has been permanently discredited, in Morena. In Oaxaca we face the Communist Party of Mexico (Marxist-Leninist), whose mass organization the FPR (Revolutionary Popular Front) has considerable presence in the state. The ICL group in Mexico, the GEM, has stagnated, and their propaganda has a distinct quality of being translated. They have been largely invisible in the recent huge protests over the massacre in Iguala.

In Brazil, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista (LQB) was born under extremely difficult circumstances as the ICL cut its ties and abandoned them for refusing to denounce the expelled comrades who later founded the IG without seeing the documents, and stabbing in the back the struggle to remove police from the unions which the ICL originally



Brazilian comrades of LQB led struggle to oust police from municipal workers union (SFPMVR), which they led, in steel city of Volta Redonda. Pro-cop elements sent military police against our comrades, who were then ousted by the courts. ICL shamefully abandoned the struggle it earlier backed to remove police, then falsely accused the Brazilian Trotskyists of suing the union, repeating the lies of the pro-police elements and trying to wreck defense campaign. Above: municipal workers rally, 4 July 1996, with signs saying “bourgeois courts hands off our union” and “Bosses’ courts and police hands off the SFPMVR.”

encouraged. Emissaries of the ICL declared that it was necessary to “pull our hands out of the boiling water” and handed the Brazilian comrades a sealed envelope with a letter breaking fraternal relations on the night before a key meeting of the Volta Redonda Municipal Workers Union, which the comrades led – an assembly called to remove the police from membership. The next day armed police arrived to shut the meeting down, and comrade Geraldo Ribeiro was hauled into court in the first of nine different court cases against the LQB comrades for having dared to remove the police, the armed fist of the bourgeoisie, from the workers organization.²⁸ (According to the prosecution, this violated constitutional provisions going back to the fascist-inspired corporatist labor law of Getúlio Vargas’ Estado Novo dictatorship in the 1930s.) At one point, police searched the office of the LQB and its union tendency, the Class Struggle Committee (CLC), demanding membership lists and to go through its papers.

The comrades in Brazil and in the IG mobilized to defend against this legal assault by the capitalist state, winning support from key Brazilian unions including the Oil Workers, and from unions all over the world, including NUMSA metal workers in South Africa, ILWU dock workers in the U.S. and telephone workers in El Salvador, with whom we had worked in the past. In response, the Spartacist League/ICL launched a vicious slander campaign, recycling fabrications

²⁸ See the *Dossier: Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil*, published by the Internationalist Group.

from pro-police provocateurs in Volta Redonda, claiming the LQB had sued the union when in fact the exact opposite was the case: our comrades are opposed on principle to taking unions to court, they were the leadership of the union, it was they who were sued (and removed from office by the courts) by the pro-cop elements whose lies the SL/ICL was now repeating. While refusing to respond to, or even acknowledge, our documented proof of the falseness of its charges, and even though the Brazilian comrades were being sued for removing the police from the unions, a campaign which they had courageously undertaken with the encouragement of the ICL, these deserters from Trotskyism sought to *sabotage* the Brazilian comrades’ defense. The SL/ICL grotesquely denounced the defense campaign as a “cynical fraud,” and used racist smears labeling our mostly black worker

comrades “dangerous hustlers.”²⁹

This is particularly vile considering that the principal spokesman of the LQB, Carlos Alexandre Honorato (Cerezo), was a former leader of the militant metal workers union at the National Steel Company (CSN) in Volta Redonda, long the largest steel plant in Latin America, during the 1988 strike which was repressed by the military using tanks, and who was placed on an army death list for his leading role in the 31-day 1990 CSN strike.³⁰

The LQB made a name for itself with its principled opposition to police in the unions, while the overwhelming majority

²⁹ See “New Repression Against Brazilian Trotskyists,” “Why They Lie: WV’s Frenzied Slanders Can’t Hide ICL Leaders’ Brazil Betrayal,” and “ICL Takes Slander Campaign to Brazilian Labor Conference” in *The Internationalist* No. 4, January-February 1998; and “ICL Seeks to Sabotage Defense of Brazilian Trotskyist Workers,” in *The Internationalist* No. 5 (April-May 1998). This and other material has been assembled in a *Dossier: Responses to ICL Sneer Campaign Against Brazilian Trotskyists*, published by the Internationalist Group.

³⁰ See “Army Death List Targeted Brazilian Worker Militants,” *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000 reporting on the revelations published by the *Jornal do Brasil* (Brazil’s equivalent of the *New York Times*) and reproducing a 1990 army document listing Cerezo among seven “individuals who stand out for their radical positions” who should be “neutralized immediately” if “imminent actions which would constitute a grave disturbance of public order” were about to occur. The idea of the petty-bourgeois fugitives from the class struggle of the SL/ICL labeling the Brazilian Trotskyist workers “hustlers” is repugnant beyond words.

All Honor to Our Comrade Marília, Communist and Poet of Struggle (1949-2012)

We dedicate this document to comrade Marília Machado, an exemplary fighter, communist and poet of struggle, who died in February 2012. Marília was a member of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB) and for 30 years a teacher in the state of Rio de Janeiro, where she was a member of the SEPE-RJ union. She was

also named Muse of Poetry of the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1997, mainly for her poems against the military dictatorship which ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985.

We print here a poem by Marília written in February 2010, following the earthquake that laid waste to Haiti, the birthplace of black freedom in the Americas:

Haiti: 200 Years of Pain By Marilia Machado

More than two hundred years
of pain, of protest and disappointment.
More than two hundred years of
struggle, of horror and torment.

But they were also two centuries
of victorious resistance,
of overcoming existence,
of strength and sovereignty.

The most implacable war,
so difficult to win,
is against prejudice
and the cruel bourgeoisie,
which arrives from the world over,
exercising tyranny, massacring,
injuring and oppressing,
disguising it as a "mission."

Pretending to desire peace,
it punishes the people
for having the "impudence"
to carry out a revolution.

In Haiti, peace is painted black,
for the heart of a beautiful people,
which struggles and will succeed.

And then it will free
the beautiful black smile
of our beloved black children
who live in Haiti;

the great black joy
of the black youth
who live in Haiti;
the black happiness of
the black women and men of courage
who live in Haiti.

I would like for there to be
a new revolution
that will build Haiti anew,
for a piece of me
also lives on there.

(This poem was published on the blog
of the SEPE-RJ, February 2010.)



of the Brazilian left supported police "strikes,"³¹ and its refusal to go to the capitalist courts against the workers unions, in a country where union leaderships and opposition groups are constantly suing each other. Moreover, when in 2002 Workers Party (PT) leader Lula was elected president at the head of a popular-front coalition with the right-wing Liberal Party (PL), virtually the entire Brazilian left supported his candidacy either directly (PSTU) or indirectly (PCO, LBI and others), claiming they were "defending the vote" against a possible (mythical) coup. The LQB alone called for proletarian opposition to the bourgeois popular front, pointing to Lula's agreement to enforce the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and the tragic lessons of Allende's Chile. When the LQB intervened at the first World Social Forum in Brazil early the next year with a banner saying "PT/PL Government: Fireman for the IMF," the assembled leftists recoiled in horror.

³¹ One group, O Trabalho, which is part of the ruling Workers Party (PT) and of the international current led by the French PT (followers of the late Pierre Lambert), even had a number of military police, including the head of the "union" of these professional professors in Alagoas, as members.

In subsequent years, much of the work of the LQB has focused on the teachers union in the state of Rio de Janeiro (SEPE-RJ), one of the most leftist unions in the country, in which for a long time just about every tendency claimed to be Trotskyist. The leadership is made up of followers of Moreno (PSTU) and Mandel (PSOL), with some right-wing opposition by followers of Lambert (OT). While some Maoists and lately some anarchists have posed as a left-wing opposition, at the same time engaging in opportunist maneuvers, the CLC, standing on the program of authentic Trotskyism, uniquely represents a proletarian revolutionary pole. In the union, the CLC has campaigned for action to free Mumia and demands workers action to drive the Brazilian military out of Haiti and the military police out of Rio's impoverished, overwhelmingly black shantytowns (*favelas*). The CLC also fought successfully to win support of the SEPE for solidarity action with Mexican teachers in 2013, and with Ayotzinapa students this past October. During the 2013 teacher struggles, the Mexican section sent a comrade to work with the LQB/CLC who was embraced by the Rio state teachers, themselves embroiled in a bitter strike. In Volta Redonda, the CLC has run slates

receiving approximately 9 percent in SEPE union elections and has two members of the executive committee (selected by proportional representation).

In the last couple of years, as the PT-led popular front under the presidency of Dilma Rousseff has run out of steam and popular opposition has grown, both from the left (in 2013) and the right (currently), the LQB and CLC have actively intervened in the class struggle calling for a general strike against the state and federal governments over the brutal repression they have unleashed in São Paulo, Rio and other major cities.³² As the “militarized popular front” in the city and state of Rio de Janeiro went into a security frenzy with the approach of the World Cup of soccer last June, coming on the 50th anniversary of the 1964 coup that installed a 21-year military dictatorship in Brazil, the CLC put forward motions which were approved by the SEPE and the Rio health workers union SINDSPREV to form “union-based workers defense committees to protect protests and the favelas.”³³ The LQB has unfailingly held high the banner of revolutionary proletarian Trotskyism in a milieu filled with more petty-bourgeois fake-Trotskyists per square kilometer than anywhere else on the planet, except perhaps Paris. Now that the popular front is coming apart, other sections of the LFI must intensify our support to our Brazilian comrades.

Lenin referred to the imperialist epoch as one of wars and revolutions. We have certainly had the wars. Since the end of the anti-Soviet “Cold War” with the destruction of the Soviet Union, the United States has waged hot wars of imperialist aggression almost without letup. Attack Iraq in 1990-91. Attack Yugoslavia in 1994. Bomb Baghdad in 1998. Attack Yugoslavia again in 1999. Invade and occupy Afghanistan: 2001 to 2014. Invade and occupy Iraq: 2003-2014. Bomb Libya in 2011. And

³² See “Hot Winter in Brazil: Mobilize Workers Power! Organize a General Strike!” in *The Internationalist* No. 35, Summer 2013.

³³ See “Brazil: No to the World Cop of Repression!” *The Internationalist* No. 37, May-June 2014.

now bomb Iraq and Syria from September 2014 on.

Revolutions, on the other hand, have been few. The only authentic workers revolution was that led by the Bolsheviks in October 1917. The wave of post-World War I revolutionary upheavals ended in defeat, as did the workers uprising of the Spanish Civil War. But despite the many defeats, outbreaks of working-class unrest, popular revolts and protests have also been almost constant in recent years, from the French worker-student protests in autumn 2010 to the Arab uprisings in early 2011, the “*indignados*” movements in Spain, Portugal and Greece a few months later and the Occupy Wall Street protests that autumn, to mass mobilizations against racist police repression in the U.S. in the fall of 2014. Yet none of these movements has produced noticeable gains, because in every case the fundamental issue posed was the urgent need for socialist revolution.

Insurgent workers and oppressed layers have shown tremendous courage and determination. What has been lacking is above all a leadership with a program and capacity to overthrow capitalism. Many on the left wish to return to the pre-World War I days of the First and Second Internationals, of “broad” socialist parties. Yet in struggles as diverse as those in South Africa against a popular-front government, in Venezuela with a bourgeois populist regime to the Middle East, Ukraine, Cuba and China, only a party armed with the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution and Trotsky’s analysis of Stalinism can take the struggle forward. *The crisis of humanity is still focused on the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the proletariat, which can only be resolved by building Trotskyist parties throughout the planet.* ■

—Draft presented for discussion to the First National Conference of the Internationalist Group, 1 April 2015

—Approved by the Executive Committee of the League for the Fourth International,

The Internationalist

Annual subscription US\$10 for five issues



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

Publication of the Internationalist Group

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Apt.# _____ Tel.(____) _____

City _____ State/Province _____

PostalCode/Zip _____ Country _____

Make checks/money orders payable to Mundial Publications and mail to:

Mundial Publications
Box 3321, Church Street Station
New York, NY 10008 U.S.A.

Write the Internationalist Group at above address, or contact:
Tel (212) 460-0983 Fax (212) 614-8711 E-mail: internationalistgroup@msn.com

China : Battle Over Capitalist Restoration Looms

The following document was approved by the fusion conference of the Internationalist Group and the Portland Trotskyist Study Group in July 2012.

1) China today is still a deformed workers state, but with huge capitalist inroads that threaten the remaining, badly eroded, gains of the Chinese Revolution of 1949. The menace of encroaching capitalism continues to grow and at some time in the not-distant future will reach the point where the emboldened forces of counterrevolution strike for power. However, to pretend that China is already capitalist, as do most on the left in the West (echoing bourgeois academics and the imperialist media) does not at all explain the actual functioning of the Chinese economy, in which the traditional Stalinist bureaucratic domination holds sway; it would mean that the capitalist forces had seized control without any change in the state apparatus, thus weakening the resolve to fight the decisive battles which lie before us, not behind; and it provides an excuse to refuse to defend China against imperialism. By adopting this pro-imperialist, defeatist line, those who claim that China is “state capitalist” (or apply a similar label) turn their back on Chinese workers at a time when their need for genuine Marxist revolutionary leadership has never been greater.

I

2) Ever since the October Revolution that led to the establishment of the Soviet Union, the first workers state in history, the world bourgeoisie sought to reverse that. During the Russian Civil War, when the nascent Soviet republic was invaded by 18 imperialist and capitalist armies in addition to fighting off tsarist White Guard counterrevolutionaries, Winston Churchill remarked that Bolshevism must be “strangled in its cradle.” At the start of the post-WWII anti-Soviet Cold War in 1949, he lamented that this had not been done.

3) Encircled from without due to the failure of workers revolution in Europe, the Soviet Union was first undermined from within by the emergence of a conservative, privileged layer – the Stalinist bureaucracy – which sought to preserve the status quo under the watchword of building “socialism in one country.” Decapitating the Bolshevik party which made the 1917 revolution, it betrayed the revolution it claimed to represent. Trotsky noted that this petty-bourgeois caste was a parasitic growth on the body of the proletarian dictatorship and the economic relations of property and production it created. Ultimately the Stalinists’ policies would lead to capitalist restoration, and some elements of the bureaucracy consciously sought that. Yet even as Stalin executed the communists who made the revolution and pursued counterrevolutionary policies, the bureaucracy remained a contradictory layer, intermediate between the proletariat and world imperialism.

4) Three-quarters of a century after the Bolshevik October Revolution, following decades of bureaucratic degeneration, the Soviet Union was destroyed in a wave of counterrevolution that swept through East Europe. As the end was approaching the world bourgeoisie, with the U.S. imperialists in the forefront, were jubilant. They declared a New World Order in which the United States would reign supreme. Their hired flacks proclaimed the end of history. The bourgeois media all declared communism was dead. It was a classic case of the false consciousness of the bourgeoisie which thinks its rule is eternal, and that capitalism is the natural order of things, the reflection of human nature. Or at least that’s what their ideologues say. The most far-sighted capitalists know differently, and they do not act on the basis of the delusions they feed to the masses.

II

5) Many on the left absorbed the “death of communism” lies of the bourgeoisie. A lot of socialist groups ceased to exist, or declared themselves partisans of “democratic revolution” and similar bourgeois claptrap. Many former Stalinist parties became explicitly social-democratic, while others (in Italy and Mexico, for example) closed up shop, joined with assorted liberals and reopened as bourgeois parties. Many former leftists took refuge as union and community activists, becoming militant liberals, or dropping out of politics altogether.

6) The founders of the Internationalist Group, were part of the leadership of the International Communist League. The ICL had intervened heavily in East Germany (DDR, German Democratic Republic) fighting against capitalist reunification and for political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy. A considerable portion of the entire membership was involved in this. Following the annexation of the DDR to imperialist West Germany, we intervened again in the Soviet Union, fighting against capitalist counterrevolution in the homeland of the October Revolution. An ICL cadre was murdered there. In the DDR and USSR, we were defeated, although the masses of working people suffered far more. And in the aftermath of defeat, a defeatist mood set in, leading to a series of internal fights, particularly over Germany.

7) In early 1996, the ICL leadership wrote that the struggles of the working class no longer had any relation to the fight for socialist revolution. They acted accordingly, and began retreating from struggle after struggle. First in Germany, where things were still hot five years after the counterrevolution. Then in Brazil they actually deserted from a struggle that we had undertaken, together with the comrades who went on to found the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, to separate the police from the municipal workers union in which they had won the leadership.



Thousands of workers at Tonghua Iron and Steel works in Jilin province, China rose up to block privatization of the company, rightly fearing it would lead to thousands of layoffs, July 2009. During the protests, a company official who threatened to fire strikers was beaten to death. As a result of the workers' uprising, privatization was stopped. Claims by bourgeois media, economists and opportunist leftists that the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state is capitalist would undercut workers' resistance when decisive battle against counterrevolution is posed.

8) To theorize their betrayal, the ICL leadership came up with the generalization that the crisis of humanity is no longer summed up in the crisis of revolutionary leadership, as Trotsky had written, but rather that the working class itself had experienced a qualitative reversal, a great leap backwards, in its consciousness. The ICL's theorization was in direct response to the founding statement of the Internationalist Group in which we reaffirmed Trotsky's fundamental thesis from the Transitional Program. We analyzed the ICL's abandonment of this

central programmatic point in the Declaration of the League for the Fourth International, "Reforge the Fourth International," and in our article "In Defense of the Transitional Program," both in *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998.

