

Drive I.C.E. Out! Shut the Detention Centers! Return the Kids! Let Refugees In! **Set Them Free, Let Them Stay!**

For Workers Action to Stop Deportations

Democrats, Republicans – Enemies of Immigrants Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!

After a tidal wave of outrage, on June 20 Donald Trump was forced to make an about-face on his grotesque policy of stealing immigrant children from their parents. Instead, he issued an executive order to hold entire families in cages in abandoned warehouses and on army bases. This only served to intensify the protests.

Soon inter-agency squabbles broke out in the White House with officials saying they didn't have the resources to handle the immigrants being arrested in droves under Trump's "zero tolerance" policy.

So five days later, the administration backed down again, as the top border control official announced that the agency had temporarily stopped handing over immigrants with children for prosecution. But this didn't stop the xenophobic president from once more going on the rampage, threatening to simply throw immigrants out of the country in blatant violation of their right to due process. Meanwhile, the stolen children have not been returned, thousands of youths are still being jailed, and toddlers are being ordered into court alone for deportation hearings.

There must be no illusions that the immigrant-bashing president and his child-snatching Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) have been stopped. Nor should anyone think that electing Democrats in November will bring relief to the more than 15 million undocumented immigrants living in fear in the United States, or to the desperate refugees camped out along the border. The monstrous deportation machine being used by Republican Trump



June 26 NYC demonstration against Supreme Court decision upholding Trump ban on immigrants from seven predominantly Muslim countries.



FULL CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS FOR ALL IMMIGRANTS! Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth demonstrate outside I.C.E. jail in New York City, June 21.

was built for him by Democrat Obama, who threw a record 8+ million people out of the U.S. during his administration.

Both capitalist parties are enemies of immigrants. It is up to the working class

together with black, Latino and other oppressed sectors to mobilize our power to wage a class war against the war on immigrants. The Internationalist Group
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Defend Syria and Iran Against Imperialist Attack!

Regional War Looms in Middle East

JUNE 28 – As illusions of "peace" spread over the Korean peninsula as a result of a vague agreement reached by U.S. president Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at a June 12 summit in Singapore, tensions are building on the other side of Asia. The stage is being set for regional war in the Middle East. On May 8, Donald Trump withdrew from the so-called Iran nuclear deal, making good on one of his chief campaign promises and cementing an alliance with the Zionist militarists and Saudi war hawks. The hard-line anti-Iran policy outlined in the U.S. National Security Strategy (18 December 2017) was spelled out at the February 2018 Munich Security Conference, where U.S. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster declared that "now is...the time to...counter Iran's destabilizing activities, including its development and proliferation of missiles – and its support for terrorist proxies

and militias that fuel destructive conflicts across the greater Middle East."

Three weeks earlier, on April 14, the U.S. and its NATO partners Britain and France launched a missile attack on Syria, targeting two empty warehouses and Syria's Pharmaceutical and Chemical Industries Research Institute, which produced cancer drugs in short supply because of imperialist sanctions. The attack was billed as a response to an alleged chemical weapons attack on April 7 by the Syrian government against civilians in Douma, a suburb of Damascus which was on the verge of being taken back from the arch-jihadist Jaysh al Islam (Army of Islam). Phony allegations of chemical weapons use by the regime of Bashar al Assad are cooked up by the U.S./NATO imperialists and their proxies in Syria whenever the Assad government is on the cusp of a significant advance, and these recent allegations were no different. The Internationalist Group mobilized imme-

diately, and within two hours of the announcement of the bombing, held a protest outside Trump Tower in Manhattan.

Then on May 14, the U.S. State Department officially relocated its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The process began last December as the Trump administration recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, a brazen provocation against the Palestinian people, who also claim Jerusalem as their capital,
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Internationalist contingent at April 15 NYC rally against U.S./NATO imperialist bombing of Syria.

For an Arab/Hebrew Palestinian Workers State in a Socialist Federation of the Middle East

Middle East War...

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and a gift to hard-line Zionist expansionists who vow to cement Israeli control of Arab East Jerusalem which Israel has occupied since the 1967 war that seized the West Bank. Meanwhile, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, along with Trump daughter Ivanka and son-in-law Jared Kushner celebrated the embassy dedication ceremony in Jerusalem, Israeli Army snipers were picking off peaceful protesters inside Gaza, who had been gathered near the border for a protest campaign commemorating the Naqba (Arabic for “catastrophe”), the 80th anniversary of the 1948 expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs from what is now Israel.

At least 129 Palestinians were killed in this latest case of Zionist mass murder, and thousands were wounded, many of them children. With North Korea on the backburner (for now), the U.S. and NATO imperialists have their gunsights trained on Iran, and things are moving rapidly. The recent withdrawal of the U.S. from the United Nations Human Rights council, under the pretext of “bias against Israel,” is a signal that any humanitarian pretenses will be dropped if the U.S. and its allies Israel and Saudi Arabia decide to attack Iran directly while hitting Iranian-led militias in Syria. Recalling the messy Balkan Wars (between competing nationalists against the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires) that triggered World War I, the imperialist powers believe they have everything under control. But one wrong move, one misfired bullet, and the entire region could blow up. In the face of this looming catastrophe, Trotskyists call for working-class mobilization internationally to defeat the imperialist/Zionist and Saudi monarchist warmongers on the road to region-wide socialist revolution.

Defend Syria Against U.S./ NATO Attack – Drive the Imperialists Out!

In Syria, the Assad government has been consolidating its hold. After a two-month offensive to reclaim the Damascus suburb of Eastern Ghouta from the Saudi-backed Jaysh al Islam jihadists, the regime declared victory on April 14. There was widespread jubilation in the Syrian capital. While denouncing the regime’s indiscriminate bombing of heavily populated areas, the imperialist press hardly mentioned the incessant rocket attacks by the Islamist “rebels” on the civilian population of Damascus. Five days later, government forces began an offensive to retake the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp, which has been under the control of the Islamic State since 2015. The I.S. was completely driven



Peaceful Palestinian demonstrators flee murderous Zionist sniper fire.

out and on May 21 the camp was declared fully under government control. The regime is now making advances in Daraa, the last rebel enclave in southwest Syria, on the border of Jordan and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. In exchange for Israeli acquiescence to Assad’s offensive, Russia brokered a deal excluding Iranian-backed forces from the Daraa operations. This pact, however, can break down at any moment, as Israel has already fired U.S.-supplied Patriot missiles at Syrian government drones in the area.

Meanwhile Turkey has consolidated its position in northwest Syria, after its anti-Kurdish “Operation Olive Branch” launched in January and completed in late March. Turkey’s president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who just consolidated his bonapartist rule with a plebiscitary “election,” dispatched 25,000 fighters of the “Free Syrian Army” (FSA) backed by Turkish tanks and heavy artillery, to seize the district of Afrin from the Kurdish YPG (People’s Protection Unit). The FSA is a fictitious creation for Western consumption covering a hodgepodge of Turkish-backed Arab and Turkmen Islamist gangs. Its main component, the Failaq al Sham (Syrian Legion), claimed to be fighting to “regain sixteen Arab towns and villages” from the YPG. (While Afrin city was majority Kurdish, the surrounding countryside was largely Arab.) This claim was merely an excuse to unleash a pogrom against Kurds throughout the area. Amnesty International reports that scores of civilians were killed by Turkish shelling as FSA fighters looted villages and executed Kurdish civilians. “This is about revenge” said a former rebel fighter quoted by *The Washington Post* (7 March).

Erdoğan threatened to extend his Afrin campaign into Manbij, where the U.S. has military “advisors” on the ground directing YPG-controlled Syrian Defense Forces. In

response, the U.S. local commander, Lt.-Gen. Paul Funk, warned “you hit us, we will respond aggressively,” to which the Turkish strong man blustered that Funk had “clearly never got the Ottoman slap.” In early March, tough guy Erdoğan threatened a full-scale invasion of Kurdish-controlled territory: “Today we are in Afrin, tomorrow we will be in Manbij, the day after we will be east of the Euphrates to clean up all terrorists all the way to the border of Iraq.” It appeared that Washington was faced with the choice of either backing their most reliable foot soldiers against Islamic State (the Kurdish YPG), or facing off against NATO ally Turkey. But as we warned in 2014, at the outset of U.S. intervention in Syria:

“The U.S. and European imperialists will never accept Kurdish independence, or even real autonomy in northern Syria... That would threaten the Ottoman ambitions of the Islamist Erdoğan and the Turkish nationalism of the [Turkish] army. And NATO Turkey is a linchpin for Western imperialist domination of the Middle East.”

—“For Workers Action to Defeat Barack Obama’s Iraq/Syria War,” *The Internationalist* No. 38 (November-December 2014).