9) The fact that the ICL was reflecting the "death of communism" propaganda of the bourgeoisie is not just our conclusion, SL leader James Robertson said as much, arguing that the IG was "insensitive" to the "qualitative change which had occurred and which is part of a larger change which has been trumpeted around by the ruling classes as the 'death of communism'." Some years later, SL theoretician Joseph Seymour expanded this into a whole essay ("Critical Notes on the "Death of Communism" and the Ideological Conditions of the Post-Soviet World," *Workers Vanguard* No. 949, 1 January 2010), essentially confirming our charge. The ICL's revision of Trotsky was rank empiricism. These days, particularly since the onset of the worst capitalist economic crisis since the 1930s Great Depression, even a number bourgeois commentators have realized that the proclamations of the "death of communism" have turned out to be "premature," as Mark Twain said of a notice of his death. Communism is alive, as we have declared, in the struggles of the workers and the program of the vanguard which we fight to uphold.

III

10) The ICL's abandonment of Trotskyism on the centrality of the crisis of revolutionary leadership went hand-in-hand with a fundamental revision of the Trotskyist analysis of the nature of the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states. In the struggles inside the ICL against us, they declared that the Stalinist bureaucracy led the counterrevolution in East Germany and the Soviet Union and they were leading it in China. We called them on this ("Stalinists Led the Counterrevolution? ICL Between Shachtman and Trotsky," *The Internationalist* No. 9, January February 2001; and "ICL Still Caught Between Shachtman and Trotsky," *The Internationalist* No. 11, Summer 2001), pointing out

that Trotsky always insisted that the bureaucracy, while paving the way for counterrevolution, opening the door to it, digging the grave of the revolution, was still a contradictory layer and that the battle would ultimately be between the proletariat and the imperialist bourgeoisie.

11) We asked the ICL, if the Honecker bureaucracy led the counterrevolution in the DDR, how come the entire Politbureau ended up in the jails of the Fourth Reich of German imperialism? We also asked, if the Stalinist bureaucracy was

leading the revolution, why did we appear together with its spokesmen at the mammoth Treptow mobilization against the fascists and capitalist reunification in January 1990, which we had initiated? Some years later, the ICL leadership flipfopped again and declared that the statement that the bureaucracy led the counterrevolution in East Germany and was leading it in China was a polemical exaggeration in the struggle against us. However, to this day they do not seem to have revised their statement about the bureaucracy leading the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union.

12) The present period has been dominated by the counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe and its aftereffects. In West Europe, the social democrats thought they would now have the wind in their sails; various pseudo-Trotskyist outfits figured they would clean up now that the obstacle of Stalinism had met its demise. At the same time, they argued that with the Soviet Union gone, the “Russian question” had become a purely historical issue and they were free to join with groups which called the USSR “state capitalist.” In fact, there had been little real difference between them for some time, since the ostensible Trotskyists didn’t defend the Soviet Union against imperialism over Afghanistan or anywhere else that mattered. Over Polish Solidarność, sections of the Ernest Mandel’s United Secretariat actually worked with the CIA while Pierre Lambert’s OCI in France demonstrated together with monarchists and fascists in support of these anti-Soviet Polish nationalists.

13) But even though the imperialist media declare communism dead and gone, its strategists don’t act on that basis. They are determined to root out the remaining workers states in order to extirpate the “communist threat” forever, or so they hope.

IV

14) That is why the question of China is central to the world situation today. As by far the largest remaining deformed workers state, it is ultimately the main target of the imperialists militarily. The bourgeois media claim that China today is just another capitalist state, like post-counterrevolution Russia, but the imperialist chiefs in the White House and the Pentagon don’t act that way. As soon as the Cold Warriors who ran the show under George Bush II came into office, they started pushing for confrontation with what they still considered “Red China.” They got sidetracked after the September 11 (2001) attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, launching a “global war on terror.” But under liberal Democrat Obama, U.S. rulers have “pivoted” their military strategy away from the Middle East to focus on East Asia, aligning with aggressive militarists in South Korea against the Stalinist regime in the



Greg Liu/Getty Images

Top echelon of Chinese Communist Party’s 17th Congress, with Hu Jintao and Jiang Zemin front and center (fifth and sixth from left respectively). Trotskyists fight for proletarian political revolution to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy which opens the door to the forces of counterrevolution, from within and without.

North and ultimately targeting China. And for all the rhetoric about Al Qaeda, Washington’s main focus in Africa today is to counter Chinese economic inroads.

15) In present-day China there is a large capitalist sector of the economy, and whole sections of the country in which capitalist production relations prevail. In these so-called Special Economic Zones, including most of the southeastern coastal area and a number of the larger cities, companies owned by U.S., European and Taiwanese capitalists dominate. They exploit a workforce of tens of millions of largely migrant workers housed in barracks, subject to draconian discipline, with few effective rights. Although wages have begun to rise in recent years and there have been thousands of worker protests, there is little to stop ruthless bosses from intensifying speed-up and a grueling workweek to the maximum. This has notoriously led to a wave of worker suicides at factories producing computers and parts for the Apple, Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard companies. While the Communist Party has now ordered companies to recognize official trade unions, these are mainly organs of bureaucratic control. The few instances of “independent” union organization in the SEZs are linked to CIA “labor” fronts such as the China Labor Bulletin, which are instruments of counterrevolution as similar outfits have been in Europe after World War II and all over Latin America in recent decades.

16) Meanwhile, a decade ago China entered the World Trade Organization, committing itself to reducing subsidies to state-owned enterprises (SOEs), to lower tariffs and trade barriers to “multinational” capitalist companies, etc. As a result of the so-called economic “reforms” there were massive layoffs, with as many as 10 million workers fired from state enterprises. There are hundreds of new capitalist millionaires – *Forbes* has published lists of them. In 2001, the then head



Workers at factory of Taiwanese-owned Foxconn, which makes electronic devices for Apple, threatened mass suicide in February 2012 in protest over miserable pay and unbearable conditions. Bureaucracy's policy of "building socialism with Chinese characteristics," inviting massive capitalist investment, threatens gains of the revolution.

of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy, Jhiang Zemin, declared that the Communist Party should reflect the productive forces by allowing "entrepreneurs" into the party, and reportedly thousands applied to join.

17) Does that mean China is already capitalist? It does not, because despite the extensive capitalist inroads, the deformed workers *state* has not been overthrown. The existence of a workers state cannot be reduced to simple economic criteria of what percentage of the economy is private and what is "public" or state-owned. That betrays a social-democratic outlook, which holds that there can be a socialist "transformation" of society through nationalizations, without the need for revolution. In Italy after World War II and continuing long after, more than 50% of all output was from state-owned companies (ENEL, AGIP, IRI, railroads, airline, phones, etc.). It is still the case of Austria. Yet those are clearly capitalist countries, and nationalized industries are subject to the world market, whereas state-owned enterprises in China are fundamentally not. Their production and every other aspect of functioning are determined by bureaucratic fiat, not market forces.

18) On the other hand, the expropriation of capitalist industry in Russia as a policy did not take place until the beginning of the Civil War in mid-1918. Up until then, the Bolsheviks took over the plants of capitalists who had fled, but only instituted workers control. Nevertheless, Soviet Russia was a workers state, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat, because the bourgeoisie had been defeated and the working class had become the ruling class. If it took some time to achieve a collectivized economy, that reflected that a workers state is a product of history, not an ideal construct.

19) The situation of a deformed workers state is more contradictory, since the bureaucracy which holds political pow-

er directly is not the representative of the working class. It is an intermediate, parasitic layer as noted earlier. It rose to power by defeating the bourgeoisie. In the case of China, it did so on the basis of a civil war by a militarized peasantry, not a workers insurrection. But once the Chinese Communist Party finally came to power after endlessly trying to work out a coalition with the butcher Chiang Kai-shek in the name of the Stalinist/Menshevik dogma of "two-stage revolution," and even though the CCP placed the widow of the bourgeois leader Sun Yat-sen in the figurehead position of co-chairman of the "People's Republic," it could only retain power by expropriating the bourgeoisie, which eventually occurred in 1953 during the Korean War. But Trotskyists recognized that from 1949 on, this was a deformed workers state because the bourgeoisie had been defeated, and the new bureaucracy that held the reins of political power was constrained to erect a state on the model of the Stalinized Soviet Union.

V

20) Various economic arguments are put forward by the bourgeois and pseudo-Marxist proponents of the "theory" of "state capitalism." It is claimed that the state sector is now smaller than the private sector of the economy, which is flatly false. How do they make this claim? By claiming that the sizeable sector of "township and village enterprises" (TVEs) are capitalist. But while they could turn into capitalist enterprises if the economic and legal framework was there to guarantee their existence, today the TVEs are still beholden to the bureaucracy. If the CCP tops in Beijing decide to dissolve them, they will be dissolved. It was also claimed for a long time that a number of companies controlled by the military were in fact capitalist enterprises. But in 1999, the CP central committee ordered that the military divest itself of those enterprises, and within a few months it was done. Would that happen in a capitalist country? Hardly. Argentina, for example, has a big military-industrial arms-producing complex, which produces big profits for the generals. If some government in Buenos Aires ordered them to divest those industries it is far more likely that there would be a coup "divesting" the bourgeois politicians of office.

21) Those leftists who claim China is state capitalist often talk of a "bureaucratic bourgeoisie." There are capitalist countries in which there is extensive nationalized industry, and in which a large government bureaucracy is linked to sectors of the bourgeoisie. Mexico, ruled for decades by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, was an example. It even mimicked many of the forms of bureaucratic rule to the point that one could refer to it ironically as a bureaucratically deformed capitalist state. But Pemex and other "parastate" companies are still

subject to the capitalist market, firing workers in order to make profits, whereas state-owned enterprises in China for decades had bloated workforces in order to prevent mass unemployment. Or take the Korean *chaebols*, which were/are intimately intertwined with the state apparatus of capitalist South Korea. They were nurtured by the military dictatorship, and long profited from tariff protection. Many are monopolies. Yet Samsung, Hyundai, LG et al. are capitalist enterprises subject to the international market, and when this goes south the companies can collapse, as occurred with the debt-laden Daewoo group in 1999. If China were capitalist, with all the padded payrolls in state enterprises, where are all the bankrupt firms forced out of business? The capitalists' complaint is that they are still there.

22) More recently, we have gone through the experience of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis following the financial crash in the autumn of 2008. Virtually everywhere in the imperialist powers, in the intermediate capitalist countries and semi-colonies there was a sharp and brutal contraction of production and skyrocketing mass unemployment. This did not occur in China. Instead, the CP tops ordered a vast expansion of investment in infrastructure, construction and output of basic industry, almost entirely in the state sector of the economy, to offset the curtailed production for export by capitalist enterprises in the SEZs. In fact, the state sector in China has sharply *increased* its percentage of economic output in recent years. Like Stalin's Soviet Union in the 1930s, Stalinist-governed China escaped the capitalist depression because it had the levers of a (bureaucratically) planned economy, in which the dictates of the world market or local markets did not hold sway. All attempts by pseudo-Marxists to claim that the capitalist "law of value" is determinant in China cannot explain away this fact. Moreover, in the very few capitalist countries that have not fallen into deep and continuing economic crisis, such as Brazil, it is mainly because they are producing vast quantities of raw materials *for China*. Even in Nazi Germany, which responded to the Great Depression by a huge program of military production, mass unemployment did not disappear until World War II.

23) The continued dominance of a collectivized economy whose marching orders come from the bureaucracy, not the capitalist market, is shown in a myriad of ways. A key example is the banks. Following the 2008 crash in the West, the Beijing bureaucrats ordered the banks to open the floodgates with low-cost loans, which they did. More recently, fearing an overheating of the economy and consequent inflation, they ordered the banks to cut back, which they also did. Does that happen in capitalist countries? No. In the U.S., the Federal Reserve Bank has pumped trillions of dollars into the banks in the hopes of restarting lending and resuscitating an economy languishing in the doldrums. But instead of investing, the bankers sit on the money. Why? Because they know that if there is a new panic in the stock market it could set off a run on the banks for which they don't have to reserves to survive. But Chinese banks are not in danger of going bankrupt, they are not capitalist institutions but es-

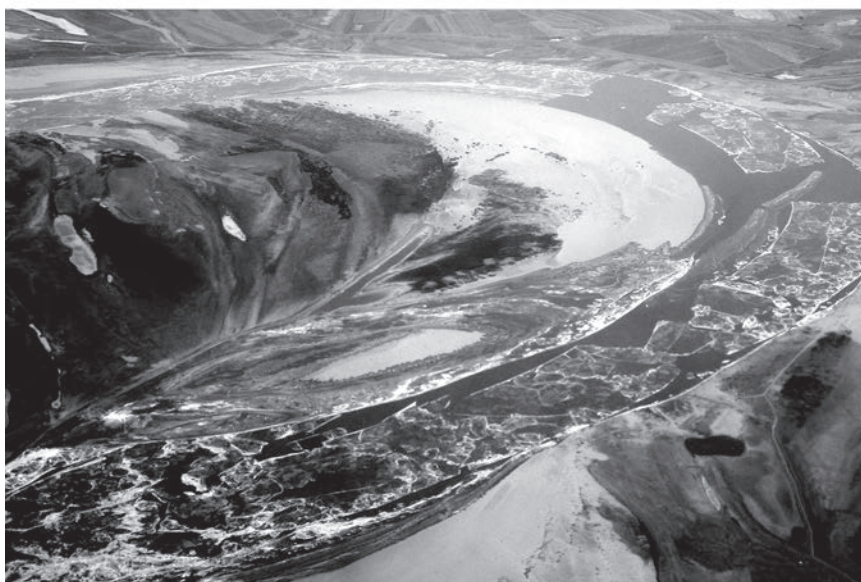
entially economic control mechanisms for the state. Western economists complain of all the "bad loans" on the books of Chinese banks, saying they threaten their stability. This is nonsense. The bureaucracy uses the banks to impose a degree of financial discipline on the enterprises. If it decides it has to recapitalize the banks it does so with a stroke of a pen; if it wants to get rid of "bad debts," it simply wipes them off the books and that's the end of it.

24) A good example of the continued predominance of a state-controlled economy not beholden to the capitalist market is in the field of ecology. The level of pollution in Chinese cities is notorious, and extremely damaging to the health of working people. Yet along with all the bureaucratic abuses and irrationalities, the Stalinist regime can easily reverse this. In late 2005, for example, there was an explosion at a petrochemical plant in Jilin province in northern China which dumped 100 tons of toxic chemicals into the Songhua River. The water supply of millions of people particularly in the giant Manchurian industrial city of Harbin was immediately endangered. So the bureaucracy simply cut off water from the river, shut down all plants along the river and brought in large quantities of bottled water. End result: five dead. Compare that to the results of Hurricane Katrina in the U.S. or the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake. On a broader scale, after years of being cast as the bad boy by environmentalists because of pollution caused by its rapid industrialization, recently China has been in the forefront in introducing "green" technology cutting back carbon emissions, simply by ordering factories to take measures. In the capitalist countries on the other hand, there has been only halting improvement in cutting down pollution, because it is not profitable to do so.

25) The fact that the economy is not capitalist does not mean that it functions in the interests of the workers. Certainly, the bureaucratically planned economy has produced a tremendous growth of production of consumer goods in recent years, which is a key goal of the bureaucracy in order to stave off popular discontent. China is now the largest market for private automobiles in the world. At the same time, the social safety net (known in China as the "iron rice bowl") and basic services for working people have been drastically curtailed. Health care has been heavily privatized, and education above the primary level is no longer free. Workers' strikes have been brutally repressed. These are abominations that Chinese workers must fight to reverse. But that can be done through mobilizing the working class in a struggle culminating in a proletarian political revolution to oust the corrupt petty-bourgeois bureaucracy.

VI

26) When considering if counterrevolution has taken place, the decisive questions are not the degree of capitalist economic penetration, or the number of layoffs, or the Chinese capitalists who have returned, or the number of "princelings" (the children of top bureaucrats who have become budding capitalists in their own right) – although those factors underscore the looming menace of capitalist



Bureaucratic mismanagement and forced-draft industrialization have created massive pollution in China's major cities (top, in Yutian), provoking mass discontent. Yet collectivized economy makes rapid response possible. In November 2005, explosion at a chemical factory dumped 100 tons of toxic chemicals into Songhua River (bottom), threatening water supply of Harbin, the largest city in Manchuria. While official media at first tried to hide it, by fully mobilizing resources, large quantities of bottled water were trucked in and only five people died.

restoration. *The determining factor is the state power*, and as Marxists rather than social democrats we understand that this state power cannot simply be “reformed” into its opposite. It will have to be smashed in the course of a counter-revolution. That doesn’t necessarily have to be violent, as it was not in the Soviet Union and East Germany and most of Eastern Europe, although in China, with its seething social tensions, a “peaceful” restoration of capitalism is far less likely. But it isn’t the same state apparatus that was there beforehand. Capitalist Russia isn’t just the old Soviet Union in new clothes. In the Soviet case, the first act of capitalist restoration was to break up the USSR along national lines,

for capitalism is fundamentally organized around the nation-state. In Germany, where the DDR was only part of the nation, they arrested the leaders, fired the rank-and-file members of the SED, the Stalinist party, and simply wiped out most of East Germany industry.

27) Another example that the degree of economic penetration by bourgeois forces or of bureaucratization are not in themselves decisive is the Soviet Union under Stalin. In the late 1920s as a result of the New Economic Policy, powerful capitalist tendencies had developed among the well-to-do landowning peasantry, the kulaks, who sought to hold the country hostage with a “grain strike.” After emphatically opposing the call the United Opposition of 1926-27 for collectivization of the countryside and the institution of planned industrialization, the bureaucracy under Stalin and Bukharin, its back to the wall, reacted and in a bureaucratic manner carried out measures against the capitalist forces that threatened their privileged position astride a workers state.

28) By the end of the 1930s, however, the Soviet Union was tottering and even large sections of the bureaucracy thought it could fall. Because the Communist Party had been gutted from within by the Moscow Purge trials, many thought the regime was an empty shell which could be easily toppled. Stalin’s refusal to fight Hitler’s invasion in the first crucial weeks was a telling sign. But Trotsky understood that the foundations of a workers state still existed and called on Soviet workers to resist the looming imperialist invasion. And Soviet workers understood as well. While Stalin was hiding out in his dacha there was an explosion of revolutionary fervor among rank-and-file CPers, workers and Red Army soldiers. They formed

guerrilla detachments spontaneously. Officers who had been sent to labor camps in the late-1930s purge of Marshall Tukhachevsky and the Soviet high command came back from the camps to lead the struggle against the attack of German imperialism. They did so not as nationalists but as partisans of what they understood as socialism. Stalin eventually imposed a nationalist line about the “great patriotic war,” in an attempt to conciliate imperialism and domestic reaction. But Great Russian nationalism didn’t win the war and smash the Nazi regime, it was the Red Army founded by Trotsky which despite all the Stalinist purges had retained a connection to October 1917.



People's Liberation Army delegates National People's Congress, March 2013. Officer corps is a key component of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

29) On the other hand, those Western leftists in the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia who claimed that there had been a counterrevolution in the Soviet Union (such as the renegades Max Shachtman and James Burnham who deserted from the Trotskyist movement on the eve of the German imperialist invasion of the USSR) refused to defend the Soviet Union and even compared it (sometimes unfavorably) to the Nazi Third Reich. This was a confirmation of the aphorism that “program generates theory”: Shachtman “discovered” that the Stalinist Soviet Union was “bureaucratic collectivist,” Burnham had a different label, but at bottom these were attempts to justify their eventual refusal to defend the birthplace of the October Revolution against imperialist attack. Likewise, when Tony Cliff proclaimed the USSR to be “state capitalist” in 1948, it was because he refused to defend it in the mounting anti-Soviet Cold War. This was then made explicit a couple of years later when Cliff refused to defend the USSR in the Korean War. And when Karl Kautsky first declared the Soviet republic under Lenin and Trotsky to be “state capitalist” it was in order to give “theoretical” cover to his backing for German imperialism, then backing counter-revolution in the Caucasus.

30) As we stressed in our article “‘State Capitalism’: Anti-Trotskyist ‘Theory’ a Cover for Refusal to Defend USSR Against Imperialist War” (*The Internationalist* No. 26, July 2007), this line in its different variants (including the LRP’s “statified capitalism”) are essentially excuses for refusing to fight, and eventually supporting, counterrevolution. In the Soviet Union in August 1991, the “state caps” (Cliffites, latter-day Shachtmanites, Workers Power) and those pseudo-Trotskyists who had long ago abandoned Soviet defensism sided with the capitalist-restorationist forces headed by Bush’s agent in the Moscow White House, Boris Yeltsin. Those who felt they needed a fig-leaf of leftism claimed they were supporting the masses who were supporting Yeltsin. The

logic used to justify this betrayal was that since there was nothing of the October Revolution left to defend in the Soviet Union, you could side with clearly pro-capitalist elements in the name of “democracy.” But the Soviet masses soon found that actual counterrevolution meant destruction of their livelihoods, mass poverty and drastically shortened life spans. It turns out that there was something left to defend, but they did not realize it until too late. Yet this is not the fault of the workers, but rather the result of decades of bureaucratic betrayal and the absence of a revolutionary Marxist, Trotskyist leadership of the working class at the crucial moment.

31) The key to determining when a revolution or counterrevolution has occurred is when the old state power is destroyed and a new one is erected in its place that is dedicated to defense of different property forms. That is why we did not declare the Soviet Union

dead the moment Yeltsin took office, dissolved the USSR and banned the Communist Party. Since the Soviet army and the state apparatus had not yet changed hands, until the capitalist-restorationists consolidated their hold on the state machinery resistance from within was still possible. In China, the People’s Liberation Army is an instrument of the bureaucracy. It may be used against the workers, but in a showdown would the PLA defend the Taiwanese and imperialist owners of capitalist industry in the Special Economic Zones against the Beijing bureaucracy? Not at this point certainly. As the counterrevolutionary danger mounts, it is quite possible that there will be splits in the military as well as in the rest of the bureaucracy.

32) The Fourth International, Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Program is the party of intransigent opposition, against capitalism and against bureaucratic misrule. The other side of the coin is that we are intransigent defenders of workers’ gains. In his April 1940 “Letter to the Workers of the USSR,” written after Stalin’s murder of hundreds of thousands of Communists, at a time when Kremlin leader was in alliance with Hitler and when this gravedigger of the Revolution and organizer of horrendous defeats, from Germany to Spain, Trotsky declared:

“But fortunately, among the surviving conquests of the October Revolution are the nationalized industry and the collectivized Soviet economy. Upon this foundation workers’ soviets can build a new and happier society. This foundation cannot be surrendered by us to the world bourgeoisie under any conditions. It is the duty of revolutionists to defend tooth and nail every position gained by the working class, whether it involves democratic rights, wage scales, or so colossal a conquest of mankind as the nationalization of the means of production and planned economy. Those who are incapable of defending conquests already gained can never fight for new ones.”

This is equally valid in China today. ■

For Proletarian Opposition to U.S./E.U./NATO Imperialists' Cold War Drive!

The Bugbear of "Russian Imperialism"

The following article was posted to www.internationalist.org in May 2014.

In the global crisis unleashed by the battle over Ukraine, the imperialists are preparing a new Cold War. In Cold War I following WWII, the target of the West's military, economic and political threats was the bureaucratically degenerated workers state of the Soviet Union. After a brief interlude of "détente" resulting from the U.S.' ignominious 1975 defeat in Vietnam, a second anti-Soviet Cold War was launched when Washington provoked Moscow's intervention in Afghanistan in 1980. Now, two decades after the 1989-92 counterrevolution that brought down the Soviet bloc and broke up the USSR, a looming Cold War III is directed at capitalist Russia. The daily denunciations and sanctions from the U.S. and its NATO allies, along with the hysteria in the imperialist media, are eerily familiar. For now, the threats are mainly verbal, talk of "punishing" Putin for violating the rules of the post-Soviet "New World Order" of unbridled U.S. hegemony.¹ But the propaganda war and economic war ultimately presage a shooting war.

In this conflict, quite a few social-democratic groups echo the Western media, railing against "Russian imperialism" for incorporating Crimea and accusing Moscow of fomenting unrest in eastern Ukraine. They blithely pass over the fact that Crimea has historically been part of Russia and that the overwhelming majority of the Crimean population strongly supported joining Russia. They dismiss the uprisings against the Kiev regime in Donetsk and Lugansk as the work of Russian "provocateurs," ignoring the clear mass support for self-rule among the largely Russian-speaking population of this industrial region. The claims by these reformists that they also oppose Western imperialism are a cynical cover as they side with the Kiev junta of fascists and free-market ultra-rightists that seized power with the backing of the U.S., NATO and European Union.

Here are some of the refrains from this pseudo-socialist pro-imperialist chorus:

The British Socialist Workers Party (SWPUK) declares "Imperialist rivals push Ukraine to brink of war," saying "Intervention in Crimea has escalated a deadly game between Russia and the West" (*Socialist Worker* [UK], 8 March 2014). In the same issue, an article by SWPUK guru Alex Callinicos says that Russian president "Putin is engaging in an inter-imperialist power play" and that fighting imperialism "means opposing Russian intervention in Ukraine." The British SWP is part of the current founded by the late Tony Cliff, who broke from the Trotskyist Fourth International at the dawn of Cold War

I, refusing to defend the Soviet Union against imperialism and justifying this with the claim that the USSR was "state capitalist."

Another British social-democratic outfit, Workers Liberty (WL), proclaims: "Russia is an imperialist country attempting to negate Ukraine's self-determination and subordinate it. We support the Ukrainians' strivings for national freedom just as we support strivings for freedom by other oppressed or potentially oppressed nations" (Workers Liberty website, 17 April 2014). Over the course of the second Cold War in the 1980s, the current that became WL embraced the heritage of another renegade from Trotskyism, Max Shachtman, who broke with Trotsky on the eve of World War II, and refused to defend the USSR against the invasion by Nazi Germany, claiming in justification that the Soviet Union was no kind of workers state but "bureaucratic collectivist."

In the United States, the leading Cliffite group is the International Socialist Organization (ISO), which declared: "Russian imperialism has made its move to retain political



Social-democratic left echoes imperialist-backed Ukrainian putschists railing against "Russian imperialism."

¹ "The New World Order," *The Economist*, 22 March 2014.

and economic domination over the country with its takeover of Crimea – this should be unconditionally condemned by all revolutionaries claiming to be anti-imperialists” (*Socialist Worker* [U.S.], 11 March 2014). The ISO vociferously denounced leftists who condemned U.S./NATO imperialism instead of “Russia, Ukraine’s past and present imperial overlord,” and declared that “The right can exploit legitimate hostility to Russian imperialism” (*Socialist Worker*, 12 March 2014). This is a bald-faced justification of fascist propaganda by Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), Svoboda, et al.² For its part, the centrist League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), whose roots go back to the Shachtman tendency, calls to “Defend Ukraine Against Russian Imperialism” (LRP website, 18 March 2014).

It’s no accident that groups coming out of the virulently anti-Soviet Shachtmanite and Cliffite currents are leading the pack howling against “Russian imperialism” today, since they have been doing so since breaking with Trotskyism on the key “Russian question.” It’s notable as well that they all claim that China today is capitalist and some even label it “imperialist,” refusing to defend the Chinese deformed workers state against counterrevolution and the threats and machinations of the real imperialists. Note as well that on the basis of shared anti-Sovietism, both Cliffites and Shachtmanites supported “leftist” offshoots of the fascist Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) founded by Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera in the post-World War II period when it was kept alive by the U.S. spy agencies.

This points to the second reason why the social-democratic hue and cry over “Russian imperialism” in Ukraine is politically logical: many of these outfits have repeatedly backed all sorts of nationalists and ultra-reactionaries sponsored by Western imperialism. Leftist groups who hailed the CIA’s mercenary *mujahedin* against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, who as the USSR was breaking up praised Baltic SS Einsatzgruppen that carried out mass execution of Jews, and who paint as revolutionaries pro-imperialist Islamist *ihadis* in Libya and Syria have no qualms about siding with a Ukrainian junta composed of rightist puppets of Washington, Wall Street and Eurobankers imposing vicious anti-working class austerity, backed up by squads of fascist killers.

Like the RCA Victor mascot Nipper in the old gramophone logo, in barking against “Russian imperialism,” these “leftist” lap dogs of U.S./NATO imperialism are just echoing “their master’s voice.” Shachtmanites and Cliffites claimed to be in a “Third Camp” during World War II and the anti-Soviet Cold War respectively. While Trotskyists

fought tenaciously to defend the Soviet degenerated workers

state, despite and against the bureaucratic leadership of Stalin and his heirs whose policies endangered the survival of the first workers state in history, these anti-Trotskyists proclaimed: “Neither Washington nor Moscow.” In reality there was no “third camp” and they ended up as camp followers of the first, imperialist “camp.”

Is Russia Imperialist? I: Monopoly and Export of Capital

Not everyone on the left is repeating the imperialist refrain over Ukraine, but among those who don’t there is little clarity about the nature of the capitalist states that arose out of the counterrevolution that destroyed the multinational Soviet Union. It’s worth asking, is Russia imperialist? Is Putin building a new Russian Empire? So say academic anti-communists like Yale’s sinister Timothy Snyder, who is sympathetically interviewed on “progressive” Democracy Now TV/radio show. Snyder is the author of *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (Basic Books, 2012) that grotesquely equates the USSR with Nazi Germany. And what about Ukraine and other “post-Soviet” states of Eurasia, are they colonies or semi-colonies whose fate is decided in the Kremlin?

To answer this question, one must first define what imperialism is. Standard bourgeois definitions would include “the principle or policy of empire; the advocacy of holding political dominion or control over dependent territories” (Oxford English Dictionary), “state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas” (Encyclopedia Britannica), or more generally “a policy or practice by which a country increases its power by gaining control over other areas of the world” (Merriam-Webster). By these definitions, there was Greek and Roman imperialism in the ancient world, and British, Spanish, Dutch and French imperialism from the dawn of their respective colonial empires in the 16th and 17th centuries. One might add the Aztecs, Incas and the Mughal Empire in India to this list of “imperialisms.”

So how do the “socialist” fustigators of “Russian imperialism” today use the term? The British SWP published a two-page spread on “Imperialism’s Game of Empires” (*Socialist Worker* [UK], 5 April 2014) in which it defines imperialism as consisting of “control, either direct or indirect, of weaker countries.” This classless definition could apply to any foreign intervention by a powerful country. Even when it says the “driving force” of the “global system” of imperialism is “competition between the big capitalist powers,” in the next breath it claims that the Cold War was a conflict “between capitalist and state capitalist powers,” the latter being their anti-Marxist label for the USSR and the Soviet bloc deformed workers states. For decades, the Cliffites denounced Soviet intervention as “Russian imperialism,” from Korea in the 1950s to Afghanistan in the 1980s, as they lined up with the real imperialists.

Theirs is a boiled-down version of the standard bourgeois definition, very different from the Marxist, and specifically



² See “Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!” *The Internationalist*, March 2014.

Leninist definition of imperialism. In his pamphlet, *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), Lenin defines capitalist imperialism as follows:

“(1) The concentration of production and capital has developed to such a high stage that it has created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life; (2) the merging of bank capital with industrial capital and the creation, on the basis of this ‘finance capital,’ of a financial oligarchy; (3) the export of capital, as distinguished from the export of commodities, acquires exceptional importance; (4) the formation of international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world among themselves; and (5) the territorial division of the whole world among the biggest capitalist powers is completed.”

The central point of Lenin’s work is that imperialism is not just a policy, which the rulers could change – as opportunists such as Karl Kautsky argued – but rather the stage of monopoly capitalism, in which the dominance of finance capital *requires* imperialist practices. Kautsky’s definition served to justify his utopian-reformist, pacifist program of pressuring the rulers to adopt peaceful “non-imperialist” policies. Lenin’s analysis laid bare that the only road to peace was to overthrow the imperialist system.

So where does Russia today stand according to these criteria? Certainly, in this land of “oligarchs,” monopolies dominate the Russian economy. Overall, a few hundred large capitalists control about 40% of sales.³ This is partly due to the structure of the economy in which industry (mining, manufacturing, construction and power), with its huge capital requirements and economies of scale, contributes a far larger share of the gross domestic product (37%) than in the United States (20%).⁴ But mainly it is a reflection of the fact that Russian capitalism has been built on the remains of the centralized, collectivized economy, in which whole industrial sectors and regional distribution chains were controlled by a single enterprise. The monopolies are not particularly large by international capitalist standards, but there are very few small firms.

An Austrian pseudo-Trotskyist, Michael Pröbsting,⁵ has

³ Sergei Guriev and Andrei Rachinsky, “The Role of Oligarchs in Russian Capitalism,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Winter 2005.

⁴ World Bank data: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.IND.TOTL.ZS>

⁵ Pröbsting speaks for the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (RCIT), a 2011 split from the League for a Fifth International led by the British Workers Power group. While claiming to



recently authored an opus titled “Russia as a Great Imperialist Power: The Formation of Russian Monopoly Capital and Its Empire” (*Revolutionary Communism*, March 2014). Pröbsting argues that Russia is imperialist in the first instance because of the domination of the economy by monopolies, citing Gazprom, Sberbank, Rosneft and Lukoil, and others. This proves nothing. In the era of combined and uneven development, even in semi-colonial capitalist countries monopolies often dominate the economy. Brazil’s Vale Corp. and Mexico’s Cemex and América Móvil outrank Gazprom and Lukoil in foreign assets,⁶ but that doesn’t make Brazil or Mexico imperialist.

And this is certainly not the dominance of *finance* capital, the cornerstone of Lenin’s analysis of imperialism. Russia has only 2 of the top 100 banks in the world ranked by total assets, Sberbank (No. 74) and VTB (No.