So on June 4 the U.S. imperialists threw the YPG under the bus at a meeting in Washington between Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Under the agreement, the YPG would withdraw from Manbij on July 4, and U.S. and Turkish forces would begin jointly conducting security patrols. The YPG, however, has also been cooperating with the Syrian government under the table. Its announced departure from the area west of the Euphrates has Assad worried about a NATO-occupied bloc in the north and east of Syria without the YPG counterweight. So not long after the U.S./Turkey deal was announced, a pro-government militia, the newly-formed Popular Resistance in Manbij, vowed to resist: “the people of Manbij made up of Arab, Kurdish and Turkmen tribes, will not allow the presence of any foreign invader, be it Turkish, American or French.”

Throughout the multisided sectarian civil war, much of the Western left has rallied around a non-existent “Syrian Revolution.” The International Socialist Organization (ISO) peddled the lie of a “moderate” Syrian rebel opposition for years, obscuring the fact that almost all the militias fighting against the Assad regime from 2011 on are hard-line Islamists, hell-bent on establishing Sharia law and eager to take money and arms from the U.S./NATO imperialists

to achieve that goal. The very few armed groups that were not jihadists were just criminal gangs. The so-called “rebels” have no compunctions about committing atrocities against any ethnic or religious group deemed “infidels” or “apostates.” But the social-democratic ISO has a long history of supporting imperialist-backed Islamic reaction going back to the *mujahedeen* fighting the Soviet army in Afghanistan – all in the name of anti-communism.

The ISO and other assorted “State Department socialists” have repeatedly lamented that the U.S. has not been doing enough to help the Islamist gangs in Syria, even as they condemn so-called “Russian imperialism.” (These political heirs of Tony Cliff, who claimed that the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state was “state capitalist,” previously denounced “Soviet imperialism.”) We have refuted the claim that post-Soviet Russia, a regional capitalist power, is “imperialist” in “The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism’” (*The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015). But behind their vituperation, the social-democratic cheerleaders for the fake “Syrian Revolution” have more sinister goals. Following the lead of Democratic Party war hawk Hillary Clinton, they want to provoke an imperialist attack on Russian forces that could trigger a full-scale regional or even world war:

“Although claiming to oppose U.S. imperial aims, the ISO repeats Syrian ‘rebel’ complaints that ‘promised military aid from U.S. and European governments has never included the kind of heavy weapons, like anti-aircraft batteries, that would help them confront the Syrian military and now Russian warplanes’.”

—“Flashpoint Syria: Russian Intervention and Imperialist Aggression,” *The Internationalist* No. 42 (January-February 2016).

Given its support for the imperialist-armed and financed Syrian “rebels,” its no surprise that the ISO was absent from the April 16 NYC demonstration denouncing the U.S. attack on Syria. In an article by ISOer Ashley Smith, the group condemned the antiwar left as supporting “imperialist powers like China and Russia and dictatorships like Assad’s merely because they oppose the U.S.” In a modern-day take on the Cliffite slogan “neither Washington nor Moscow,” Smith writes “the old left slogan ‘the main enemy is at home’ is being used as a cover for refusing to extend solidarity to those struggling against tyranny.” During the anti-Soviet Cold War, this “Third Camp” position placed them in the imperialist camp. Today, the ISO sides with anti-Russia warmongers and takes aim at the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state just as Trump escalates his trade war against Beijing.

At least the social-democratic camp followers of imperialism are consistent. But in response to the U.S. missile attack on Syria, the Spartacist League calls for “all imperialist forces” and “regional powers” out of Syria – including not only Israel and Turkey, but also Iran and Russia, the mainstays of the Assad regime (*Workers Vanguard*, 20 April 2018). Evidently, for the SL, like the ISO, the main enemy is not at home, as nowhere in this article does it call for *defense* of Syria against imperialism, or for the *defeat* of imperialist forces in Syria. (In addition to the missile strikes, there are more than 4,000 U.S. troops “in country” in Syria.) In fact, now that the Islamic State has been largely defeated, the SL has quietly dropped its former line “tak-

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Internationalists Mobilize Against I.C.E. Gestapo



Internationalist photos

Locals of the Internationalist Group mobilized coast-to-coast to protest Gestapo-like attacks by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement police. Left: IG and Transport Workers Against Deportations at Los Angeles protest against I.C.E. separation of children from parents, June 14. Center: New England IG organized protest in Nashua, New Hampshire, June 18, to demand “I.C.E. Out of Bus Stations Now!” Right: Internationalist Group and Class Struggle Workers – Portland at OccupyICE PDX camp, June 20. For workers action to smash the capitalist deportation machine Obama built for Trump!

Set Them Free...

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demands *set them free, let them stay*. We call for mass **worker/immigrant mobilization** in the streets to **block deportations** and to **demand that the concentration camps housing immigrants be closed**. We say: **Stop the detentions! Return the children to their parents! Let the refugees in! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!** To lead this struggle we must build a **multi-ethnic internationalist workers party** to bring down the racist rule of capital through socialist revolution.

Border Patrol Child Snatchers

The entire country has been in turmoil for the last three weeks as the barbaric treatment of child immigrants shocked the conscience and provoked horror and fury among vast swathes of the population. This included:

- Images of rows of children sleeping in cages under fluorescent lighting on thin mats on concrete with foil for a blanket.
- Sounds of wailing children pleading for their parents as Border Patrol agents mock them.
- “Tender Age shelters” – i.e., jails for kids – housing babies and toddlers ripped out of their mothers’ arms.
- A repurposed former Wal-Mart holding 1,500 boys kept inside in cages for 22 hours a day.
- A tent city in Tornillo, Texas where temperatures are over 100°, to hold thousands of children.
- Reports of horrific abuse including immigrant children being handcuffed, beaten, left nude in concrete cells and strapped to chairs with bags over their heads.
- Other reports of children being forcibly administered psychiatric drugs to silence them.

The ghoulish attorney general Jeff Sessions could only respond to comparisons to Hitler’s Nazis with the bizarre claim that the Nazis “were keeping the Jews from leaving.”

Over a two-month period from April to June, more than 2,300 immigrant children – half reportedly under the age of 12 – were kidnapped by the U.S. government while their parents were locked up in immigrant prisons. One Honduran man seeking asylum, Marco Antonio Muñoz, committed suicide in a detention cell after having his three year-old-child forcibly taken from him by Border Patrol agents. And the Border Patrol that rips children out of their mothers’ arms while



Claudia Gómez González, murdered by the Border Patrol on May 23.

they are breastfeeding is the same criminal outfit that murdered Claudia Patricia Gómez González in cold blood after she had traveled 1,500 miles from Guatemala.

Demonstrations against family separation have been organized by a host of “non-governmental organizations” closely tied to the Democratic Party. The outrage over these atrocities is so intense that it could represent a turning point for opposition to the Trump regime. While he has the backing of hard-core racists, opinion polls show that two-thirds of the population oppose his immigration policies, and equal numbers say undocumented immigrants should stay. But so long as this opposition is channeled into support for the Democrats, it will lead to a dead end.

Bipartisan Capitalist Deportation Machine

The abuse of children by the immigration system is nothing new. The American Civil Liberties Union recently exposed

the brutal treatment of detained immigrant children under Obama, from 2009-2014, including beatings, stress positions, denial of medical care, death threats and sexual abuse.¹ Moreover, the government has only allowed extremely limited access to a few facilities, even turning away some grand-standing Democratic politicians like NYC mayor Bill de Blasio and Oregon senator Jeff Merkley. But then Melania Trump traveled to a detention center in McAllen, Texas ostentatiously flaunting a jacket with the words “I really don’t care” on the back.

The immigration “crisis” is the direct result of the deprivations of imperialist capitalism. The explosion in immigrant detentions began in the 1980s, with a flood of refugees fleeing the U.S.-sponsored dirty wars in Central America. It escalated after Bill Clinton pushed through the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994 that destroyed much of Mexican agriculture, pushing millions of peasants to emigrate. Clinton’s Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 brought the number of detainees from about 5,000 to about 16,000 per day.

It was Obama – the “Deporter in Chief” – who really created the detention juggernaut we have today. He expanded the system to some 200 centers crisscrossing the country. The children’s prisons were also built by Obama, and expanded

¹ ACLU, *Neglect and Abuse of Unaccompanied Immigrant Children by U.S. Customs and Border Protection* (May 2018).



Immigrant women held in cages in a former warehouse in McAllen, Texas.

in response to the influx of unaccompanied minors fleeing violence in Honduras and Guatemala in 2014. Today there are approximately 34,000 immigrants being held in detention on any given day in the largest immigrant prison system in the world, jailing about 400,000 immigrants yearly. Detention is now a big business in the U.S., with most of the detention prisons being privately run, and hugely profitable.

Donald Trump, meanwhile, has kept up his vile bigoted ravings against Mexicans and Central Americans. His latest was to declare that undocumented immigrants “aren’t people. These are animals.” And he treats them accordingly. The broader purpose of this massive machinery of repression is to terrorize immigrants, dehumanize them, make them vulnerable and scapegoat them, as part of the divide-and-conquer strategy the bourgeoisie uses to keep the multiracial working class down. This is the putrid state of American capitalism in terminal decay – the richest, most powerful ruling class in the history of the world, stealing the children of the most desperate and keeping them in tents! We say: Free the detainees! Labor must mobilize to tear down the detention centers!

The Democrats and Their “Resistance” That Isn’t

Trump certainly has a knack for plumbing the depths of human depravity. He attacks immigrants coming from “shithole countries,” refers to Mexican immigrants as rapists and murderers, and attacks children. While Trump and the Republicans are overt in their vile racism, the Democrats pretend to care about immigrants and working people. In demonstrations called by Democratic Party front groups, they claim that the child separation policy is “un-American.” In fact, at a June 26 protest in New York City against the Supreme Court decision upholding Trump’s “Muslim ban,” organizers grotesquely started chanting “USA, USA.” Yet under slavery it was common for the slavers to separate black mothers from their children. And there is the long and shameful history of the U.S. government taking Native American children from their parents and forcing them to speak English instead of their native languages. This vicious abuse was called “civilizing.”

Most of the protests that have occurred in the last three weeks against Trump’s immigration policies have centered around the call to “keep families together.” Organized by Democratic front groups like Rise and Resist, they have been careful to focus exclusively

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

on the Republicans. One of the largest in the Los Angeles area was on June 14. The original blurb for the rally said, accurately, “This criminal government has been doing this for years! Both parties are guilty of these Human Rights Violations!” But then organizers dropped the statement about “both parties” in order to appeal to Democratic liberals. The Internationalist Group together with a contingent from Transport Workers Against Deportations stood out as a class pole at this march, denouncing the Democrats as well as Trump. One of our most popular chants, picked up by the crowd, was, “Stealing children on stolen land, Border Patrol’s got blood on its hands!”

Across the country, we have been protesting on a daily basis. The New England local of the Internationalist Group organized a June 18 protest outside the bus station in Nashua, New Hampshire to demand that the I.C.E. police get out, and that the Concord Coach company stop cooperating with *la migrá*. In New York City, the IG along with the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and the fraternally allied Class Struggle Education Workers and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas protested outside the Hudson County jail in New Jersey where immigrant worker Pablo Villavicencio is being held after being turned over to I.C.E. when he delivered pizza to an Army base. We joined the protest against the “Muslim ban,” marched on the I.C.E. jail and participated in the OccupyICE blockade there. In Portland, the IG and Class Struggle Workers came down to the encampment of OccupyICE PDX while simultaneously preparing a June 30 labor mobilization against the fascists.

The Internationalists emphasized the need to mobilize workers power to *stop* the deportations. We insisted that the persecution of immigrants has been carried out by both major capitalist parties, and supported by the Greens, who ran immigrant-basher Ralph Nader for president (with the backing of reformists like the International Socialist Organization and Socialist Alternative). We chanted “I.C.E. out!” and called to drive I.C.E. jails out of the cities. When the Maoists of RefuseFascism chanted over and over “Free the children!” we chanted “Free them all, let them stay, full rights for immigrants!” The Internationalists demanded citizenship rights for all immigrants, and unlike the ex-Trotskyist Spartacist League, which pointedly limits its call to “those who have made it here,” we called for asylum for refugees fleeing from the wars, terror and devastation wrought by imperialism. For the SL, the desperate women and children just across the border have no right to enter the U.S.

The liberal wing of the bourgeoisie, as represented by Bernie Sanders, only offers to put a stop to “inhumane deportation programs and private detention centers.” Thus Sanders, who is backed by the likes of the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America, wants a “humane” deportation program and public detention centers. He also calls to “Ensure our border remains secure and protects local communities.”

None of this will or can really change as long as the private property system is in place. The bourgeoisie needs the superexploitation of immigrants deprived of rights, just as it extracts superprofits from its poverty-stricken neo-colonies. This is not a “broken” immigration system, it works quite well in what it was designed to do – terrorize, scapegoat and divide the working class. This system cannot be reformed, it has to be destroyed.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International insist that the

only way out of this horror show is international socialist revolution. Only with the construction of a planned, collectivized economy under workers rule can the needs of all be met. And that requires building revolutionary workers parties around the globe, based on the program of the Bolsheviks Lenin and Trotsky. That is the central task facing those who would truly defend immigrants today. ■

Regional War...

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ing a military side” with it, even as the I.S. was attacking Kurdish, Yazidi, Shiite, Christian and Druze minorities. Today the SL line on Syria and that of the social-dems are virtually indistinguishable.

Zionist Mass Assassination in Gaza, U.S./Saudi Slaughter in Yemen

In Israel, the moving of the U.S. embassy in May was a major provocation that galvanized Netanyahu and hardliners in and around his Likud party. The celebration itself was a grotesque display of imperialist decadence. Jared Kushner, the Trump administration’s point-man on Middle East “peace,” gave a speech proclaiming that “by moving our embassy to Jerusalem, we have shown the world once again that the United States can be trusted.” As the Zionist elite partied, split-screen TV coverage showed Israeli sharpshooters assassinating Palestinian protestors in Gaza one by one. This was not your usual Zionist indiscriminate bombing of apartment houses in Gaza, and certainly not Israeli troops out of control. This time the military piled up mounds of dirt along the border to house snipers’ nests for the express purpose of shooting individual unarmed protesters approaching the border fence. They admitted as much in a since-deleted tweet on the official Israeli Defense Force (IDF) account:

“Yesterday we saw 30,000 people; we arrived prepared and with precise reinforcements. Nothing was carried out uncontrolled; everything was accurate and measured, and we know where every bullet landed.”

The demonstrations began on 30 March 2018, as a six-week-long protest campaign demanding that Palestinian refugees and their descendants be allowed to return to lands they were expelled from in what is now Israel. The protests were supposed to end on Naqba Day (May 15) and took place along a stretch of border fence separating Israel from the Gaza Strip. The Zionists, as usual, want to pin the blame on the Islamist hard-liners of Hamas, in order to justify the slaughter. But in fact, the march came from independent activists with “a grass-roots idea for a peaceful, long-lasting protest along the Gaza fence” that Hamas (the dominant political force in Gaza) later “embraced” but did not directly lead (*New York Times*, 15 April 2018). Nevertheless, the Israeli snipers individually took aim at and killed or wounded 7,324 unarmed people in a monstrous crime that can’t even be considered a war crime, because there was no fighting – not one Israeli casualty. This slaughter was nothing short of mass assassination.

Many have accurately compared the Gaza killings to the Nazi murders of Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto. The difference is that the Nazis went on to kill millions of Jews (and many others) in the genocidal Holocaust. But there are not a few rabid Zionist politicians in Israel who dream of (and some openly call

for) a “final solution” to the “Palestinian problem.” They are aided by Trump’s son-in-law Kushner who is a longtime family friend of Benjamin Netanyahu, and shares in his far-right Zionist outlook. (Netanyahu once stayed in Jared’s bedroom when the Israeli prime minister visited the Kushner family.) Jared was co-director of his family’s foundation from 2006 to 2015 when it was building an illegal settlement in the Palestinian West Bank. Today he is the person in charge of brokering a “peace deal” between the Zionists criminally oppressing the Palestinian people and their sellout bourgeoisie represented by Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

The embassy move by the U.S. emboldened the Zionist war hawks. “What a glorious day,” Netanyahu proclaimed. “Today, the embassy of the most powerful country on earth, our friend and ally, the United States of America, opens in Jerusalem.... We have no better friends in the world.” Coupled with Trump’s abandonment of the Iran nuclear deal, this move was a signal to Netanyahu and the Israeli far right that preparations for an attack on Iran can begin in earnest. At the Munich Security Conference in February, Netanyahu warned that “Israel will continue to prevent Iran from establishing a permanent military presence in Syria” and Israel “will act, if necessary, not just against Iran’s proxies that are attacking us, but against Iran itself.” Now he plans to make good on that promise. On June 17 he informed Russian president Vladimir Putin and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that “we will take action – and are already taking action – against efforts to establish a military presence by Iran and its proxies in Syria.” The opening salvo of a regional conflagration might be forthcoming.