93), whose combined worth is less than half that of the three Brazilian banks on the list (Itaú Unibanco, Banco do Brasil and Bradesco). Banks constitute a much smaller part of the Russian economy (4% of GDP) than in the U.S. (8% of GDP and 41% of corporate profits) or the rest of the imperialist West, and play little role in directing the economy. Sberbank is a giant savings bank, majority state-owned, which mainly finances majority state-owned firms. VTB, also majority state-owned, is the former Soviet foreign trade bank. Its subsidiaries in ex-Soviet republics focus on financing trade with Russia.

As for export of capital, Russia is in an intermediate position between imperialist countries and neo-colonial countries. Thus Russian total foreign investment amounts to 21% of GDP, far less than Sweden (78% of GDP), Great Britain (74%) France (54%), Germany (46%) or the U.S. (35%), or even Chile (37%); substantially more than Brazil and Mexico (around 10%) and about the same as South Africa (22%).⁷ In

be Trotskyist, both the RCIT and its progenitor declare the Fourth International dead, not only organizationally but also programmatically. Workers Power was a mid-1970s split from the Cliffite International Socialists. Today they all declare China “state capitalist” just as Cliff did with Russia during the first Cold War. In each case they are inventing a label in order to justify refusing to defend degenerated/deformed workers states against imperialism.

⁶ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *World Investment Report 2013*, Table of Top 100 TNCs from Development and Transition Economies (2011).

⁷ Figures in this paragraph on outward and inward stock of foreign direct investment are for 2012, UNCTAD, *World Investment Report 2013*, FDI/TNC database.

addition, while in imperialist countries foreign investment outside the country (44% of GDP in “developed economies”) almost always exceeds foreign investment inside the country (33% of GDP), in Russia outward foreign direct investment (21% of GDP) is less than inward FDI (26%), though the gap is not nearly as great as with the larger semi-colonial countries where capital inflows can be double or triple the outflows.

Moreover, a large part of the capital outflows from Russia are hardly foreign investment at all, but hiding funds in offshore tax havens. Look at the countries which are the recipients of Russian foreign “investment”: Ukraine, 1.2%; rest of former USSR, 3.1%; but European Union, 64%, of which Cyprus accounts for US\$122 billion, or 34% (and in 2012, 43%).⁸ Cyprus? No center of industry or raw materials supplies, but it is (or was) a tax paradise. The other main destination, the British Virgin Islands (12.8% in 2012), has since dramatically increased its share from US\$49 billion to \$80 billion as Russian money fled to the British tax haven in the 2013 collapse of the Cyprus banking system. Far from encouraging foreign investment, the Russian government has been appealing to bring this “flight capital” home, to no avail.⁹

Much of this is capital temporarily parked off-shore, as suggested by the fact that inflows and outflows of capital largely balance out year after year. Thus the accounting firm Ernst & Young did an analysis of movement of Russian funds from 2007 to 2011 (“Capital Outflow from Russia: From Myths to Reality” [2012]), showing US\$135 billion movement to offshores and \$133 billion from offshores. Their conclusion: “The amount of real capital outflow is overstated by a factor of at least 2x.” Moreover, several leading Russian companies have been divesting themselves of foreign holdings, such as Severstal which is seeking to sell its two U.S. steel plants.¹⁰ Asia, Africa and Latin America, there are very few.

The bottom line is that far from having “an enormous ‘surplus of capital’” (Lenin, in *Imperialism*) that is scouring the globe for more lucrative investments, to corner markets or jack up profit margins by exploiting low-wage labor in semi-colonial countries, Russia has a *capital shortage* and is a *net importer of capital*. Only one of the world’s 100 largest “transnational” corporations is Russian (Vimpel.com, No. 93, a cellphone company, with less than half the assets of Brazil’s Vale and the same size as Carlos Slim’s Mexico-based América Móvil). As far as the search for raw materials supplies is concerned, Russia is endowed with vast quantities of almost every vital resource, including the largest natural gas reserves in the world. It is primarily an exporter of raw materials and energy (oil and gas supply 70% of total export earnings). In short, on the criterion of exporting capital, Russia is far from qualifying as an imperialist country.

⁸ Aleksei Kuznetsov, “Russian Multinationals FDI Outflows Geography: the Emerging Dominance of Greater Europe,” *European Researcher* [Vol. 67:1-2, 2014]

⁹ “President Vladimir Putin’s calls for domestic companies to repatriate their funds back home from offshore jurisdictions have fallen on deaf ears” (“Russian Investors Flock to Virgin Islands After Cypriot Crisis,” *Moscow Times*, 18 August 2013).

¹⁰ “Russian Steel Billionaire Mordashov Seeks U.S. Pull Out,” *Bloomberg*, 16 May 2014.

Is Russia Imperialist? II: Dividing Up and Dominating the World Territorially

The same goes for being part of “international monopolist capitalist associations which share the world.” For all the talk of “partnership,” post-Soviet capitalist Russia has been treated as an outsider, to be dealt with warily. Although Russia applied to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1993, it was not admitted until 2012, more than a decade after China. The Russian Federation is still excluded from the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the club of leading capitalist countries, which has been expanded to include Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Mexico and the Czech Republic. The NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) imperialist military alliance has been expanding right up to Russia’s borders. And now Russia has been kicked out of the Group of Eight leading powers.

Lenin’s definition of imperialism had several elements, and some countries might qualify as imperialist by most but not all criteria. Lenin himself pointed to “a country most backward economically (Russia), where modern capitalist imperialism is enmeshed, so to speak, in a particularly close network of pre-capitalist relations.” Yet despite its economic weakness and backwardness, the tsarist empire acted as the “policeman of Europe” in the mid-19th century, crushing revolutions in Hungary and Poland; and during the Balkan Wars on the eve of World War I, it was seen as the protector of the southern Slavs against the Austro-Hungarian Empire. So Russia’s economy is not dominated by finance capital, it is not a major exporter of capital and it has not gained full admittance to the imperialist clubs, but what of its geopolitical role?

Pröbsting in his tract claims that “Russian imperialism already dominates or at least plays a central role in oppressing a number of Central Asian and Eastern European semi-colonies.” He claims that one of the 28 tables he prints (No. 9) shows that: “Russia’s monopolies are investing in mostly semi-colonial Central Asia and Eastern Europe, as well as in Western imperialist Europe and in the semi-colonial Balkans. From these figures we can conclude that Russian monopolies derive significant extra-profit from their foreign investments in the semi-colonial countries in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Central Asia.”

The figures show nothing of the sort, giving no indication of actual *amounts* of investment. With this sleight of hand, he is hoping that readers won’t recall that a previous table (No. 4) showed that less than 4% of Russia’s foreign investment went to Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Even if a portion of transfers to tax havens are actually investments in offshore Russian companies, such as Lukoil’s U.S. operations headquartered in the British Virgin Islands, very little of these are invested in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

For example, the statistics showing US\$2.5 billion of Russian foreign investment (0.7% of the total) in Kazakhstan certainly understate the actual amount. Several sources put the real figure at US\$7 billion. But this is less than the \$9.7 billion corresponding to U.S. firms, and less than 8% of the total foreign investment in the country (which accounts for



four-fifths of all foreign investment in Central Asia).¹¹ That is because the investments are concentrated in the petroleum industry, including the giant Tengiz oil field operated by a consortium led by Chevron and Exxon and the mammoth project at Kashagan, undertaken by a consortium led by Eni (Italy), BP (Britain), Statoil (Norway), Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell and Total S.A. (France). The Russian Rosneft and Lukoil only have minor fields producing far less than the Austrian OMW.

As for dividing up the world territorially, Russia hasn't been notably successful in that department either. While Moscow's rulers have waged two brutal, dirty wars to prevent the secession of Chechnya from the Russian Federation, they have accepted the independence of the non-Russian Soviet republics. Yeltsin even encouraged them, playing to a chauvinist sentiment that Russia should stop subsidizing the rest of the USSR. Putin has declared that "the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century," not because of any lingering affinity for socialism, however perverted and negated by Stalinism, but on the nationalist grounds that "tens of millions of our co-citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory" (address to the federal assembly of the Russian Federation, April 2005).

There is no doubt that Putin would like to restore the "glory" and power of the Russian Empire, but post-Soviet capitalist Russia has not been and still is not in a position to do so. Moscow has not turned the screws on the Baltic Republics, although their reactionary capitalist leaders have excluded several hundred thousand ethnic Russians from citizenship in Estonia and Latvia on the basis of Nazi-style "blood laws," requiring ethnic Russians to be naturalized, renounce Russian citizenship and pass discriminatory language exams. In all three countries SS and police battalions of Nazi collaborators

during World War II are hailed as national heroes, including those who executed Communists and slaughtered tens of thousands of Jews.

In ex-Soviet Central Asia there are no Russian military bases, nor has Moscow used military pressure to dominate the region. The U.S., on the other hand, has a base in Manas, Kyrgyzstan, a staging point for supplying the imperialist occupation force in Afghanistan. Washington also poured



Washington engineered 2005 "Tulip Revolution" (above) in Kyrgyzstan, Central Asia, providing printing presses and financing opposition groups while maintaining military base in Manas to supply U.S. occupation forces in Afghanistan.

¹¹ OECD Investment Policy Reviews, *Kazakhstan 2012: Foreign Direct Investment in Kazakhstan* (2012).

New York Times



Tengiz oil field: U.S., European imperialists are exploiting Central Asian resources.

hundreds of millions in aid into the country, including tens of millions of dollars to promote “democracy” and “civil society.” Using the conduit of the National Endowment for Democracy, Washington financed Kyrgyz opposition groups who also used a Freedom House printing press to prepare the 2005 “Tulip Revolution,” which overthrew the government of Askar Akayev and installed Kurman Bakiyev as president.¹² Bakiyev in turn was overthrown in 2010 by oppositionists feeding off discontent over the U.S. base and endemic government corruption.

In Georgia, the U.S. engineered the so-called “Rose

¹² “U.S. Helped Prepare the Way for Kyrgyzstan’s Uprising,” *New York Times*, 30 March 2005.

Shakh Alvazov/AP



U.S. imperialists also engineered 2003 “Rose Revolution” in Georgia, installing Mikheil Saakashvili as puppet president, who in 2008 launched attack on pro-Russian enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, hoping to spur membership in NATO.

Revolution” in November 2003 to oust the government of former Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, using a network of U.S.-funded “non-governmental organizations” (NGOs) and U.S.-trained operatives from Serbia who had organized the overthrow of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000. Shevardnadze’s replacement, U.S.-educated Mikheil Saakashvili (who got an advanced law degree from Columbia University on a State Department scholarship), was backed by financier George Soros, whose empire of “Open Society” NGOs was also active in Ukraine in 2004 and again in

2013-14. Having taken power in a coup, Saakashvili soon applied for Georgian membership in NATO.

In 2008, Saakashvili set off hostilities and eventually a five-day war with Russia by military provocations in the pro-Russian enclaves of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where Russian peacekeeping troops had been stationed since Georgia tried to suppress revolts by the local population in 1991-92. In response to Georgian attacks, Moscow dispatched Russian troops who drove out the invaders, but then continued on into Georgia in what became a reactionary Russo-Georgian war. But even NATO officials and observers of the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) blamed Georgia for starting the conflict, hoping to get NATO to intervene and fast-track its application for membership in the imperialist military alliance. Far from being expansionist, the Russian military action was essentially defensive.

So in talking about an imperialist power that exploits Central Asian and Caucasian semi-colonies, reaping super-profits by exporting capital to exploit their natural resources, intervening with massive financing to influence local politics, organizing coups and maintaining military bases, who has done that in the post-Soviet period is not Russia but the United States. Certainly Russia’s capitalist rulers seek to dominate the geopolitical space around their reduced domain and to lord it over submissive weaker states. Putin clearly dreams of doing so. But at present Russia can only ward off the attacks of aggressive U.S. imperialism and its NATO imperialist allies who, sometimes through regional puppets, are determined to smash any challenge to their global hegemony.

Russia as a Transitional Capitalist Country and Regional Power

Contrary to the social-democratic purveyors of imperialist propaganda against “Russian imperialism,” Lenin did not divide the world exclusively into imperialists and colonies or semi-colonies. In his pamphlet on *Imperialism*, the Bolshevik leader referred in several places to “non-colonial and semi-colonial countries” (such as Persia, China and Turkey), to “a

number of *transitional* forms of state dependence” including Argentina (“almost a British commercial colony”) and Portugal (“a British protectorate”), and more generally to “the transitional forms which are to be found in all spheres of nature and society.” His point was that they are all “links in the chain of operations of world finance capital,” part of “a general system,” imperialism.

Russia today is such a transitional capitalist country, neither a semi-colony nor an imperialist state – not yet. Another example of an intermediate capitalist country is Greece.¹³ Geopolitically Russia is a regional power with imperial ambitions. It’s not unique. South Africa, both under the apartheid regime and now under black capitalist neo-apartheid, has sought to control the southern parts of the African continent. Even larger semi-colonial countries can play this role: Iran under the shah and Khomeini and his heirs has sought to dominate “its” region, including the “Persian” Gulf statelets. Brazil acts as a sheriff for Yankee imperialism in the Caribbean, supplying mercenary troops for the U.S./U.N. occupation of Haiti. Putin’s Russia plays hardball with Ukraine over gas supplies and prices? For decades Brazil imposed below-cost payments to Paraguay for electricity from the Iguazu Falls.

Marxists oppose the imperial and great power ambitions of such regional powers while concentrating our fire on the real imperialists who like to carry out their aggression posing as defenders of human rights, democracy and the like. Woodrow Wilson did so in the first imperialist world war, the “democratic” imperialists did so in World War II, Bill Clinton did so in twice attacking Serbia, and today liberal U.S. Democrat Barack Obama, French “socialist” François Hollande and British Tory David Cameron sound the same theme in sponsoring Islamist “ethnic cleansers” in Syria and Nazi pogromists in Ukraine. *Today, the main threat to working people in the clash over Ukraine is the imperialist-backed junta of ethnic-nationalist fascists and free-market rightists in Kiev, not some “Russian imperialism.”*

So what about the claims of Russian aggression against “poor little Ukraine”? In the first place, Putin’s incorporation of Crimea was able to take place without firing a shot because it had the overwhelming, enthusiastic support of the local population. Crimea was historically part of Russia and the large majority of its population culturally Russian, and it was “gifted” to Ukraine only in 1954 by Nikita Khrushchev. The administrative change made little difference to people at the time as Ukraine and the Russian republic were part of a single state, the Soviet Union. Residents have continued to identify with Russia in part because of the economic dominance of the peninsula by the Russian Black Fleet base at Sevastopol, and because many in the 95% Russian-speaking population

(including ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians) are army and navy veterans.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International supported the self-determination of Crimea and its joining the Russian Federation. Russia’s military action, far from being an act of aggression, facilitated the exercise of this democratic right in repudiation of the imperialist-backed Ukrainian-nationalist Kiev junta, which is hostile to (and despised by) the population of Russian-speaking regions of Ukraine. Russian intervention was also a defensive move to forestall military action by a hostile, NATO-backed Ukraine to seize Sevastopol. This is not only home port to the Black Sea Fleet, but is vital for Russian exports because it dominates access to Russia’s only major warm water port (which doesn’t freeze in winter), Novorossiysk. If NATO ever got control of Sevastopol they would use it to strangle Russia economically.

As for all the talk of the Russian bear gobbling up southeastern Ukraine, this is crude Cold War fear-mongering. That would result in a rump Ukrainian state dominated by a virulently anti-Russian nationalist government based in western Ukraine through which most of the 12 pipelines carrying Russia gas to Europe run. They could be turned off in a flash, and while Russia has now opened the Nord Stream pipeline under the Baltic Sea, this can only carry a fraction of Russian gas exports to Europe. Moreover, the population of eastern Ukraine is more mixed than in Crimea, with a strong minority of native Ukrainian speakers. A Russian takeover (as opposed to self-rule) would doubtless face endless Ukrainian-nationalist attacks. In one of its few lucid moments, the *New York Times* (13 May 2014) recognized this, editorializing:

“Mr. Putin has given every indication that his real goal is not to annex any more Ukrainian territory but to transform Ukraine into a federation under a weak and neutral Kiev government permanently dependent on Russia.”

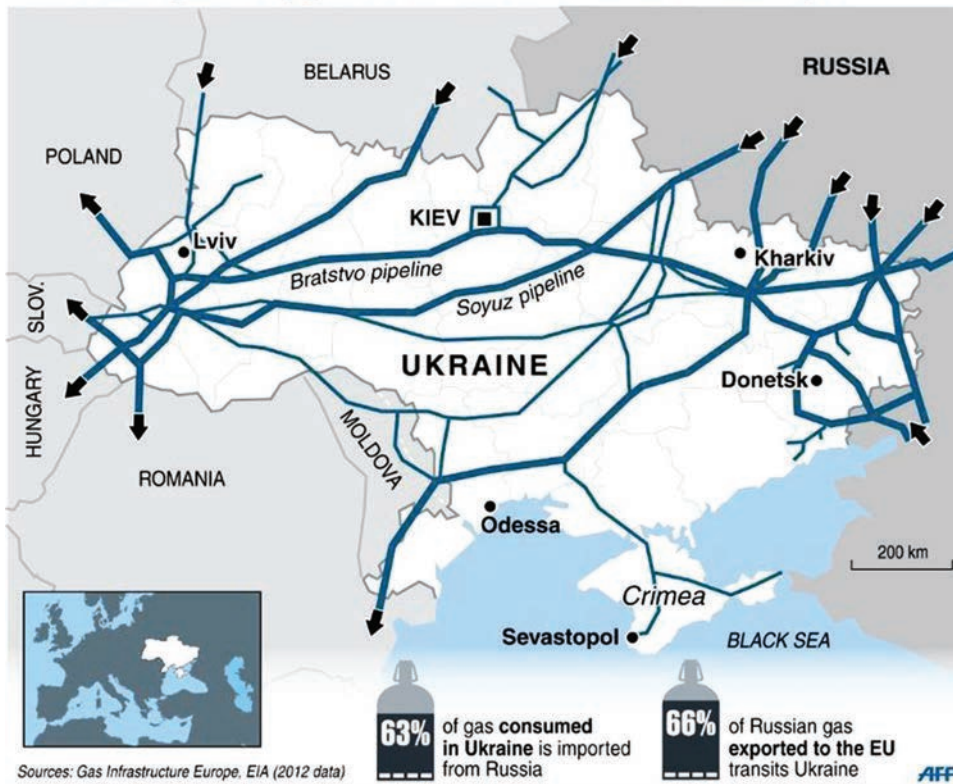
What the most aggressive imperialist warmongers want, in contrast, is a Ukraine dependent on the West which would be a permanent military threat to Russia. Such a configuration would inexorably point to war. Provocations by Ukrainian ultra-rightists, or others, would be unpreventable. No “peace” arrangements could avert that danger, so that nuclear deterrence would be back, and with it the doctrine of “Mutually Assured Destruction.” The Pentagon understands this well, which is why it has so far not acted on Ukrainian (or Georgian) requests to join NATO. The Kremlin even more so sees this perilous scenario on the horizon, and has moved to avert it.

Ukraine: Neo-Colony of Post-Soviet Russia?

Aside from the Cold War anti-Russian propaganda, there remains the question of Ukraine’s relationship to Russia: under the tsarist empire, in the Soviet Union, and since the destruction of the USSR and restoration of capitalism. Is it true, as the American ISO claims, that Russia is “Ukraine’s past and present imperial overlord”? This “captive nations” refrain is definitely the view of the leaders of the Kiev junta, “prime minister” Arseniy Yatsenyuk and “president” Oleksandr Turchynov and Ukrainian nationalists generally who justify the

¹³ We have noted elsewhere that Greece is neither a semi-colonial country nor a full-fledged imperialist country but “a sub-imperialist power whose capitalists own the largest shipping fleet in the world (though mostly not sailing under the Greek flag); whose banks have historically had a privileged position in the eastern Mediterranean and are now buying up banks and companies throughout the Balkans; and which economically dominates Macedonia and Albania” (“Greece on the Razor’s Edge,” *The Internationalist* No. 32, January-February 2011).

Russian gas supplies to Ukraine and W. Europe



military assault on eastern Ukraine with the claim that they are fighting to throw off the Russian imperial yoke (even as they seek to become a semi-colony of the imperialist European Union).

Ukraine was certainly an oppressed nation under tsarism, one of many in the Romanovs' "prison house of peoples." Ukrainian culture was persecuted and the Ukrainian language was banned from the schools from 1804 on. In addition, by the late 1800s Ukraine was home to 20% of all European Jews, who were beset by tsarist repression and pogroms, leading many to flee Ukraine. But many remained and Ukrainian Jews played a prominent role in the socialist movement, one of the reasons for the Odessa pogrom by tsarist Black Hundreds at the height of the 1905 Russian Revolution.

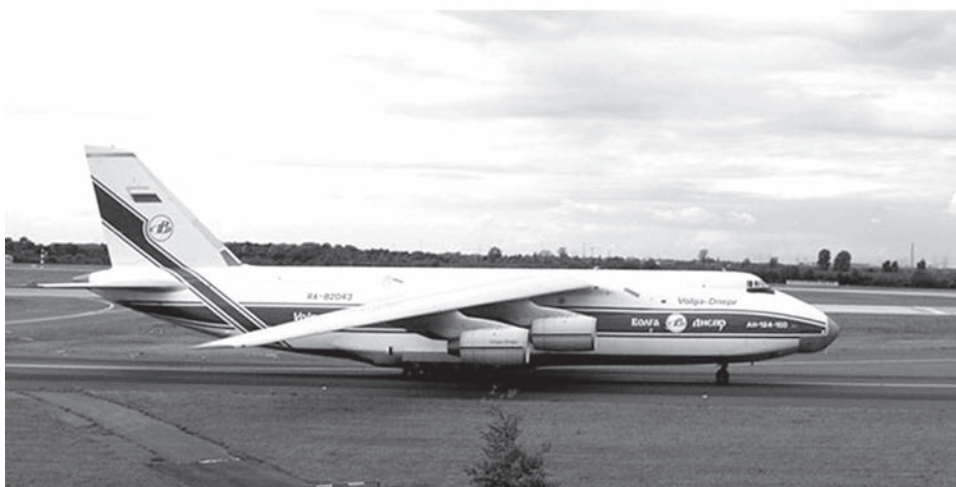
We have noted how during the Civil War following the 1917 October Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky united Ukrainian and Russian Bolsheviks and leftward-moving Ukrainian nationalists in a single Communist Party. A short-lived Donetsk—Krivoy Rog soviet republic in the east was integrated into the Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic, with its capital in Kharkiv. In his speech to the Russian parliament over Crimea, Putin complained: "After the revolution, the Bolsheviks, for a number of reasons – may God judge them – added large sections of the historical South of Russia to the Republic of Ukraine. This was done with no consideration for the ethnic make-up of the population" (RT,

19 March). Russian nationalists blame Trotsky for this, which was key to creating a multi-national Ukraine. Ethnic homogeneity is a chauvinist program.

In the early years of Soviet Russia, the Bolsheviks followed a policy of "*korenizatsiia*," or indigenization, promoting the use and development of native languages in non-Russian areas of the USSR. The use of Ukrainian was encouraged in the government and schools. But as part of Stalin's nationalist dogma of building "socialism in one country," an aggressive campaign of Russification was launched: in 1929 Ukrainian intellectuals were arrested; a few years later Ukrainian instruction in the schools was banned and newspapers switched to Russian. In addition, there was the terrible toll of forced collectivization, in which several million died in the 1932-33 famine. And, as Trotsky noted, Stalin's bloody purges of Communists in the late 1930s hit the Ukrainian CP harder than anywhere.



"Ukrainians and Russians Have a Common War Cry – Pan [Polish aristocrat] Will Not Be Master of the Worker!" 1920 Red Army agitational poster by Vladimir Mayakovsky.



Ukraine a semi-colony of Russia? Ukraine does not have typical semi-colonial economy based on resource extraction but is a heavily industrialized country, the tenth-largest arms exporter and tenth-largest steel producer in the world. (Top) Russian R-36 intercontinental ballistic missile launcher and (bottom) Antonov 124 cargo plane, both made in Ukraine and sold mainly to Russia.

This was not the entire story of Ukraine's history in the Soviet Union, however. From the 1930s on, eastern Ukraine became the industrial powerhouse of the USSR. Following former Ukrainian party chief Nikita Khrushchev's 1954 accession to power in Moscow, language policy was loosened and Ukrainian was once again used in schools and media, although Russian was still prevalent as was repression of all dissidents – pro- and anti-socialist alike. Similarly under Ukrainian Leonid Brezhnev, who succeeded Khrushchev in the Kremlin from 1964 to 1982. Incomes and supplies of consumer goods rose and by 1991, living standards in Ukraine were slightly *higher* than in the Russian republic. Then counterrevolution devastated the economy and incomes fell by up to two-thirds. Capitalism threw millions

of Ukrainians into poverty.

Today incomes are much higher in Russia than in Ukraine: pensions in Russia are double those in Ukraine (one reason why even ethnic Ukrainians voted for Crimea to join Russia). This is mainly due to Russia's boom in oil and gas production and the international rise of energy prices. Yet despite all the propaganda about Russian use of natural gas to "blackmail" Ukraine, even after prices of Russian gas to Ukraine were more than doubled in 2006, the average price (\$130 per thousand cubic meters) was barely 40% of that charged to Germany (\$320/mcm).¹⁴ Far from extracting superprofits from gas sales to Ukraine, *Russia has greatly subsidized Ukrainian industry and consumers* in order to keep the country friendly, while Ukraine has periodically used its control of the pipelines and storage facilities to siphon off huge quantities of gas.¹⁵

The other major difference between the Ukraine and Russian economies is the role of the "oligarchs." In both countries, the demise of the socialized economy was marked by wholesale looting, as privatized enterprises were handed out to cronies for a pittance. This is typical of the formation of a new capitalist class, which almost always is the result of state promotion. The difference between Russia and Ukraine is that, beginning in 2000

Putin clawed back some of the ill-gotten gains, beefed up state-owned strategic sectors and brought the capitalist *boyars* (princes) to heel, with some fleeing to exile (Berezovsky,

¹⁴ S. Pirani, *Ukraine's Gas Sector* (Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, June 2007).

¹⁵ An article by two Brookings Institution experts notes, "The simple fact is that Russia today supports the Ukrainian economy to the tune of at least \$5 billion, perhaps as much as \$10 billion, each year" (Clifford Gaddy and Barry Ickes, "Ukraine: A Prize Neither Russia Nor the West Can Afford to Win," Brookings, 22 May). This subsidy is not limited to cheap gas, but also includes Ukraine's heavy manufacturing and defense industries which are almost entirely dependent on exports to Russia. When Russia stopped ordering railroad locomotives and rolling stock last year, Ukraine lost billions of dollars and its plants effectively shut down.

Gusinsky) and others jailed (Khodorkovsky). In Ukraine, the looting never stopped, and the oligarchs have continued to have free rein, no matter who was president.

Russian companies have limited clout in Ukraine, as “pro-Russian” and “pro-Ukrainian” oligarchs have united to keep their richer Russian cousins out. There has been a tug-of-war over oil refineries, with the Russian company Tatneft ousted at gunpoint from the largest plant (Keremenchug) in 2007, while a court recently seized a smaller Odessa refinery which had gone back and forth between Russian and Ukrainian ownership. The largest foreign-owned refinery today (Kherson) belongs to the Kazakh state oil company. Russian firms have also been largely excluded from the steel industry: when the largest mill, Kryvorizhstal, was privatized in 2004, the Russian company Severstal was excluded, and the initial award to eastern Ukrainian steel baron Rinat Akhmetov was reversed on presidential orders. The plant was then sold to Arcelor Mittal Steel with a loan from Citigroup. In 2010 the government awarded the second largest steel complex, the Ilyich Steel and Iron Works, to Akhmetov in order to keep Russian investors out.¹⁶

Ukraine does not have a typical semi-colonial economy based on resource extraction. It is heavily industrialized and is the tenth largest arms exporter in the world (and in 2012 the fourth-largest), ahead of Israel and Sweden, producing not only light arms but a full range of heavy weaponry including tanks.¹⁷ Ukraine is also the tenth largest steel producer in the world.¹⁸ And contrary to the news reports about a “rust belt,” heavy industry in eastern Ukraine has revived somewhat, while light manufacturing plants in the west have closed due to the competition of cheaper imports. The reality is that Russia has been a main customer of the Ukrainian iron, steel, metal and weapons plants. Ukraine’s aircraft industry based in Kiev and Kharkov works in close collaboration with Russian plants in Samara and Voronezh.

People in eastern Ukraine are well aware that if the country swings into the European Union orbit, most of this industry would be destroyed, as the U.S. and European capitalists snap up a few choice morsels and the workers are condemned to unemployment.

Overall Ukraine, like Russia, is an intermediate, transitional capitalist country, albeit one that is still mired in post-counterrevolution economic malaise and is far weaker militarily. But while workers’ wages and income levels are at poverty levels, that is not because of superexploitation by Russia. It is centrally because Ukraine’s capitalist rulers have grown filthy rich by looting the country’s riches. In fact, many Ukrainian oligarchs have used their accumulated wealth to buy up foreign companies. Thus in addition to Sergei Taruta who owns major steel mills in Ukraine, Poland and Hungary, Ihor Kolomoyski’s Privat Group controls banks, airlines, oil refineries, iron and steel mills, ferroalloy plants in Ukraine, Romania,

Poland, Georgia and Russia, and Australian Consolidated Minerals which has 10% of global manganese production. Not to mention pipe magnate Viktor Pinchuk and “chocolate king” Petro Poroshenko, among others.

The issue of language has been a lightning rod for anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalist sentiment. This is in large part because of the large ethnic Russian population in the east and south, much of which has little allegiance to the Ukrainian state, but just as importantly because the actual number of Russian speakers is far greater. While 30% of the population give Russian as their native language, 46% say they speak Russian at home, over half say it is their everyday language and Russian is the most common language in media and business. Moreover, in the central Ukrainian regions, a large percentage speak Surzhyk, with a mixture of Ukrainian and Russian vocabulary, so that “pure” Ukrainian is the dominant language only in the west. Thus the ethnic nationalists are trying to impose the use of Ukrainian on a reluctant population.

The decision by the Ukrainian Rada (Supreme Council) on the day after the coup to eliminate the official status of the Russian language in eastern Ukraine was no fluke. Not only the fascists but even the “moderate” nationalist bourgeois parties voted for this last fall. It is common when nationalist movements gain power that they seek to impose a national language, and Ukrainian nationalists are vexed by the fact that Russian remains the predominant language. Marxist internationalists, in contrast, oppose the imposition of official languages or state privilege for any language.¹⁹ Demands that all Ukrainian citizens must speak Ukrainian, that official business and school instruction must be in Ukrainian, paralleling Estonia and Latvia, are discriminatory and chauvinist, and we oppose them just as we oppose the French-language Law 101 in Quebec that seeks to legislate the use of French by English-speakers and immigrants.²⁰

In sum, the relation of Russia and Ukraine today is not one of imperial overlord and semi-colonial vassal but of two intermediate level capitalist states, notwithstanding differences in their relative power. Canada and the United States are both imperialist states, and while the U.S. is far more powerful, there is no qualitative difference between them. Marxists must take into account the long history of Ukrainian oppression at the hands of the tsarist Russian Empire and the Great Russian Stalinist chauvinists, but Ukrainian anti-Russian nationalism is no less reactionary (and like all nationalism, bourgeois). While also combating Russian nationalism in eastern Ukraine, Trotskyists fight for proletarian internationalism against all the capitalist exploiters, and particularly against the imperialists, their Ukrainian bourgeois puppets and fascist attack dogs. ■

¹⁹ “In particular, Social-Democrats reject a ‘state’ language” and oppose “any ‘state’ privileges for any one language” (V.I. Lenin, “Theses on the National Question,” June 1913). The Bolsheviks did not make Russian the state language, and in fact promoted non-Russian languages in teaching and administration under the policy of “korenization” (or indigenization), including use of minority languages in districts with ethnic minorities, among them Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine.

²⁰ At the same time, we oppose company policies requiring the use of the language preferred by management.

¹⁶ Slawomir Matuszak, *The Oligarchic Democracy: The Influence of Business Groups on Ukrainian Politics* (OSW Studies, 2012).

¹⁷ SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) *Yearbook*, 2013.

¹⁸ “World Steel Statistics Data 2013,” World Steel Association, January 2014.

Killer Cops...

continued from page 5

I can't breathe"³). But after all that, he comes up with a tiny list of "reforms" that either aren't going to happen (ending the drug war, "changing police culture" or instituting civilian review boards with subpoena power and the authority to impose discipline) or are completely empty (more "transparency"). Balko, who is no "bleeding heart" liberal but a right-wing libertarian, complains:

"Police today are armed, dressed, trained and conditioned like soldiers. They're given greater protections from civil and criminal liability than normal citizens. They are permitted to violently break into homes, often at night...

"This isn't to say we're in a police state.... [But] at the individual level, a police officer's power and authority over the people he interacts with day to day is near complete."

He ends with a lament that the supplying of military-grade armament to local police has become so pervasive that military contractors have shifted their resources to focus on this market.

As *Rise of the Warrior Cop* makes clear, the militarization of the police is not something new but a long-term process. It goes back to the late 1960s as impoverished blacks in the northern cities, having gained nothing from the civil rights movement, rebelled against rampant police brutality. After the "riots" were put down by the National Guard and military, local police began stocking up with heavy armament. The first paramilitary police SWAT squad was formed by Los Angeles police chief Darryl Gates and first used against the L.A. Black Panther Party office in December 1969. Because the Panthers, led by Geronimo ji-Jaga (Pratt), were well-armed and trained, they were able to stand off the cop assault for hours. (Geronimo was later imprisoned for 27 years on frame-up charges before his conviction was finally vacated.⁴)

At the same time, Richard Nixon launched the "war on drugs," which from the outset was a war on the black and Latino population. This war escalated in the 1980s under Republican Ronald Reagan and continued under Democrat Bill Clinton. Following the September 2001 attacks on the NYC World Trade Center and Pentagon, the militarization of local police again escalated, this time under the guise of a "war against terror," facilitated by the USA PATRIOT Act and other laws backed by both capitalist parties. There was also a deeper economic reason for the increasing militarization of the police: under the impact of "free-market" economic policies, the middle class was being hollowed out, with a sharply increased number of poor workers (including many immigrants without rights) and a tiny, obscenely wealthy capitalist elite. As U.S. society began to look more like Latin America, so did the police apparatus.