Meanwhile in Yemen, a war has been raging since 2015. A Saudi-led coalition, backed by the U.S./NATO imperialists, has been waging a war against Iran-backed rebels. The Saudis support the deposed president Abd Rabbuh Mansur Al Hadi, fighting against the Houthis tribe in the northeast. In addition to the Houthis and Saudis, other contenders in Yemen are the Sunni Muslim Al Qaeda affiliate active in the east and the South Yemen Movement that seeks to reestablish the Arab nationalist state (with leftist pretenses) that existed around the port of Aden until 1990. While the U.S. and Saudi Arabia claim that the Houthis are simply Iranian “proxies,” they are a part of the Zaidi Shia sect that broke from mainstream Shiism centuries ago. These highland tribesmen have had conflicts with central authorities going back to the Ottoman Empire. The U.S., meanwhile, has rained death from the skies on Yemen, as Barack Obama personally signed off on drone strikes that killed thousands of Yemenis. Trotskyists stand with the Houthis against the U.S. imperialists and Saudi monarchists.

The situation in Yemen, treated as a sideshow in the imperialist press, has been characterized by the United Nations as “the world’s worst humanitarian situation.” As we go to press, various imperialist strategy think-tanks are warning that Yemen could be a flashpoint for the looming regional



Israeli snipers perched on murder mounds open fire on peaceful Palestinian protestors.

war. As the battle for the Yemeni port of Hodeidah heats up, with the stage set for massacres of civilians, the International Crisis Group announced that it had moved Yemen (along with southern Syria) up to “critical” on its “U.S.-Iran Trigger List” (*Newsweek*, 27 June). Should the U.S./Israeli/Saudi axis strike at Iran, as we have repeatedly stated in the past:

“The League for the Fourth International defends Iran, a semi-colonial country, against imperialism and Zionist Israel, which serves as a cat’s paw for the imperialists. We give no political support to the Islamic fundamentalist regime.... But we defend Iran’s right to develop nuclear power and to obtain nuclear or any other kind of weapons to defend itself against those countries that already have nuclear weapons in the region and have threatened to use them against Iran: the United States and Israel.”

–“Zionists Gearing Up for War on Iran,” *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010

Given the intertwined network of alliances and overlapping conflicts across the Middle East, in the face of the looming possibility of war engulfing this strategic region which could lead to annihilation of entire populations, antiwar and “peace” movements that seek to pressure the imperialists will have little effect. Many bourgeois liberal “doves” over the invasion and occupation of Iraq become war hawks when it comes to Israel. The Middle East has been a tinder box ever since the imperialists arbitrarily carved up the region after World War I. What is called for is a proletarian revolutionary strategy encompassing the entire region and extending to the imperialist centers. To break the death grip of imperialism, Zionism and Islamism, the League for the Fourth International calls for a bi-national Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state as part of a wider socialist federation of the Near East. As we wrote in 2010:

“However distant that prospect may seem today, it is the only basis on which Muslims, Jews, Christians, Druzes – not to mention Kurds, Zoroastrians and numerous other national and religious minorities throughout the region – can overcome sectarian divisions and live and develop in harmony. Achieving this is a vital task not only of Hebrew-speaking and Arab workers in Palestine, but of the world proletariat as we struggle to smash imperialism through international socialist revolution.”

–*The Internationalist* No. 31

To accomplish that arduous and historic task, the working class throughout the Middle East, and centrally the millions-strong proletariat in Egypt and Turkey, need a genuine revolutionary Marxist leadership following the internationalist program of the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky. The League for the Fourth International seeks to build the nucleus of that leadership. ■

Rightist Government Spurs Xenophobic Terror,
Boats Rescuing Refugees Refused Entry

Italy: Mobilize Workers Power to Smash the Anti-Immigrant Offensive

The following article is by our comrades
of the Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia.

Three months of horse-trading after the March 4 elections, which were dominated by anti-immigrant hysteria and vicious racist demagoguery, have resulted in a far-right coalition government of the populist Five Stars Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle, or M5S) and the virulently anti-“foreigner” Lega (formerly Northern League). The new government, politically dominated by the fascistoid Lega, is a mortal threat to the working class and all the oppressed. It is preparing racist xenophobic measures against immigrants, asylum seekers and minorities; planning wage and benefit cuts for working people and tax cuts for the rich; dismantling democratic and trade-union rights, and waging all-round class war. After five years of austerity and mushrooming poverty under the Democratic Party government of Matteo Renzi – which pushed through the grotesquely misnamed “Jobs Act,” that multiplied low-paid temporary jobs, and dismantled social services such as education, health care and transportation – the new Lega-led government is pushing for much more.

The spectacular rise of Five Stars/Cinque Stelle, which skyrocketed from zero to 222 out of 630 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, is based on its demagogic rhetoric against the privileged political “caste,” denunciations of corruption and “the system,” and defense of the “little man.” Its flamboyant historical leader, ex-comedian Beppe Grillo is known for his “f... you all” rallies calling to kick out all the lazy do-nothings in the government. Now the “colorful” Grillo has ceded the spotlight to 32-year-old suit-and-tie-wearing Luigi Di Maio, who rushes around reassuring the titans of industry (Confindustria) and high finance that the M5S is responsible, there is nothing to worry about. The just under one-third of the vote that went to Five Stars, by far the largest of any party, was largely based in the South, where it won big due to promises of a guaranteed “citizen’s income” and raising the lowest pensions.

Di Maio, now minister of economic development, and the M5S economics minister Giovanni Tria have already backtracked saying that the “citizens income” will only be available to those who work eight hours a day and are willing to accept any job while being “trained.” Cinque Stelle ministers also declare that no new programs will be enacted without fully paying for them, while moving to pass a highly regressive “flat tax,” which means a huge tax cut for the rich. The increase in the lowest pensions seems unavailable to most, and has been “delayed” until the government “finds” 12 billion euros, or about US\$15 billion, to avoid an increase in the sales tax. All of this means more austerity for working people and the oppressed. And Cinque Stelle’s coalition with the Lega, which has insulted Southerners with chauvinist demagoguery for decades, could discredit the M5S in the South.

Matteo Salvini, leader of the Lega, is now minister of the interior, in charge of the police and paramilitary carabinieri, and the



Election propaganda of the Lega (formerly Northern League) targets immigrants.

real leader and main spokesman of the government. The premier (*presidente del consiglio*), Giuseppe Conte, is a figurehead. Salvini is already gearing up the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state in a clear push towards bonapartism. This includes increased repression and persecution of trade-union organizers and militants, and leftist activists. At the same time there has been a notable rise in attacks by fascist *squadrismi* (paramilitary gangs) and others from fascist groups including CasaPound, Forza Nuova, Generazione Identitaria and others which have a symbiotic relationship with the Lega, as was seen in the February murder of six African immigrants in Macerata.¹ And the June 2 murder of Soumailia Sacko, an agricultural worker and long time USB (Federation of Rank-and-File Unions) labor activist and fighter against the subhuman conditions of the *caporalato* (the ostensibly illegal near-slave labor system run by armed *caporali*, prevalent in the agricultural fields of the South), is an ominous sign.

The official program of the Lega/M5S government calls for the eviction of everyone from Rom² camps without providing any alternative. It also calls for the separation of Rom children from their families if they do not or cannot follow the law requiring that youth attend school. Now Salvini declares that he will enact an ethnic census of the Rom population in Italy, and that the “irregulars” will be deported, adding that “unfortunately, we have to keep the Italian Rom here.” Spokesmen for the Rom and Jewish communities have protested that this is in line with the 1938 Racial Laws under Mussolini, and blatantly illegal. The Lega family minister is Lorenzo Fontana, a well-known homophobic anti-abortion bigot, while the Lega education

minister, Marco Bussetti, is a big promoter of private education.

Salvini recently refused to let the *Aquarius*, a rescue ship operated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), dock at an Italian port. The ship was crammed full with 629 refugees who had just been saved at sea, including 123 unaccompanied minors, pregnant women and victims of rape and torture. The ban violated Italy’s internationally agreed obligation to receive the ship since it had the closest safe harbor. The refusal led to a dangerous eight-day ordeal in a stormy sea, in which reportedly most of the exhausted refugees became seasick. Finally, the *Aquarius* was allowed to enter the Spanish port of Valencia. At least 13,000 refugees have drowned trying to reach European shores and Salvini’s publicly stated intention to not allow other ships to dock in Italian harbors can only lead to more deaths.