This development burst into public consciousness in August 2014 as the media showed hundreds of black residents of Ferguson, Missouri facing down an army of police in full body armor and military fatigues, with high-power rifles and machine

guns mounted atop Bearcat armored vehicles. The sight of the same equipment deployed in the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan being used against domestic demonstrators protesting against a police killing shocked many. The politicians, however, were shocked by the fact that the protesters didn't back down. Since then there have been calls to end the Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security programs of supplying military hardware to local police forces. After some initial hand-wringing, in May President Obama issued an order supposedly conditioning (but not banning) the transfer of armored trucks, drones and other aircraft. But just about every police force in the country already has a bulging arsenal of heavy weaponry.

Militarized police in the U.S. are not going away, protests or not, any more than the National Security Agency and other spy shops are curtailing their across-the board-surveillance after the Edward Snowden revelations. The capitalist rulers need them, to use against "the enemy," including the general population of the United States.

"Community Control of the Police" – A Dangerous Illusion

Over the years, various reformists and some black radicals have called for "*community control of the police*." In 1970, the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California, by then heavily influenced by the reformist Communist Party, put forward an amendment to the city charter calling to give "control of the police to community elected neighborhood councils so that those whom the police serve will be able to set police policy and standards of conduct." Today demands for community control of the police are raised by the Black Agenda Report and various pseudo-socialists including the Freedom Socialist Party (FSP)⁵ and Socialist Alternative (SAlt)⁶, both based in Seattle. This utopian reformist call only fosters illusions in the nature of the capitalist state. The ruling class will never permit the exploited and oppressed to have any control over the forces of repression, whose job is to enforce the exploitation and oppression of poor and working people. This reformist demand, moreover, legitimizes the functions of police in capitalist society and seeks to make the population targeted by the repressive apparatus co-responsible for those functions.

In the case of SAlt, which pretends that cops are "workers in uniform," its city council member Kshama Sawant praised the process of hiring a new police chief last year, saying it was "positive ... that a woman will be at the head of what has been and still is a male-dominated bastion." She hailed the new chief's "openness" and "commitment to build a relationship with the community," and said the new top cop's call for "a tiered approach for policing protests," in which riot cops will only be brought in "if they are absolutely necessary," and bike police will be used first against "unauthorized protests," was a "welcome change."⁷ So this "socialist" *supports* using riot cops against demonstrators! As for

⁵ "For community control over the police!" *Freedom Socialist*, June-July 2015.

⁶ "Socialist Alternative calls for community control over public safety and for community policing to be overseen by local committees of democratically elected representatives from the trade unions and community organizations," *Socialist Alternative* No. 8, November 2014

⁷ From Kshama Sawant's official city council member page.

³ See "Alberta Spruill: Victim of NYPD Killer Elite," *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003.

⁴ See "Geronimo Is Out! Now Free Mumia!" *The Internationalist* supplement, June 1997; and "Honor the Memory of Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt)," *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011.

the rest, in Portland, OR bike cops in their bumble-bee uniforms have brutally attacked protesters, and in South Africa, where cops shot down 37 striking mine workers at Marikana in August 2012, the head of the national police is a woman.

All these schemes fly in the face of, and in fact directly contradict, the fundamental Marxist understanding of the state. As Friedrich Engels spelled out in his book *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1885), and V.I. Lenin elaborated in his 1917 pamphlet *The State and Revolution*, the state is a public power consisting of “special bodies of armed men,” namely the military and police, along with their material adjuncts such as courts and prisons, which serves as a “means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.” “The state,” wrote Engels, “is an organization for the protection of the possessing class against the non-possessing class,” and that is true in “the highest form of the state, the democratic republic” just as much as in a monarchy, at the lowest levels just as much as at the highest.

As Karl Marx wrote at the time of the 1871 Paris Commune, under capitalist rule the state *cannot* serve the interests of the exploited and oppressed, no matter who is in the government or how much pressure is put on it, and the task is not “to transfer the bureaucratic-military machine from one hand to another, but to *smash* it.” Under the Commune, the police were subject to the control of, and was recallable by, the working people – but that was *after an uprising that suppressed the former army and police*, i.e., destroyed the former state machinery. The idea that the capitalists and their politicians, while still the ruling class, would tolerate control of the police by those it is intended to repress is a total illusion. And those who think that the election of sheriffs makes any difference in their repressive role need only look at the racist sheriff Joe Arpaio in Maricopa County, Arizona, who has been elected again and again.

The entire legal system is based on the recognition that the police are the first line of defense of capital. As shown by the refusal of a grand jury to indict the cops who killed Eric Garner, even in the face of irrefutable evidence, the process is rigged to ensure impunity for the police. In *Rise of the Warrior Cop*, Post reporter Balko points out that, “Under the qualified immunity from civil lawsuits currently afforded to police under federal law, a police officer can’t be sued for mere negligence – or even for gross negligence that results in a fatality.” But he admits that of his paltry list of reforms, modifying this immunity is the “least likely to be adopted.” This is not some peculiar American or modern invention. Engels in *The Origins of the Family* notes about even the earliest appearance of the state: “Representatives of a power which estranges them from society, they have to be given prestige by means of special decrees, which invest them with a peculiar sanctity and inviolability.”

No amount of protest will convince the ruling class to muzzle its uniformed guard dogs, whom it requires to keep the poor and working people down. What’s needed is militant class struggle on a revolutionary program. The Internationalist Group has called for an *end to all drug laws*. We call for *labor/black/immigrant mobilization against police terror*. We have acted to carry this out, with the unprecedented port shutdown to “Stop Police Terror” by Local 10 of the International Longshore and

Warehouse Union in Oakland this past May Day, and the “Labor Against Police Murder” contingent the same day, organized by Class Struggle Workers – Portland. Bringing to bear workers’ power to stop the wheels of commerce could stay the rulers’ hand for a time. At the height of struggle one can also *mobilize to get the police and military occupation forces out*, as the IG called for in Ferguson last August and again in Baltimore this spring.⁸ But such actions can only have a temporary effect.

Ultimately, there is no solution to racist police brutality under capitalist rule: it is inherent in the system. Racist vigilantes, from George Zimmerman to Dylann Roof, act as auxiliaries. Whether in the form of KKK nightriders and racist sheriffs under Jim Crow, or mass incarceration combined with paramilitary police forces today, supplemented by massacres, American capitalism has always devised a way to keep its black, Latino and now increasingly immigrant wage slaves in thrall. The killer cops aren’t running amok, in contradiction to their assigned task, they’re doing their job to enforce racist “law and order” which is essential to American capitalism, and has been ever since African slaves were brought here in chains. The fact that year after year, from one end of the country to the other, virtually no police are indicted – much less convicted – for killing *over 1,000 civilians a year* is no accident.

As we wrote in *The Internationalist* No. 1 (January-February 1997):

“Trigger-happy cops with Glocks pop anyone they consider ‘suspects’ or ‘perps,’ not to mention bystanders, subway riders, drivers who are parking, drivers who are stopped at stop lights, passengers in cars, pedestrians on the street, patrons in restaurants, young men playing football, young men outside bars, young men inside bars – *particularly if the victims are black, Hispanic or Asian* – as well as roaming around housing projects in off-duty vigilante squads, and not infrequently bumping off their own wives and girlfriends. They think they can get away with murder, and history – recent and past – shows they are right. Why? Because they are the enforcers of the monopoly of violence in the hands of the capitalist state, the apparatus set up to guarantee the profits and the rule of the bourgeoisie. . . .

“To get rid of racist cop terror, you have to sweep away the system that spawns it. That system is capitalism, and what’s needed is a socialist revolution to make the working class and its allies the rulers of society.”

While various pseudo-socialists are always seeking to build a new “movement,” adapting their politics to whatever is the flavor of the day, such amorphous “coalitions” always end up reducing their program to the lowest common denominator. This may at times bring many people into the street, but it cannot point the way forward to actually win. The struggle for socialist revolution requires a leadership, a multi-racial workers party with a clear revolutionary program, a party that champions the cause of all the oppressed and can overcome the rulers’ attempts to set one ethnic group against another, employed workers against the unemployed, etc. In short, we need, as we wrote in 1997, to “forge a revolutionary leadership, with a core of cadres tested in the class struggle, like the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky which led the October 1917 Russian Revolution.” ■

⁸ See “Defend Black Baltimore – Cops and Troops Out!” *The Internationalist* No. 39, April-May 2015.

Charleston Massacre...

continued from page 88

that he was responding to recent events, and whether or not he had ties to racist terrorist groups he was part of a white supremacist milieu. Clearly he relished living in infamy, as a hero to some. It was a rant by a loser identifying with other lost causes, from the slaveholders' Confederacy to the white citizens councils that enforced Jim Crow segregation to the rulers of apartheid South Africa and colonial Rhodesia. (He titled his screed, "The Last Rhodesian.") And he remarked to his black victims, "you're taking over the country," an obvious reference to Obama, the first black president. He was just acting out the fantasies of reactionary Tea Party bigots and racist right-wing talk show hosts and their substantial audiences.

With the attack at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, everyone immediately thought of the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama and the four black girls killed there. There were the obligatory references to Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and talk of healing. Naturally there was no mention of the fifth victim that day, a black youth shot in the back by police as they broke up a crowd of thousands of protesters. The Birmingham church bombing came two weeks after the August 1963 March on Washington, where King made his "I have a dream" speech imagining racial harmony, and a week after Alabama governor George Wallace said that to stop integration Alabama needed a "few first-class funerals." Malcolm X derisively referred to the "farce on Washington" and in response to the Birmingham church bombing said it was "not a dream but a nightmare," and blamed the federal government.

Charleston is a city steeped in the history of the slave South, which is its major attraction as a tourist destination today. Not only was it the center of the slave trade, the site of the first professional police force in the United State, born from slave-catching patrols, and where the first shots of the Civil War were fired at Fort Sumter in 1861, it was the site of the 1822 planned slave revolt led by Denmark Vesey. Vesey, who was born as the slave Telemaque in the Virgin Islands but managed to purchase his freedom, was a founder of the church which became the Emanuel AME. The uprising was planned for July 14, the day the French Revolution began in 1789 which first abolished slavery in Saint-Domingue (Haiti). Vesey visited Haiti as a seaman and was inspired by the Haitian Revolution, the first victorious slave insurrection in history.

But the slave revolt was betrayed, a secret court was convened and Vesey was hanged, along with others, on the eve of the July 4th Independence Day holiday. Vesey was a preacher, and justified the struggle to free the slaves with verses from the Christian Bible about delivering the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Because of this, and because several other AME members were allegedly involved in the slave conspiracy, city officials ordered the congregation disbanded and the church burned to the ground. So in striking at the Mother Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, the white racist terrorist was aiming at the specter of black revolt. Moreover,

he did so on the very day (June 17) that in 1822 Charleston authorities began rounding up the slaves accused of "exciting insurrection." Can that be an accident?

The struggle of African Americans in Charleston did not end with the suppression of Denmark Vesey's Revolt. The very first black regiment in the Union Army during the Civil War was the First South Carolina Volunteers, composed of escaped slaves, while the more famous Massachusetts 54th (whose heroism was celebrated in the film *Glory*) was drawn from free Northern blacks. Moreover, the birthplace of black labor organization in the South was on the Charleston docks. As Philip Foner writes in his *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (Vol. 1):

"In 1867, a wave of strikes swept the South. A strike on the levee in Mobile early in 1867 spread to other industries, resulting in some of the most stirring mass demonstrations of southern history. About the same time the Negro longshoremen in Charleston formed the Longshoremen's Protective Union Association and won their strike for higher wages. After the strike the Charleston *Daily News* referred to the association as the 'most powerful organization of the colored laboring class in South Carolina'."

The LPUA was the predecessor of today's Local 1422 of the International Longshoremen's Association.

The longshoremen of ILA Local 1422 have waged hard battles to defend their own interests and those of other black workers. In 1969, a two-month dock strike inspired hospital workers to go on strike for recognition of their union, Local 1199. After months of marches, the ILA settled the matter by threatening to shut down the port in support of the hospital workers. In January 2000, ILA Local 1422 fought back against an assault by 600 riot police with armored cars, helicopters, snipers, police boats and attack dogs. The "Charleston Five" dock workers were held under house arrest until November 2001 when worldwide protest and solidarity action forced the state to scale back the charges and let them go.

Today, the power of labor must be brought to bear in the fight against racist terror, whether by the police or vigilantes like Dylann Roof. Last month, in a groundbreaking action, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10 shut down the Port of Oakland, California to demand "Stop Police Terror." The West Coast longshore union was encouraged in its action by a letter from the South Carolina AFL-CIO responding to the police murder of black worker Walter Scott, whose brother and two other relatives are members of Local 1422. Among the nine people killed in the Emanuel AME Church massacre were the son and an aunt of an ILA member. It would send a strong message to all would-be racist killers, and underline the power of black workers, if Local 1422 were to shut down the port in protest over this heinous atrocity.

The chances are slim that President Obama's call for even tighter gun control laws in the wake of the Charleston massacre will be met. Nor should it be. No amount of additional hurdles will keep weapons out of the hands of the racists bent on terrorizing blacks, but they can restrict the ability of everyone else to defend themselves against deadly attack. A strict law

Our Charleston Martyrs



Our Charleston martyrs. Top row, from left: Susie Jackson, Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, DePayne Doctor, Ethel Lance; second row, from left: Tywanza Sanders, Cynthia Hurd, Clementa Pinckney, Daniel Simmons Sr.; third row: Myra Thompson.

against guns in places of worship would leave black churches defenseless against racist killers (as was lamentably the case in Charleston). We have always stood for the right of black armed self-defense, as we called for in our article on Trayvon Martin.² More than that, as underscored by this tragic case, and those that came before, it would only be prudent for black people to take the necessary measures to defend themselves in this virulently racist country.

No amount of liberal hand-wringing and pious statements from capitalist politicians calling for unity will stay the murderous hand of the white supremacists. The Confederate battle flag, the banner of the KKK, prominently flying at the South Carolina state capitol is an incitement to racist murder, which the politicians may now finally remove in an effort to cover their tracks. On June 20, hundreds of mainly white demonstrators in a march to “save black lives” protested outside the Confederate Museum in Charleston. But symbolic protests and actions will change little. The “white power” terrorists, Ku Klux Klan, remnants of the White Citizens Councils, neo-Nazis and the rest of their ilk must be smashed to smithereens. Until they are there will be more Dylann Roofs, and more Charleston massacres.

We are paying the price today for the defeat of Black Reconstruction in 1877, when federal troops were withdrawn

and the plantation owners and slavers regained political power. Today it is necessary to launch a fight to *finish the Civil War* the only way possible, by *workers revolution*. The first step must be to break with the Democratic Party, which upholds the racist status quo and commands the racist police who enforce it. Whether there is a black Democratic mayor in Baltimore or a liberal white Democratic mayor in Charleston makes no difference, because the whole structure of American capitalism, in which since the time of slavery black people are always on the bottom, ensures that African Americans will be the targets of the terror that backs up this bankrupt system.

What a terrible indictment of American “democracy,” that people have to march under the slogan “Black Lives Matter”! But no appeals to the “conscience” of the racist rulers will change the bitter reality that since the days of the Charleston auction block, the only thing about black lives that has ever mattered to this capitalist society is the money it can squeeze out of them. No vague calls for “unity” of black and white people will end the bloodshed. What we need is the unity of black, white, Latino, Asian and immigrant workers in a struggle to abolish the “wage slavery” of capitalism. And to accomplish this we must build a multiracial revolutionary workers party, with black workers in the vanguard. This is the daunting task that the Charleston Massacre places before us. ■

Cast a Critical Vote for Scottish Independence, and Fight for Socialist Revolution to Bring Down the Monarchy, NATO and the Rule of Capital

For a Scottish Workers Republic in a Socialist Federation of the British Isles

The following article was posted to www.internationalist.org, the web site of the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International, in September 2014 in the lead-up to the referendum on Scottish independence. In the voting, the independence option lost, with 45% voting for and 55% against separation from Britain. In the recent (May 2015) general elections, the Scottish National Party, now led by Nicola Sturgeon, won exactly 50% of the votes, but due to grossly undemocratic British election laws this gave the SNP 56 out of 59 seats in parliament, almost wiping out Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties despite receiving altogether almost half the popular vote.

Obama, the Pope and Harry Potter author J.R. Rowling have all weighed in against it. Sean Connery is for it. Lord George Robertson, former head of NATO and “defense” minister under the war criminal Tony Blair, told the Brookings Institution in Washington D.C. that a “yes” vote in the September 18 referendum on Scottish independence “would be cataclysmic for the world” and “the forces of darkness would simply love it.” Boris Johnson, the piggish Tory (Conservative) mayor of London, went berserk about the dim future for the British “brand” if it became the “former United Kingdom” (i.e. “FUK”): “What the FUK do we think we are doing?”

In the days leading up to the September 18 Scottish vote, all three parties in Britain’s parliament at Westminster have been thrown into a “blind panic” (*New Statesman*, 12 September) as polls show a neck-and-neck race, and possibly a majority for secession. Suddenly plans were announced for fast-track enactment of “devo supermax,” increased devolution (transfer) of tax moneys to the Scottish parliament (but not from oil, sales or corporation taxes). Scottish former Labour prime minister and chancellor of the exchequer (finance minister) Gordon Brown was dispatched, bearing “more gold than when Ethelred the Unready paid *danegeld* to the Vikings” (*Guardian*, 9 September).¹

¹ Æthelred II, called “the Unready,” king of England from 978 to 1016, paid thousands of pounds of gold and silver as tribute to the Danish king (*danegeld*) in a failed effort to hold off Viking raids.



Striking refinery workers at Grangemouth, Scotland outside shut-down plant, October 2013. Labour Party provoked the strike, Unite trade-union bureaucrats sold it out in deal brokered by Scottish National Party leader Alex Salmond.

Conservative prime minister David Cameron ordered the Scottish St. Andrew’s cross flag, the Saltire, raised at No. 10 Downing Street. He, his coalition ally Liberal Democratic chief Nick Clegg and Labour opposition leader Ed Miliband all rushed north for a last-minute appeal for a “no” vote. So widely despised is “Team Westminster” that Alex Salmond, the first minister of the Scottish parliament at Holyrood and leader of the pro-independence campaign, offered to pay their travel expenses. The governor of the Bank of England added to the “Better Together” campaign (a/k/a Project Fear) by declaring that there was no way an independent Scotland could use the pound sterling as its currency.

The British chauvinist opponents of a “yes” vote on September 18 may cause revulsion and awaken immediate sympathy with the alleged “forces of darkness.” But of course, the enemy of your enemy is not necessarily a friend. What position, then, should proletarian internationalists and class-conscious British and Scottish workers take on the impending Scottish independence referendum?

Certainly revolutionary Marxists are implacable enemies of the “United Kingdom” and all of its archaic institutions such as the monarchy, the House of Lords and the established churches that serve as props for British imperialism. “Britishness” means domination centered on the “Home Counties” of southeast England and above all London, with utter contempt



No laughing matter now. From right: Tory prime minister David Cameron, Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg and Labour Party chief Ed Miliband.

for Scots, Welsh and Irish Catholics. Tory “Little Englanders” in particular have been waving the Union Jack against British membership in the European Union.

It was no accident that the last resurgence of fascist thuggery took the form of the “English Defense League” waving the flag of St. George. Since then we have had the electoral ascendance of the ultra-rightist UK Independence Party (UKIP), which is not only anti-immigrant and anti-European Union but also wants to roll back Scottish devolution. And on September 13, 12,000 reactionary Protestant loyalists of the Orange Order, including many from Northern Ireland, marched through Edinburgh in opposition to Scottish independence.

The question being voted up or down on September 18 is quite simple: “Should Scotland be an independent country?” But as framed by the Scottish National Party (SNP), which currently holds office in Edinburgh, the result of a “yes” vote would be at most “independence lite”: the Act of Union of 1707 would be repealed, but not the Union of the Crowns going back to 1603, and the pound would be retained as currency. The SNP is now openly pro-NATO. While SNP head Salmond criticized the war against Serbia in 1999 and marched against the Iraq war in 2003, supposed SNP left-winger and deputy first minister Nicola Sturgeon now volunteers an independent Scotland as an airbase for imperialist attacks such as that against Libya in 2011.

And despite its electoral posturing, the SNP is ultimately no less committed to capitalist austerity than its southern big brothers. In the current “nation-building” phase, in which it is locked in a struggle with Labour for the latter’s urban bastions, the SNP has managed to simultaneously promise a welfare state paradise together with a reduction in corporate taxes! Talk of a “Celtic Lion”, a Scottish pendant to the Irish “Celtic Tiger,” has disappeared following the financial crash of 2007-08. But the SNP’s real appetites are revealed by its groveling to the likes of Donald Trump and Rupert Murdoch

and its support from Scottish billionaires like Stagecoach chairman (and anti-abortion bigot) Brian Souter, owner of Megabus.

Scottish independence would result in the creation of another minor imperialist power – hardly a goal for working people. Instead, the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC), backed by all of the Scottish ostensible socialist left, is campaigning to vote “Yes to save the welfare state.” Many working-class voters, yearning for social democracy and fed up with the relentless Social Darwinism to the south, say that’s why they will vote for independence. Yet economic realities are such that no matter what the SNP or RIC promise, there will be no return to “welfare state” capitalism. A signal benefit of secession would be to drive home that reality, to get the national question off the agenda and focus Scottish workers’ struggle against the Scottish bosses.

Once Again on the Scottish Nation...

Geography is not destiny. As a favorite historian of Maggie Thatcher pointed out: “The people of these islands have seldom been united, politically or culturally. Efforts were made to unite them from the 12th century onwards, but they only came under the same monarch in 1603, and the complete political union, which was at last achieved in 1801, endured only till 1922. Since then the process has been reversed” (Hugh Trevor-Roper, “The Unity of the Kingdom” in *The English World* [1982]). The “United Kingdom” as an overall term for England, Wales, Scotland and all or parts of Ireland only became the official designation in 1801.

But in discussing the question of independence for Scotland, we lend no credence to the kitsch “Braveheart” mythology shared by both left and right nationalists that sees Scottish nationhood as existing from time immemorial, even going back to the days when the Picts allegedly slaughtered invading Romans in droves. While various pseudo-Marxists (associated with Stalinism or the late Gerry Healy’s brand of pseudo-Trotskyism) deny there is a Scottish nation at all (as opposed to a “British” one), in fact Scotland underwent a process of bourgeois revolution parallel to, but not identical with, that to the south.

Scotland broke with the Catholic Church later (1560) but more thoroughly. Its armed forces first opposed, then allied with King Charles in the 1640s Civil War, were trounced by Cromwell, but then rose against the restored monarchy. Having laid the basis for a bourgeois nation state, albeit a small and poor one, its rulers then bankrupted the country in a foreign adventure (trying to imitate England by setting up a colony in Panama) and accepted union in 1707. But through it all, Scotland retained its own systems of Roman law and local government, its own school and university system and its own form of Protestantism, the Presbyterian Calvinist Scottish Kirk.

In the 1700s the Highlands were “cleared,” as often by Lowlands Scots as by Englishmen, their hapless population

of peasant smallholders (crofters) furnishing colonists and soldiers, and eventually proletarians. The Scottish ruling class participated in the course of the empire with a vengeance. The Royal Bank of Scotland got its start in the slave trade. Between 1850 and 1939, a third of all British colonial governors were Scots. At its peak in the early 20th century, given the rather meager home market, Scottish industry was even more export- and Empire-oriented than English firms. But what had the Scots joined as junior partner? As Marx noted in 1867, "By engaging in the conquest of Ireland, Cromwell threw the English Republic out the window."

The final stabilization of the bourgeois revolution involved inviting over yet another foreign dynasty – the House of Hanover – as rulers, a tradition going back to the Norman kings a millennium ago. In reaction to the American colonial secessionists and the French Revolution it became a British fashion to sneer at "paper constitutions," and no other "national" anthem was needed other than "God save the King" (or Queen). In short, a multinational construct was built in which Scottish regiments were used to crush the Irish uprising of 1798, Irish soldiers enforced the Highland Clearances, London police were sent against Welsh miners and English troops against the Glasgow general strike of 1919.

But as Leon Trotsky noted in *Where is Britain Going* (1925), "Scotland entered on the capitalist path later than England: a sharper turn in the life of the masses of the people gave rise to a sharper political reaction." He was referring to the fact that Scots were disproportionately represented in the left wing of the British workers movement. The Scottish Trades Union Congress refused in 1897 to affiliate to the other TUC because the STUC was more advanced in independent working-class politics and mass unionization in the industrial area along the River Clyde. This is further illustrated by Scottish socialist and later communist John Maclean, the embodiment of "Red Clydeside," and by the Independent Labour Party stronghold in Glasgow.

But contrary to a certain mythology, Scotland as a whole was never "left" – the predominant party up until the First World War was the Liberal Party (in many ways, the SNP are heirs of William Gladstone). The heyday of Labour in Scotland in the later 20th century came as Scottish (and

British) industry were in decline. In the 1966 election Labour won 49.9% – a high water mark based on a system of public housing, state benefits and jobs and subsidies to a tottering industrial sector. But as it became increasingly clear that the British Empire was rotting alive, the SNP turned into something more than an eccentrics' club, winning its first MP in 1967. The Scottish-English ruling-class marriage was going down.

...and the Resurgence of Scottish Nationalism

If the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Near East is history's revenge for the failure of the Stalinists and Arab nationalists to wage an all-out struggle against imperialism, instead pursuing the will-o'-the-wisp of "peaceful coexistence," the rise of Scottish nationalism is the blowback from the defeat of union struggles and the capitulation of the workers movement, both English and Scottish, to capitalist reaction. From the late 1970s to the early 1990s, a series of union battles ended up in defeat, centrally because the leaders allowed them to be isolated and were unprepared for a frontal confrontation with the capitalist state. For that, militant trade-unionism was in adequate, a program for international socialist revolution was necessary.

The 1971-72 struggle at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders yards slated for closure eventually won a temporary reprieve with £192 billion in government subsidies to the shipyard bosses. But the UCS shop stewards led by Jimmy Reid and other Communist Party supporters instead of striking staged a "work-in" to claim the yards were still profitable, and to avoid a Britain-wide social explosion against the Tory government. There followed several years of labor unrest and plant occupations leading to the election of the Labour government of James Callaghan. But Labour in office was stymied by recession and inflation. After the 1978-79 "Winter of Discontent" of strikes, a backlash led to the election of Conservative Thatcher.

Following her "victory" in the 1982 Falklands/Malvinas War, the Tory union-basher provoked the miners strike of 1984-85 and threw the full weight of the police and army against the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) led by Arthur Scargill. Scottish participation in the strike was weaker than in Yorkshire, Kent and South Wales, and prominent



Scottish ruling class participated in British Empire with a vengeance. Royal Bank of Scotland grew out of a slaving company. Lower right: captured Africans being forced into the hold of a slave ship.

Allan Milligan



Communist Party shop steward convenor Jimmy Reid addresses workers at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders during “work-in” against closing the yard, July 1971.

Scottish Stalinists like Reid and Mick McGahey were well to the right of Scargill. Shamelessly abandoned by the TUC (and with bourgeois repression against Scargill egged on by the Healyite pseudo-Trotskyists), the miners were isolated and the heroic strike went down to defeat.

There were defensive occupations against plant closures at Caterpillar in Uddingston in 1987 and at Timex in Dundee in 1993, but the Scottish TUC sold out the latter struggle as perfidiously as the betrayals of its British namesake. As Thatcher and the Conservatives targeted the “nanny state,” in 1989 the Scots were selected as guinea pigs for the infamous poll tax. The SNP and various left groups called for resistance in the form of massive non-payment, but Labour did not. When the protests culminated in London in March 1990, the poll tax became a dead letter and Thatcher was soon out. Yet Labour still managed to lose the national elections of 1992.

By the 1990s, “Red Clydeside” was a distant memory. Scotland was disproportionately hit by deindustrialization and Scottish workers were no longer in the forefront of the British labor movement spearheading militant class struggle. As disgruntlement in the north set in over the failure to oust the Tories, a “Scotland United” popular front (a class-collaborationist alliance with the bourgeois SNP) soon emerged. Although a capitalist party, the SNP sought to appeal to Labour voters with a “social-democratic” program: Scotland was to use its historically evolved niche to evade the worst effects of Thatcherism.

In the 1997, the “new broom” for the restabilization of the UK arrived in the shape of Tony Blair and New Labour. With the assistance of U.S. imperialism, the “Peace Process” in Northern Ireland integrated a housebroken Sinn Féin to prop up the status quo, with Catholics and Protestants more rigidly segregated than ever. In Scotland, devolution (autonomy) together with proportional representation was supposed to

strangle any impulses toward independence. But New Labour continued the Tories’ policies of unbridled capitalist profiteering, vicious austerity and imperialist war, leading to a sharp drop in its support in the north.

Since that time, devolution and/or independence have been seen as a bulwark against national austerity measures irrespective of whether the Tories or Labour are in the driver’s seat. While some Scottish voters even now will vote Labour, at least in national elections, it is as a “lesser evil.” The Scottish National Health Service remains in the hands of the state while in England this has been steadily eroded. The last major private hospital built in Scotland was nationalized in 2004. And as the UK government first imposed and

then increased university fees, in Scotland university education remains state-funded and tuition-free for students. Prescription drugs are also free in Scotland, as is personal care for the elderly.

This, more than Scottish nationalist ideology, is a main factor in the growing support for a “yes” vote on September 18. The SNP government has managed to opt out of such measures as the infamous “bedroom tax” (a punitive reduction in council housing subsidies for recipients with “unoccupied space”) but runs the risk of being punished by a reduction in the block grant which it receives from the UK Exchequer (treasury). This could be avoided by turning over all taxation levied in Scotland to Edinburgh while consigning foreign policy and military matters to London. But the central power could still contrive to put Scotland on rations, and due to a consensus of the Westminster parties such a “devo max” is not on offer in this referendum.²

The other key motivation, which the SNP has been harping on since the ’70s, is the question of North Sea oil, and whether or not an independent Scotland would be better off if it got its hands on the royalties and other fees due from that industry. Thus the whole referendum debate has been framed in terms of rather immediate economic benefit. SNP leader Salmond proclaims that with oil revenues, Scotland would be “the wealthiest country in the world ever to declare its independence.” Many dream of a future as an idealized Norway. But the “black gold” may turn out to be fool’s gold, as experts say North Sea oil reserves are likely to run out in a couple of decades. And already the Scandinavian “welfare states” ain’t what they used to be.

² SNP leader Salmond originally wanted a third, “devo max” alternative on the ballot but this was vetoed by Cameron. Considered a tactical victory at the time, the hard-nosed “all or nothing” policy has now backfired.



Scottish National Party leaders Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon present Scottish government white paper on case for independence, November 2013.

Considerations on Scottish Secession

Since various leftists have expended much ink on the question of whether Scotland is oppressed and if so, how much, it should be recalled that for Leninists, self-determination (and its exercise) are not a reward for oppression but a democratic right applicable to every nation. In 1913, Lenin summed up the principles of the Marxist position on the national question: “As democrats, we are irreconcilably hostile to any, however slight, oppression of any nationality and to any privileges for any nationality. As democrats, we demand the right of nations to self-determination in the political sense of that term...i.e., the right to secede.” (“Draft Program of the 4th Congress of Social Democrats of the Latvian Area” [May-June 1913]).

Or again: “Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the unity of the workers of all nations – such is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teach the workers” (“The Right of Nations to Self-Determination” [February-May 1914]). In that polemic against Rosa Luxemburg, who denied the right of self-determination, the Bolshevik leader discussed the 1905 separation of Norway from Sweden, which has certain parallels to Scotland and England today. After several hundred years as a united kingdom with Denmark, Norway was attached to Sweden during the Napoleonic Wars at the start of the 19th century. Lenin commented:

“The geographic, economic and language ties between Norway and Sweden are as intimate as those between the Great Russians and many other Slav nations.... Despite the very extensive autonomy which Norway enjoyed (she had her own parliament, etc.), there was constant friction between Norway and Sweden for many decades after the union, and the Norwegians strove hard to throw off the yoke of the Swedish aristocracy. At last, in August 1905, they succeeded: the Norwegian parliament resolved that the Swedish king was no longer king of Norway....”

In response to Luxemburg’s dismissal of Norwegian independence as “simply a manifestation of peasant and petty-bourgeois particularism,” Lenin wrote that “the Norwegian proletariat had to oppose this [Swedish] aristocracy and support Norwegian peasant democracy (with all its philistine limitations).” He added: “Swedish Social-Democrats would have betrayed the cause of socialism and democracy ... if they had failed to demand *not only* equality of nations in general ... but also the right of nations to self-determination, Norway’s freedom to secede.” Thus, “[t]he dissolution of the ties imposed upon Norway by the monarchs of Europe and the Swedish aristocracy strengthened the ties between the Norwegian and Swedish workers.”

For Marxists as opposed to nationalists, self-determination does not presume some utopian freedom from “foreign” interference. It is purely a political right to constitute a separate state. It is quite beside the point that an independent Scotland would

be subject to the capitalist world market, the European Union (if it were accepted into that imperialist lash-up), large capitalist firms, the International Monetary Fund or the like. This is self-evident, and is true for every country that has acceded to national independence. The removal of the political connection will “merely” prevent the SNP, or any other political force which ends up running an independent Scotland, from blaming Westminster for its own anti-working class measures.

As Leninists and Trotskyists, we judge matters of democratic rights not in the abstract but from a class standpoint, from the interests of the proletariat. In Catalonia, in north-eastern Spain, a referendum on independence is scheduled for November. Many supporters and opponents of Catalan independence have drawn parallels to Scotland. But not only is Catalonia the richest part of Spain, whose bourgeoisie wishes to stop subsidizing poorer southern regions; not only would independence mean separating off one of the most militant sections of the working class; but much if not most of the industrial workers do not speak Catalan, many coming from Andalucía. In Scotland, in contrast, independence would not discriminate against any sector.