The Lega-dominated government’s push towards more police-state measures includes increasing the persecution and victimization of trade-union organizers and leftists. The courts have recently upheld the politically motivated firings of five union organizers and militants at the FCA (Fiat Chrysler Automobiles) Pomigliano auto factory. Their “crime” was taking part in a protest against the brutal working conditions. There are also legal proceedings against Mustafa Elshennacui, Simone Carpeggiani and others of the militant SI COBAS “rank-and-file” union, including Aldo Milani, in a totally transparent frame-up trial.³ Others are being victimized for participating in demonstrations that confronted the fascists of CasaPound. Meanwhile, workers at the ILVA steel mill in Taranto, once the largest steel-producing factory in Europe, and workers at various FCA auto plants are threatened by thousands of layoffs, firings and possible plant closures.

³ See our article, “Workers Mobilizations Free Arrested Leader of SI Cobas” (February 2017), reprinted in *L’internazionalista* No. 2, June 2017.

In the face of this unrelenting capitalist onslaught and the transparent rot, violence and poverty of capitalism in its decay, there is no reformist solution. As the disastrous experience of the SYRIZA government in Greece showed, the capitalists will not permit an end to the austerity that is propping up their decaying system. What’s needed is to mobilize the full power of the working class to stop the bourgeois offensive and fight for workers power.

This fight must include the formation of *workers defense guards* to stop racist terror and defend the Rom; *workers actions* to stop deportations; *factory occupations*, *elected strike committees* and eventually formation of workers councils to overcome the sabotage of the labor bureaucracy and the division of the workers movement into numerous different unions. For all this to happen, the key is the forging of an internationalist Bolshevik party of the proletarian vanguard.

Defend the Rom!

The first month of the Lega/M5S government already shows the kind of sinister xenophobic climate and repressive attacks that it intends to carry out. On June 14, the city council of Rome, led by the M5S, passed a motion presented by Fratelli d’Italia (Italian Brothers, a far-right outfit, successor to the former National Alliance) to name a street after Giorgio Almirante, the ex-leader of the fascist MSI (Italian Social Movement), the direct descendant of Mussolini’s fascist party. Almirante was a supporter of the 1938 Racial Laws, “minister of culture” of the Salò Republic (the last fascist redoubt, where partisans were executed and tortured), editor of the magazine *La Difesa Della Razza* (Defense of the Race), during 1943-48 and an unapologetic supporter of Mussolini. The Cinque Stelle council members all voted for the motion.⁴ This is hardly a surprise. Although the M5S tries to portray itself as a party of hip anti-establishment millennials, the father of poster boy minister Di Maio was a leader of the fascist MSI.

Meanwhile, attacks on immigrants are growing. On June 19, unidentified persons shot at two immigrants from Mali, apparently with an air pistol, while shouting “Salvini! Salvini!” On June 16, all buses going to Rome for an anti-government demonstration called by the USB union after the murder of Soumailia Sacko were stopped by the police, the demonstrators identified and photographed with their identity card in hand. On June 2, the Savona City Council passed a motion presented by the Lega to tax waste disposal at higher commercial rates for those who rent to immigrants. The Lega-M5S government program calls for an increase in spending for police, carabinieri and other security forces, for measures against immigration, and for order and discipline. In many

⁴ It is worth noting that Communist Party (PCI) leaders respectfully attended Almirante’s funeral in 1988 and that the leader of the PCI and minister of justice in the post-WWII bourgeois government, Palmiro Togliatti, pushed through an amnesty for the fascists in 1946.



Thousands of immigrants and other workers protested against exploitation, racism and repression: the SI COBAS contingent in Rome, February 24.

cities police are now being armed with taser guns capable of hitting demonstrators or picketers with thousands of volts. The United Nations has called these “instruments of torture,” while the claim that they are supposedly “non-lethal” is contradicted by the many deaths that they have caused.

In an interview last year, Salvini declared, “We need a mass cleansing, street by street, piazza by piazza, neighborhood by neighborhood.” Now he has upped the ante by announcing a “census” of the Rom population in Italy. The Nazis considered the Rom and Sinti populations to be genetically criminal and inferior, identified them with black triangles and killed 500,000 in death camps. This went hand-in-hand with the registration of the Jewish population prior to exterminating six million Jews in the Holocaust. While conventional bourgeois histories claim that the Italian fascists were not so anti-Semitic, the Mussolini regime also registered the names and personal information of the Jewish and Rom populations in Italy. After the issuance of the Racial Laws in 1938, Jews were rounded up and about 8,000 were deported to Nazi death camps in Poland, where they were exterminated. The Rom population in Italy suffered a similar fate.

The government’s ominous racist attacks against the Rom and the shutting down of their camps is a taste of the police-state repression it has in store for everyone. *It is the duty of every class-conscious worker and communist to defend the besieged, 160,000-strong Rom population.*

The *Aquarius*, Fortress Europe And Imperialist Hypocrisy

Campaigning for a Lega candidate for mayor of Vicenza, Salvini proclaimed, “the party’s over for illegals, it’s time for them to pack their suitcases” (Corriere TV, 2 June). At the same time he calls for the deportation of 500,000 undocumented workers and promises to seal off the Italian peninsula from immigration and asylum seekers. His recent refusal to let the NGO ship *Aquarius* dock in an Italian port, seriously risked the lives of the hundreds of exhausted and traumatized survivors at sea who were crammed on board.

Yet inside Italy the spectre of hundreds of desperate shipwreck survivors being abandoned at sea sparked a revolt by officials in port cities. The mayor of Palermo declared that its port was open and that they were prepared to take in the *Aquarius*. The mayors of Naples, Taranto, Messina, Reggio Calabria and Ravenna did the same. Eventually, Spain, with the new Socialist Party government of Pedro Sanchez, let the *Aquarius* dock after eight days at sea. Yet most of the immigrants

who docked in Valencia are likely to be deported, classified as “economic migrants” with supposedly no legitimate reason to seek asylum. We say: *let them in*, and we fight for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*.

Now Salvini, with the enthusiastic support of M5S leader and fellow minister Di Maio, is criminalizing the saving of lives at sea. Salvini declares that foreign flag ships can appeal to foreign countries but cannot dock in Italy. He is threatening to sequester NGO ships and prosecute the crews for “aiding clandestine immigration,” as well as “criminal association for the purpose of clandestine immigration.” Italian fishermen have known for some time that they risk criminal persecution and the sequester of their ships when they act to save lives. But many have run the risk.

The *Aquarius* affair set off an obscene pass-the-buck squabble among the countries of the EU. French president Emmanuel Macron lectured about moral responsibility and the “leprosy” of populism. This is the same Macron who recently pushed through a law to speed up deportations and who refuses to allow asylum seekers to enter from Italy at Ventimiglia. Oxfam released a report, *No-where But Out* (15 June), accusing France of illegally stopping foreign children there. Over 16,000 migrants have been camped out in the area, including many children pushed out by Italy’s asylum system. But when they cross the border, French police have falsified their birth dates in order to justify refusing entry, as well as stealing the SIM chips of their cell phones and cutting the soles off their shoes (!) before pushing them back to Italy.

The tense “discussion” about immigration policy between European Union rulers has moved to the right. There now appears to be common agreement to fortify and close off the borders of all of racist Fortress Europe, to not allow immigrants to travel from one EU country to another, to reinforce the presence of the Frontex military forces in the Mediterranean Sea, and to immediately hand over immigrants intercepted in the Mediterranean Sea to detention centers in North Africa or elsewhere, so that they never enter an EU country. On June 25, Salvini proposed during a visit to Libya that “migrant reception centers” (concentration camps) be set up along Libya’s southern border.

Key to the Fight for Victory: Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Workers Party

So we now have the fascistic Lega in a coalition government with the populist Cinque Stelle preparing to unleash ferocious attacks against immigrants, Rom, the entire

workers movement and all the oppressed, while closing off the borders and leaving asylum seekers in distress at sea. The banks are insolvent, racist terror is increasing, poverty is spreading, youth have little future and the entire situation is worsening. The capitulatory politics of the left have led to this situation today. The old PCI renounced any reference to communism, however cynical and distorted by its Stalinist poli-

tics, transforming itself into the social-democratic PDS. They then united with former Christian Democrats from the Ulivo popular front to become the Democratic Party (PD), an outright bourgeois party. The so-called “Trotskyists” spent 16 or more years trying to reform Rifondazione Comunista, which is now part of Potere al Popolo pushing bourgeois populism. Meanwhile, the workers movement has been suffering major attacks for decades.

So what is the left proposing now? Many are now pushing for an “anti-capitalist front,” “mass class united front” or a similar formulation. Thus, as part of their perspective of building a “mass class united front,” the Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori (PCL – Workers Communist Party) writes that it “fully adheres to” and “contributed to writing” the political platform of the “Genova Antifascista” coalition for an anti-fascist demonstration on June 30. The program has a list of demands that includes “throw out the fascist organizations and close their dens, applying the Constitution that bans ‘the reorganization of the disbanded fascist party under any form.’” In other words, Genova Antifascista and the PCL look to the *bourgeois state* to protect them from the fascists. This is suicidal. The capitalists protect the fascists.