Another frequent parallel is with Quebec. One similarity is the presence of a bourgeois nationalist party, the Parti Québécois (PQ) which sometimes (especially when out of office) strikes a social-democratic pose.³ But this does not capture the deep-seated nationalism of most of the French-speaking population of Quebec, which hardened when in 1970 the Canadian federal government put Quebec under military occupation without protest elsewhere and with the support of Canadian labor officialdom. Then in 1972, a Quebec general

³ Another similarity is that an independent Quebec would also be a minor imperialist power. Québécois generals and police officials played a leading role in the U.N. imperialist occupation of Haiti, Montreal banks are prominent in the Caribbean, and Quebec-owned industrial firms (Bombardier, AbitibiBowater, Quebecor) are major multinational monopolists.

strike provoked not the slightest echo from the rest of Canadian labor. From that point on, revolutionary Marxists should have called for Quebec independence, as the League for the Fourth International does.

In Britain, national antagonisms are more muted, although contempt for Scots goes back even further than Thatcherite snarling about Scottish “subsidy junkies.” For its part, the SNP might well prefer “devo max” to the rigors of actual independence, just as the PQ talks of “sovereignty/association” rather than outright separation. But in the long run, how could anything like a Scottish welfare state coexist with a neo-Thatcherite UK where the latter calls the shots? In Quebec the left is dominated by nationalism and class confrontation will not likely come to the fore until separation from Canada.

In Scotland, the Conservative Party is so discredited that there are now more pandas (2) than Scottish Tory MPs. The growing disenchantment with Labour has fed a pro-independence sentiment that not been able to budge social policies in the UK, and which isn’t going away. Meanwhile, such trade-union struggles as there are, are becoming increasingly disconnected. A UK-wide strike of teachers this year did not include Scotland; teachers there are not in the National Union of Teachers but rather the Educational Institute of Scotland (a rather right-wing union) and faced with a quite different educational system. UK-wide labor protests have often fallen flat in the north.

The referendum debate has already raised tensions. Since open Tory support to the “Better Together” campaign for a “no” vote would be the kiss of death, the spokesmen are all from Labour. There is thus a great deal of Labour pressure on the trade unions, but even the half-dozen who decided to support “No” are staying away from “Better Together.” The neutrality of the majority of unions is significant: the bureaucrats are obviously worried about a split. After a ballot of its members in Scotland showed a narrow majority for independence, the left-wing RMT transport union came out for a “yes” vote. The Scottish Socialist Party and other nationalist sources report various examples of Scottish locals coming out for yes. The CWU (communications workers), for example, is for no on the national level, but Edinburgh is for yes.

Certainly the “Better Together” campaign has absolutely nothing to offer workers. Its main spokesman, former Labour chancellor of the exchequer Alistair Darling, only managed to enrage Scottish voters with his threats. Home Secretary Theresa May warned in October 2013 that an independent Scotland would be invaded by “Islamic terrorists.” Labour is standing on its austerity record, while its response to the UKIP gains is to redouble its own anti-immigrant demagoguery. The most that “Better Together” could come up with was renegade “left” Labourite George Galloway, who went to Scotland in June to blather about the Battle of Britain, to the delight of the right-wing *Spectator*, if no one else.

There are in fact sinister forces being lined up against independence. In June 2013, “Better Together” launched “Forces Together” for military personnel, veterans and their families. If Salmond were to attempt to pull together a Scottish military

after independence we suspect he would not get those Scottish regiments he is so fond of. Recall that the officer corps swears allegiance to the monarch and to no one else. Meanwhile, the UK claims it has no contingency plans if the SNP were actually to make good on its promise to close down the Faslane Trident nuclear submarine base. You think? What about the talk of making the base an “extra-territorial” enclave like British bases in Cyprus, or Gibraltar?

As to the monarchy, after a visit to the Queen in Balmoral (Queen Victoria’s old haunt) in 2007, Salmond began backpedaling on his criticisms of the royals. In response to the September 6 YouGov poll reporting a slight majority for independence, the press reported her majesty to be “quite concerned” at the possible break-up of the three-centuries-old union. But Salmond quickly retorted that “Her Majesty” would be “proud to be Queen of Scots” who in turn were “proud to have her as the monarch.” While at least getting rid of the House of Lords, the wretched bourgeois nationalists of the SNP would retain the Union of the Crowns. But why should the Scots tolerate a monarchy that in a crisis could serve as lightning rod for a coup d’état?

The erstwhile “Marxist” proponent of Scottish nationalism, Tom Nairn, now an SNP advisor, has made a career of comparisons between the UK and the old Austro-Hungarian monarchy. It was the claim of the social democracy in that latter empire that its policy of “cultural autonomy” was the alternative to self-determination. But it only dragged out the existence of the antiquated structure, exacerbating national tensions until the whole rotting edifice collapsed in the post-World War I upheaval in 1918. Whereupon the pusillanimous reformist and centrist Austrian social democrats betrayed the revolution.

There is no reason to drag out the niche existence of Scotland in the “United Kingdom.” An opportunity is posed to accelerate the break-up of imperialist Britain – it should be seized. The UK was founded to pursue empire, and ever since it has been a machine for the subjugation of colonial slaves, inconvenient minorities and the working class. There is no reason that Scottish independence should undermine class struggle in England or Scotland. It would strike a blow against decrepit British imperialism (it’s been a long time since Britannia ruled the waves), and while the SNP has dropped its opposition to NATO, Scottish independence could still cause problems for that imperialist alliance. Just ask Obama.

But whether or not the “yes” vote wins, it appears the referendum will be close enough so that if it doesn’t, politics for years to come would still be dominated by the issue of independence. We want to get the national question off the agenda: let Scottish workers direct their fire against Scottish bosses, starting with Alex Salmond, the former economist for the Royal Bank of Scotland. While advocating a critical “yes” vote, the League for the Fourth International calls for building a revolutionary workers party to lead *class* struggle against the bourgeois nationalists who would be the new masters of a Scottish state and against the Westminster parties of the rump UK and their vicious anti-working-class austerity policies.

Yes to Independence, Against Scottish Nationalism

The referendum, whatever the outcome, should be used by revolutionaries as a trigger for a fight to *drive British troops out of Iraq and throw the nuclear-armed Trident submarines out of Scotland* (and anywhere else in Britain). While SNP leaders salivate at the thought of all those oil royalties, revolutionary Marxists should push for a drive to *unionize North Sea oil workers*, and for unions to impose *workers control on the platforms and at the Grangemouth refinery*. While the SNP seeks to attract multinational investors by promising to cut corporation taxes, union militants should demand a *sharply increased minimum wage* and to *end subcontracting and zero-hour contracts and precarious jobs for youth*, fighting for real unionized jobs.

It is also necessary to expose the politics of class collaboration of the “socialist” left, both those that sided with the British imperialists in calling for a “no” vote and those that campaigned for “yes” by peddling illusions in a future of prosperity and parroting the demagogic claims of the bourgeois-nationalist SNP. It is a measure of the collective dementia of the referendum debate that some leftists were asking if Scotland would have the financial resources to bail out its banks in the event of another financial crisis. The answer is no – the holdings of RBS and HBOS are more than 10 times the gross domestic product. But why should they be bailed out at all?

The various opportunist leftists calling for a “yes” vote on September 18 are promoting the agenda of the Scottish capitalist government. What they are angling for is a “popular front,” a class-collaborationist coalition with the bourgeois SNP, under the watchword of fighting “austerity” and “neo-liberalism.” They may raise criticisms of Salmond, even saying “no confidence in the SNP,” but when they talk of “socialism” they are calling on Salmond & Co. to adopt *social-democratic policies for administering capitalism*, the policy of pre-Blair “Old Labour” with its famous Clause IV for “common ownership.”

Thus the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in listing six reasons why it is voting “yes” calls to “Stuff Cameron” and to “build a movement that forces any new government to represent our interests” (*Socialist Worker*, 13 September). No mention, of course, that any new *capitalist* government will not and cannot defend the interests of working people. An article on “The Limits of Scottish Nationalism” says that “the SNP remains a nationalist party” and that “sooner or later all nationalist parties are forced to take sides” between “the rich and poor.” But the SNP is a *bourgeois* party which necessarily defends the interests of the ruling class it represents.

The Scottish affiliate of Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers International (CWI) takes a similar tack. After decades of being buried in the Labour Party as the Militant tendency, it simply transferred the object of its pressure tactics to the SNP. After the success of the anti-poll tax campaign in the early ’90s, CWI supporters including Tommy Sheridan rallied to form the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP). The program of Sheridan’s SSP was for an expanded welfare state and its actual role was that of pressure group on the SNP. This being Presbyterian/Catholic Scotland, after a few years in the sun,

the party exploded in a ludicrous sex scandal.

But politically they are still singing the same refrain today. Thus Taaffe’s Socialist Party of England and Wales (SPEW) and its subsidiary, Socialist Party Scotland, quote one of their comrades’ intervention at a meeting starring socialist-nationalist ex-comrade Sheridan:

“We’re campaigning for public ownership of the banks, the oil and gas industry and the major sectors of the economy. The powers of independence should be used to deliver a living wage for all, an end to zero-hour contracts and a fully resourced welfare state.... A mass movement against the cuts and for an independent socialist Scotland linked to the struggle for socialism in England, Wales and Ireland is the only real escape from savage austerity.”

–“Scottish referendum: A mass revolt against austerity,” *The Socialist*, 11 September

This could be taken straight out of the Labour Party’s 1945 election manifesto calling “public ownership” of basic industry, banks, utilities, etc.

When the SPEW talks of using “the powers of independence” to provide a “fully resourced welfare state” they are putting forward a program for a capitalist government of Salmond’s SNP. But the real power of the capitalist world market will quickly cut short any such attempt to revive the “welfare state” of years gone by as it relentlessly drives down wages and rips up union gains. The only way to “escape from savage austerity” is by carrying out a socialist revolution, something you won’t hear from these dyed-in-the-wool social dems. But no doubt we will soon enough be reading the SPEW/SPS plan for organizing a “democratic” police force for the bosses as they declare cops to be “workers in uniform.”

The several non-party groups active in the referendum campaign strike a similar chord. *Yes: The Radical Case for Scottish Independence* admits that the Scandinavian countries are capitalist, and far from models. But it then claims that they are an “alternative” to “neo-liberalism.” The catalogue of measures proposed amounts to an expanded welfare state, rather than the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and a planned economy. But a capitalist Scotland can’t even sustain that. Meanwhile, the various authors of *Scotland’s Road to Socialism: Time to Choose* (2013) reject the UK and Labour as vehicles for “socialism,” but claim it will all be different in a “newly independent country.” Want to bet?

Let’s look at recent history. Last October, refinery workers at Grangemouth suffered a decisive defeat when they were blackmailed by threat of closure of the plant into accepting an agreement (brokered by Salmond) cutting jobs, pensions and pay, although a previous strike in February had defeated an attack on pensions. The walkout was sparked by the Labour Party, and they were stabbed in the back by trade-union bureaucracy of Unite. The Socialist Party Scotland called for nationalization by the SNP government. The Socialist Workers Party raised the even more ludicrous idea of pressuring Cameron to nationalize it. There were no takers.

And what about the North Sea oil workers themselves? None of the “socialist” blueprints for a future Scotland mention them. They have never been unionized. The oil majors



Anti-poll tax marchers in Scotland, 1989.

outsource all hiring to contractors in the usual fashion, and the TUC affiliates have a few token sweetheart deals. Health and safety conditions are appalling. After the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster that killed 167 workers, an Offshore Industry Liaison Committee emerged, leading wildcat strikes in 1989-1990. They wanted fusion into a single industrial union. The TUC (and STUC) boycotted them with the nonsensical claim that it was “breakaway union.” Today the main opponent of unionization will be the SNP.

On the other side, those tendencies calling for a “no” vote (the rump Communist Party and the “Socialist Appeal” group among them) are just displaying their Labour loyalism and lining up behind British chauvinism. They claim to stand for the unity of a working class which is already divided and are in fact only upholding the unity of the bourgeois state. Thus the arch-social-democratic Alliance for Workers Liberty argues that if Labour wins an all-UK general election in May 2015 it would be “a lame-duck administration” that is “set up to fall in March 2016, or whenever separation comes, because it will lose its majority with the loss of MPs from Scotland” (*Solidarity*, 10 September). Horrors!

The AWL’s alternative is a “democratic federal Britain, within a democratic federal united Europe” *under capitalism*. Similarly the idiosyncratic Communist Party of Great Britain declares a plague on both houses, concocting schemes for a *bourgeois* federal republic of the British Isles. Not bloody likely, and in any case this program is *counterposed* to socialist revolution. To top it off, AWL says it defends different people’s “right to define their own nationality” ... such as “the right of the Ukrainian people in the face of claims, backed up by force of arms, by Russian fascists and ultra-nationalists that they are ‘really Russian’” This cynical sleight of hand is a vile *call for supporting the Ukrainian fascists and imperialist puppets in their war on the Russian-speaking people of eastern Ukraine*.

The World Socialist Web Site/Socialist Equality Party – a fragment of the Healyite tendency now following David North and notorious for opposing trade unions – is carrying out a frenetic campaign for a “No” vote. As noted earlier, Healy

denied the very existence of a Scottish nation, and North & Co. oppose the right of self-determination in general, even for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. In the U.S., the Northites’ current hobbyhorse is to denounce the idea that racial oppression is central to American politics. Indeed, this has been one of their central themes amidst the wave of racist police murders of black youth from Ferguson to New York City.

Workers Power (Summer 2014) argues that a “yes” vote would signify a “major setback” for “the common project of establishing a workers’ government in Britain, which is implicit in the organisation of a labour movement” – as if the present trade-union and Labour leaders had the least intention of fighting for such a “common project.”

But the golden palm for obfuscation and confusionism goes to the International Communist League and the Spartacist League/Britain, continuing its long history of idle flirtation with Scottish nationalism without consummation. The SL/B’s *Workers Hammer* (Winter 2013-2014) declared, in an article on the Grangemouth strike, “we do not advocate either a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ vote and are indifferent to the outcome.” But continuing its recent pattern of abrupt turnabouts, its next issue ran a “correction”: “we are not taking a stand for or against independence. But we are not indifferent to the outcome, nor to the many questions it will surely pose” (*Workers Hammer*, Spring 2014). So much for the ICL’s claim to be a revolutionary vanguard: no line, but “not indifferent.”

As for the international “Bolshevik” tendency, this parasitic offshoot of the Spartacist tendency has come out for voting “no” in the referendum, thus lining up with Cameron, Tony Blair and the Orange Order. This repeats its policy of voting against Quebec independence in the 1995 referendum there. The IBT is at least consistent in its chauvinist, social-democratic/Labourite economism.

Genuine Marxists have always understood that Labour was a “bourgeois workers party,” as Lenin put it, and sought to break its ranks from the reformist leadership and win them to the revolutionary program. The Labour leadership has since largely “emancipated” itself from its working-class base. Because the trade-union bureaucracy did not dare lead any mass struggles that would clash with the capitalist state, this evolution was not marked by any noteworthy confrontation. But the upshot of this process of putrefaction is a situation in which dissatisfaction with Labour and opposition to capitalist austerity has led to mass sentiment for flight in a third of the UK. This is deplorable, but it is a fact.

It’s better to lance the boil. Rather than concocting schemes for a “Scottish transition to socialism,” painting rosy pictures of an independent capitalist Scotland or seeking to prettify the SNP, as revolutionary Trotskyists we irreconcilably oppose it and all the bourgeois parties, calling for a critical vote for independence as part of the fight for workers revolution. *For a Scottish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles and a socialist united states of Europe!* ■

Horrendous Murder of Nine African Americans by White Supremacist

Charleston Massacre and Cop Terror: It's Racist American Capitalism



David Goldman/AP

Hundreds in “march to save black lives” stop in front of Daughters of the Confederacy building during march on the Confederate Museum in Charleston, June 20, to protest massacre in Emanuel AME Church.

Finish the Civil War with Workers Revolution!

JUNE 22 —After the lynching of Trayvon Martin by a racist vigilante, after the cop murders of Eric Garner in Staten Island, Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, Akai Gurley in Brooklyn, Tamir Rice in Cleveland in 2014, then Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina and Freddie Gray in Baltimore, and so many others – and after the mass protests coast-to-coast unleashed by those racist murders and by the impunity of the racist murderers – now comes the horrific massacre of nine African Americans in a church in Charleston. It doesn’t stop, and for a reason: ever since slavery, violent racist suppression, repression and oppression of black people is part of the DNA of American capitalism. That heritage and that reality is what was shown in Charleston, once the prime slave market of the pre-Civil War South.

The authorities and official manufacturers of public opin-

ion try as they might to portray this gruesome slaughter as the work of a lone, deranged gunman, and the appropriate response as just sorrow at the tragedy, not anger at the atrocity. Politicians attend prayer meetings from Charleston to Washington, New York and around the country. The media highlight the heart-wrenching words of forgiveness from the relatives of the victims. The liberal Democratic mayor makes much of the fact that the killer was not from Charleston. President Obama tries to shift the focus to gun control and away from the virulent racism the killings expressed. But the fact is that this massacre was no aberration, it was an integral part of a rising line of murderous racist reaction in recent years.

The gunman, Dylann Storm Roof, was hardly deranged, he was a cold-blooded killer. His Internet “manifesto” shows

continued on page 78