The platform also includes a laundry list of reform demands entirely within the capitalist framework, and calls for the mayor to resign. A genuine united front is for an action. It is not a political bloc, a lowest-common-denominator political program, or an ongoing organization. “Genova Antifascista” is a propaganda bloc that is organizing a march, not an action to stop the fascists. It appeals to various antifascist forces to join together and pressure to apply the Constitution to outlaw fascists. And who exactly would do this, the right-wing Lega/M5S government? The bourgeois courts? This is clearly a class-collaborationist popular-front appeal, underlined by the fact that the Genova Antifascista bloc prohibited its components from carrying their own banners and slogans (which the PCL dismissed as “a negative note”)!

The Frazione Trotskista Internazionale (FIR), like the PCL from which it recently split, endlessly calls for an “anti-capitalist front.” In an article titled “Reflections for Revolutionaries Today” (La Voce delle Lotte, 17 February) they sneeringly counterpose building such a front to the building of a “party of the revolution” with a “correct line.” They write: “as the FIR we have refused to organize ourselves into a party.” Instead they envision an eventual party “formed by workers delegated from the fac-

tories..., of students leading demonstrations, of militants carrying out intellectual labor educating workers as ‘organic intellectuals’,” etc. This petty-bourgeois Gramscian gobbledygook is the very antithesis of a Bolshevik workers party based on the program of Lenin and Trotsky and is incapable of providing revolutionary leadership in struggle.

In the same article, the FIR writes: “We proposed the slogan of an anti-capitalist front in November. In recent weeks it has been taken up by other forces, like the leadership of SI COBAS.” The SI COBAS union has carried out many strikes, defense campaigns and other actions. These concrete struggles must be defended and supported by the workers movement. These actions are very different from proposing an ongoing “anti-capitalist front” drawing in various heterogeneous forces. Such a permanent political bloc, especially if it takes hold, can only serve as an antechamber for a popular-front political coalition on a bourgeois program.

On the other hand, some marginal left groups have sought to compete with the populist-nationalist right on a program of national sovereignty. An especially repugnant role in this “sovereignist left” is played by the Lega Trotskista d’Italia, part of the International Communist League (ICL). These *ex-Trotskyists* coincide with many positions of the Lega/M5S government. As fighters for “Italexit” from the European Union – i.e., to restore an “independent” Italian imperialism – they consider that the main enemy is not “at home” but among the Eurocrats in Brussels (see “According to the ICL, the Main Enemy Is In Brussels,” *L’internazionalista* No. 2, June 2017). They claim that anyone who defends the right of immigrants to travel within Europe is a proponent of the liberal/anarchist utopia of “open borders.” And these left-chauvinists refuse to call for letting refugees from the wars, terror and devastation caused by imperialism into Italy, not recognizing their right to asylum – including, we suppose, those on board the *Aquarius*.

The Lega/Cinque Stelle government is not strong, it is rent by contradictions and can be brought down with class struggle. Salvini says he looks to employ measures against immigrants like those Trump implemented in the United States. But explosive demonstrations and actions across the U.S. just forced the government to “temporarily” back down on the separation of immigrant families, even as Trump threatens to throw immigrants out by force, denying their legal rights. It is necessary to fight for workers actions to stop racist terror and directly resist deportations. The answer to the all-sided attacks is a class mobilization of workers and the oppressed independent of and against the bourgeoisie, their parties and their courts. Only a workers revolution can put an end to the misery of capitalism.

As Trotsky wrote in *Lessons of October*: “Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer.” This is a fundamental lesson of history that Lenin, Trotsky and other revolutionaries repeated over and over again and was the very reason for the founding of the Communist International. It is necessary to start the work of forging a Leninist-Trotskyist party in Italy, part of a reformed Fourth International. This is the political perspective that we of the Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italia/League for the Fourth International fight for. ■

To Defeat Temer and the Pro-Imperialist Offensive of Privatization, Repression and Hunger

Brazil Truckers Strike: Oil Workers Should Take the Lead to Ensure Proletarian Leadership

The following article is translated from a leaflet issued by our comrades of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International.

RIO DE JANEIRO, May 27 – The truck drivers strike has been going on for a week already. Despite attempts by the (unelected) government of the hated Michel Temer to defuse the protests through repression and phony negotiations, roadblocks continue in more than 500 locations in 24 of Brazil's 26 states. In the metropolitan areas, fuel is scarce and airports are running out of jet fuel. Municipal governments are announcing escalating shutdowns of public transportation, while universities and schools are exempting students and workers from their activities. Now, since the day before yesterday, the military has begun breaking the blockades with armed escorts of oil tanker trucks. All of Brazil is in turmoil.

The truckers' blockades began on Tuesday, May 22 to protest the latest increase in the price of diesel fuel, which is essential for transporting most of the commodities and raw materials in Brazil. In the two years since the impeachment in which the Congress of thieves and murderers deposed President Dilma Rousseff, Temer's government has regulated a rise in the price of diesel that by now has nearly reached 100 percent. This increase is a direct result of the dollarization policy that Temer imposed on the Petrobras oil company, according to which fuel prices would fluctuate in line with the international market. That policy was demanded by the Wall Street investors who now dominate the once-state-owned company. In a broader perspective, it is the result of the policies of privatization of the energy sector imposed by former President Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT) after moving into the Planalto Palace (Brazil's White House) at the head of a popular front of class collaboration.

The rise in the price of diesel not only affects big transport companies, but also small truck owners – a petty-bourgeois sector – and consumers as it raises the cost of goods. Finally, it is a direct attack against the living standards of the working people and the poor of the city and the countryside. At this moment it is indispensable to *change the class axis* of the struggle against the free-market measures imposed by Temer, as well as by the previous governments of Lula and Dilma. The concrete conditions for a turn to the proletariat are in full view: the oil workers have announced the possibility of carrying out a national strike in the sector. Such a strike would open the possibility



Thousands of striking truck drivers set up hundreds of blockades on Brazil's highways, throwing the country into turmoil as fuel supplies dwindled.

of turning popular anger into a class-based mobilization pointing in the direction of a workers and peasants government in Brazil.

It is urgent to establish a proletarian leadership of the utterly justified rebellion against the imposition of exorbitant prices, and also in order to combat the bourgeois leaderships of Abcam (the Brazilian Association of Truck Drivers), the transport bosses, and petty-bourgeois groups that in some blockades painted banners calling for "military intervention." But they are already experiencing intervention by the army – which is seeking to *break their strike*. Today the situation requires the presentation of a program of transitional demands that point to how to connect the current struggles of the workers with the need to fight for socialist revolution. Thus *workers should impose workers control in the energy sector. The oil workers should decide to whom to sell the fuel at and at what price*. This means leading a real class struggle against the bourgeoisie as a whole, which means achieving complete class independence for the proletariat. In turn, to fight against the cost of inflation and unemployment, other sectors in struggle should impose a sliding scale of wages and hours of work.

As our comrades from the Grupo Internacionalista, the Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, wrote at the time of a rebellion of truckers and demonstrators against an exorbitant increase in fuel prices at the beginning of last year:

"The fact that oil workers are under attack is a key element in planning a class-struggle strategy to roll back the *gasolinazo*, along with the anti-worker

'reforms' that have smashed the living standards of the workers. So far, the mobilizations against the *gasolinazo* have fundamentally been led by sectors of the petty bourgeoisie

"...a complete shift in the class axis of these protests is needed. To achieve this, the workers of the energy sector, and particularly the oil workers, must play a key role. To defend their own jobs and turn back the effects of privatization in the sector, the oil workers could sell fuel directly to the population at five pesos per liter. This is utterly realizable at the big storage and distribution centers" –"For Workers Mobilization to Smash the Gasolinazo!" *Revolución Permanente* No. 7, April-May 2017 (translated in *The Internationalist* No. 46, January-February 2017)

The working class, by placing itself at the head of all the sectors impoverished by three decades of "free-market" policies, could not only "resist" but openly go over to the offensive. **For this, a genuinely revolutionary leadership, a Leninist-Trotskyist workers party armed with the program of permanent revolution, is indispensable.**

Building a Revolutionary Leadership

Meanwhile, reports of growing food shortages in major cities are being used by the government and its kept media to sow animosity in the population against the truck drivers. Various employer sectors are complaining that lack of materials is forcing them to shut down the assembly lines, particularly in the automotive industry. But despite

the media attack and constant references to the "radical minority" that "kidnapped" the population, truckers' blockades have enjoyed massive support from the impoverished and hard-working population. So if food shortages intensify, **union commissions and neighborhood committees should be organized to requisition basic necessities**. And faced with massive repression, **a national oil strike in combination with the truckers strike** could be the starting point for a **genuine general strike**, the first in more than 20 years, to demand the **abolition of Temer's decree proclaiming a Guarantee of Law Order** and force the **withdrawal of the military from the streets and the favelas of Rio**.

Karl Marx emphasized that every class struggle is a political struggle. The key question today is precisely what policy the working class must follow in order to defeat the bourgeoisie and get rid of the anti-democratic, anti-worker Temer government. Groups claiming to be socialists have shown a great deal of confusion in the face of the current truckers strike precisely because, as the revolutionary Trotskyists of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil have insisted, these pseudo-leftists are tailing after the bourgeois blocs that are fighting over who shall run the country.

Some, such as the PSTU (Partido Socialista dos Trabalhadores Unificado, or Unified Socialist Workers Party) and the trade-union federation it leads (CSP-Conlutas), as well as the CST (Socialist Workers Current), simply proclaim "Total Support" to the truck drivers' strike (*Opinião Socialista* No. 555, 24 May, and the Declaration of Conlutas, 21 May). These followers of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist leader Nahuel Moreno are not particularly concerned about the right-wing character of the current leaders of the truck drivers, seeing as they gave "left" cover to the rightist, anti-worker and bonapartist offensive that resulted in the impeachment of the PT president Dilma Rousseff and the installation of the government of Temer that with its labor "reform" has legalized slavery. More recently they practically applauded the arrest of Lula ordered by the bourgeoisie in order to prevent the PT's historic leader from running in the October presidential elections.

On the other hand, the Workers Party, as well as the Brazil Popular Front and the Front of People Without Fear, linked to the PT, only promise a new edition of the "working people's government" that for 13 years guaranteed stratospheric profits for the capitalists.

And then there is the curious case of the neo-Morenoites of the Movimento Revolucionário

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**For a National Oil Workers Strike and Occupation!
For Workers Control of the Production and Distribution of Fuel!**

For a Revolutionary Party, Not the “Tagtail of Any Bourgeois Party”

An Open Letter to Socialist Alternative Oppositionists, Past and Present

The following Open Letter, was distributed as a leaflet the the Left Forum in New York City on June 1-3.

“Yet revolution is a supreme political act and those who want revolution must also want the means of achieving it, that is, political action, which prepares the ground for revolution and provides the workers with the revolutionary training without which they are sure to become the dupes of the Favres and Pyats [French bourgeois politicians] the morning after the battle. However, 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 goals and its own policy.”

—Karl Marx, “Apropos of Working-Class Political Action,” September 21, 1871

The Class Struggle Education League was founded in Fall 2017 by members of the Lowell/New Hampshire branch of Socialist Alternative (SAlt), the U.S. group in solidarity with the Committee for a Workers International (CWI). This Open Letter is by Danny K. and Mike G., former leading members of the branch who went on to found CSEL. After eight and five years in SAlt, respectively, our growing disagreements with the organization came to a head over its blatant tailing of the Bernie Sanders campaign. Participating in the opposition within SAlt to this class-collaborationist policy, while becoming aware of the opposition’s own limits, led us to reexamine what Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism really stand for.

This forced us “to face reality squarely,” as Trotsky writes in the *Transitional Program*. Within SAlt, members are given the idea that it is a revolutionary socialist party that only *pretends* to be a reformist organization as a matter of tactics, to “reach people where their consciousness is at.” But hard experience revealed to us that SAlt isn’t any kind of revolutionary party at all. Instead, it is an opportunist, social-democratic organization that continually tramples all over Marxism’s bedrock principle of *proletarian political independence*. Marx warned against being a “tagtail” to bourgeois parties – but that is exactly what SAlt does, and what it is.

To put it another way, our experience as members led us to conclusion that Socialist Alternative is a thoroughly reformist group that, for tactical reasons, internally pretends to be a revolutionary party that is just pretending to be reformist. We decided to make a decisive break from its program and perspectives, and resigned in September 2017. Intensive study and joint work have led to the decision by the Class Struggle Education League to fuse with the Internationalist Group (IG), U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International. We have published our statement, “Where We Come From and Where We Are Going” in *The Internationalist* (No. 51, March-April 2018) and on the IG’s website (internationalist.org). We will also be discussing this at the joint CSEL-IG panel titled “Revolutionary Regroupment vs. ‘Sanders Socialism’” at the Left Forum.

We want to take this opportunity to go

over some of the key issues that led us to part ways with the CWI. We address this open letter to our former comrades in the SAlt opposition – some of whom are still within that organization, others of whom have dispersed to the four winds – as well as to any others seeking to draw lessons from the fight inside SAlt.

The “Bern Turn” – Bringing It All Home

From the very beginning of Bernie Sanders’ presidential bid it was clear that he was running to refurbish the credentials of the racist, capitalist Democratic Party. In September 2014 – the weekend after Seattle City Councilor and SAlt spokesperson Kshama Sawant urged him to run as an independent at the People’s Climate Summit in New Hampshire. We attended his appearance, sat through a dreadful social-patriotic video and an only slightly less dreadful speech by Sanders, and spoke during the discussion period. Dutifully carrying out SAlt’s party line, we also urged him to run as an independent. In response, Sanders hemmed and hawed for a full thirty seconds before making it clear that he had always intended to run as a Democrat. And as the campaign continued, Sanders made it clear that he would endorse the Democrats’ candidate (Hillary Clinton) if and when he lost the nomination.

This was well understood and admitted even by SAlt’s leadership. Over and over, they argued that it wasn’t “about” Sanders. They insisted that all their pleas to Sanders to run as an independent, to run all the way to November 2016,¹ etc., aimed to intervene in his campaign with “bold demands,” to “force the contradictions” to the benefit of Occupy-influenced youth and dissatisfied workers who backed Sanders. What was the real contradiction here? The one between claiming, in words, to be a socialist alternative to capitalist politics, while, in deeds, SAlt prettified and spread illusions in the capitalist politician Sanders as he did his job of ushering those youth and workers into the Democratic fold.

SAlt’s leadership would have us believe that their capitulation to the Sanders campaign was nothing more than a clever tactical maneuver to break left-leaning voters from the Democrats, an attempt to actualize Lenin’s well-known analogy in “*Left-Wing Communism*”: *An Infantile Disorder* that offering critical support to a reformist candidate is like the support a rope offers to a hanged man. No – this was a cynical and deliberate blurring of

¹ As we finished writing this Open Letter, we saw that SAlt is up to it again, advising New York gubernatorial candidate Cynthia Nixon that if she is defeated in the Democratic primary, she should run all the way to November on the Working Families Party ballot line (“Cynthia Nixon Challenges Establishment Democrats in New York State,” socialistalternative.org, 30 May). To top it all off, they are giving this advice to a bourgeois candidate who is notoriously anti-union, and was the spokesperson for keeping NYC’s exclusive Center School in a predominantly white school that has been the epicenter of a revolt against school integration on Manhattan’s Upper West Side (see “Free Market Racism: Segregated Schools, Gentrified Neighborhoods,” in *Marxism & Education* No. 5, Summer 2018).



the class line. Lenin used this analogy when discussing the British Labour Party in 1920, as an example of communists giving critical electoral support to a party of the working class in order to win its base away from its reformist, pro-bourgeois leadership. This is diametrically opposed to tailing a bourgeois politician like Sanders who was running to be the candidate of the Democratic Party, the oldest and most experienced capitalist party on the planet.

To this end, SAlt helped create branches of People for Bernie and launched its own Movement4Bernie. Also Students for Bernie, Labor for Bernie, you name it. They participated in and/or organized rallies for him (March for Bernie) in cities such as Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Seattle. Working overtime to spread illusions in Sanders launching an “independent” bourgeois candidacy, they called sometimes for a “Party of the 99%,” at others for a “People’s Party.” In some branches they phone-banked for him, in others they door-knocked. This culminated at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, after Hillary Clinton was duly nominated, with SAlt members, one of them elected as a delegate (!), leading over a hundred Sanders delegates to rally for the Green Party’s candidate, Jill Stein (see “Inside the DNC Walkouts,” counterpunch.org, 5 August 2016).

It was no accident that in line with all this, SAlt embraced the populist vocabulary of the “99%” used by Occupy and Sanders. This populist rhetoric is anti-Marxist, specifically bourgeois. Ever since the French Revolution of 1789, the bourgeoisie and its followers have cloaked themselves in the language of the “people” and “the people’s party.” SAlt further developed its perspective of a “new party” in its 2016 U.S. Perspectives document (socialistalternative.org, 11 July 2016). The document states outright that this party would be “likely to initially have a more populist multi-class character rather than having a clearly pronounced working class character.” The scrap of hedging about “initially” does not obscure the politics: SAlt proposes to build a “multi-class” party. Trotsky had a whole polemic in *The Third International After Lenin* about the impossibility of a “two-class party.” The Marxist name for what SAlt is calling for is a *bourgeois party*. (Naturally, SAlt is part of the workshop sponsored by the

“Movement for a People’s Party”, formerly “Draft Bernie,” at this year’s Left Forum – where social democrats will hold love-fests for pro-Democratic “Sanders socialism” beginning with the Friday plenary addressed by Jane Sanders, as well as a Democratic NYC council member, etc.)

Opposition within Socialist Alternative grew as the entire logic of the “Bern turn” led to the organization to be ever more brazen and blatant in its ever-escalating capitulation to this bourgeois politician. At one point (in January 2016), there was a “Unity Opposition Statement” which we signed along with 101 SAlt members against the National Committee’s policy which, the opposition statement said, “is qualitatively an endorsement of a Democratic Party politician, such endorsement being incompatible with building an independent workers’ party.” True enough, but this opposition, as we wrote in our statement “Where We Come From and Where We Are Going,” was far from a solid *revolutionary class opposition*. Since then some have left SAlt in the direction of Maoism (the Austin, Texas branch), others joining the Green Party (Mobile, Alabama branch). One of the main groups of oppositionists (Worcester, Massachusetts branch) stayed in SAlt despite the organization’s ever-increasing adaptation to the Democratic Party. We want to speak here to the various arguments that were presented by those who opposed the SAlt “Bern turn” but – in different ways – failed to address the central question: the *class line*.

Without a real fight for the class independence of the workers, talk of “tactics” is just a bunch of cynical excuses. As any Marxist could predict, the “Bern turn” reinforced illusions in reforming capitalism through bourgeois electoral politics, and sowed confusion with SAlt ranks. Many members and even at least one whole branch (Tennessee) took SAlt’s position to its logical conclusion and decamped to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). If you’re going to carry water for “progressive” Democrats, who needs the baggage of a self-styled Trotskyist organization? Surely, these former comrades must have thought to themselves, if we’re going to be the best Bernie-builders, why not go all the way with the DSA?

SAlt’s ploys and get-rich-quick schemes flew in the face of Marx’s warning. They ignored Trotsky’s admonitions to “face reality squarely,” “call things by their right name” and “swim against the stream” in order to build a revolutionary leadership of the working class and all the oppressed. Instead, the SAlt leadership pandered to existing consciousness, lying to workers and youth, and was a tagtail on a bourgeois party. It was class-collaborationism, pure and simple. We got fully and finally fed up with it – aren’t you? Breaking from the whole “method” and tradition of opportunism, we want to devote ourselves to building a genuine revolutionary a real Trotskyist party, one whose deeds go together with its words. That is the revolutionary workers party that we need and are going to fight for as part of the IG/LFI.

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Class Struggle Education League Fuses with Internationalist Group

On June 3, the Class Struggle Education League, based in southern New Hampshire, and the Internationalist Group joined together in a single organization, the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International. The fusion took place following a well-attended CSEL-IG panel on “Revolutionary Regroupment vs. ‘Sanders Socialism’” at the annual Left Forum in New York City. The panel was sharply counterposed to the Bernie Sanders brand of Democratic Party liberalism that dominated this year’s edition of the social-democratic confab. The previous day a panel by the Class Struggle Education Workers on “Teacher Revolts Shake Labor” and “On the Front Lines Defending Immigrants” drew a standing-room-only crowd. The CSEW is a union tendency fraternally allied with the IG. Also at the Forum, “An Open Letter to Socialist Alternative Oppositionists, Past and Present” (31 May) by the CSEL was distributed.

The CSEL-IG panel focused on the issues that led the Class Struggle Education League toward fusing with the Internationalist Group, and what revolutionary regroupment means, from Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks to today. Speaking for the CSEL, Danny Keating, a steel worker, recounted that his first reading group studying the *Communist Manifesto* was in the U.S. Army, which he had naively enlisted in as a young man. After the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, he decided he had to resist, leaving the military and looking for a communist group. After encountering the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party (“off-putting and strange”) he met Socialist Alternative (SAlt), which he believed was teaching working-class independence from the bourgeoisie. Instead, he said, SAlt capitulated to existing consciousness, launching a new campaign every six months, never getting past Socialism 101 in its internal education of members, leading to high turnover, confusion and disillusionment.

Disagreements began when the SAlt leadership truncated its call for “\$15 and a Union” to “\$15 Now,” because some liberals were uncomfortable with the union part. SAlt’s 2015 “turn” to campaigning for Bernie Sanders was particularly cynical. The leadership called for Sanders to “campaign all the way to November” (as if that would make it okay to support a bourgeois politician) knowing full well that Sanders was never going to win, that he would support Hillary Clinton, that he would never break from the Democrats. They told the members to tailor their approach to those who following the election of Trump have illusions in the Democrats, opposing only “corporate” and “establishment Democrats.” When the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) grew exponentially after the elections, Keating said, SAlt leaders “were beaming. To them, this was confirmation that they should have watered down their program even more: ‘Imagine how big the left would be if only we had lied to people a little more,’” they figured.

The New Hampshire branch of Socialist Alternative said it would engage with Sanders supporters, but wouldn’t lie to



At April 30 protest in Philadelphia in defense of class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, supporters of the Class Struggle Education League join with the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth in calling to “Mobilize Workers Power to Free Mumia” and for “Black Liberation through Socialist Revolution!”

them. The speaker contrasted the program and action of the League for the Fourth International with that of SAlt’s parent body, the Committee for a Workers International, which grew out of the Militant tendency of the British Labour Party. “The CWI’s Labour reformism and sewer socialism is nothing but sowing illusions and diverting energy from what is really needed,” namely building a tight-knit revolutionary party, not opportunistically adapting to the outlook of what they would call “newly radicalized layers,” meaning young people that they “could lie to from the start,” said Keating. So after breaking with SAlt, “we hit the books again,” seeing that “in this period of splits and fusions,” many opportunist outfits are busting apart while people “are striving to find an organization that actually seeks to overthrow this rotten system.”

Mike Gath, also speaking on behalf of the CSEL, emphasized the importance of the writings of James P. Cannon. “In Socialist Alternative the beginning of the end” came after reading (or in his case, re-reading) Cannon’s *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*, about the 1939-40 struggle against the anti-Soviet petty-bourgeois opposition inside the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. Clearly there was a discrepancy between the revolutionary party Cannon talked about and Socialist Alternative’s claims. It took a couple more years of fighting for the comrades who would go on to found the CSEL to come to the conclusion that when they talked about the need for a party, they weren’t speaking the same language as the SAlt leadership, or others in the opposition. “What it meant for us was a class-struggle, revolutionary vanguard party – not a ‘mass socialist party,’ not a ‘party of the 99%,’ not a ‘people’s party.’ No, we need a Leninist revolutionary vanguard party, as a sign here says, to reforge the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution, hammered out on programmatic agreement.”

Gath underlined the importance of Lenin’s statement in *What Is To Be Done?* that the role of the revolutionary is not to be a trade-union secretary but to be a tribune, or champion of the oppressed. So they threw themselves into struggles for trans rights and gay rights, as well as highlighting the fight for black liberation, not always a simple task in an area where the black population is statistically quite small. The black question is key to revolution in the United States, and the CSEL endorsed the program of revolutionary integrationism put forward by Richard Fraser in the SWP during the 1950s against the perspective of black nationalism, which in practice often meant tailing after black Democrats. At a conference in Connecticut held by Socialist Action (a split-off from the SWP which has a black nationalist line), a spokesperson for the Malcolm X Grassroots Network responded to criticism that it was getting “too close to the Democratic Party” by saying no, they were and always had been Democrats. (Socialist Action had nothing to say in response.) In February, the CSEL held a second annual black history forum together with speakers from the IG and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, highlighting Ona Judge, the former slave of George Washington who escaped to New Hampshire.

The CSEL speaker stressed that revolutionary integrationism “means that the oppression of the black population cannot be solved before a socialist revolution. There is no reforming racism away.” He noted the CWI’s adaptation to social-chauvinism coming out of the Labour Party, adding, “you can see the same thing in the Bernie Sanders campaign: the idea that to work on issues like \$15 Now that appeal to everyone regardless of race is how you’re going to forge unity across racial lines. But that kind of reformist approach doesn’t get to the root of eradicating the material basis for black oppression.” Finally, “one of

the key things that led us to this room was re-reading Trotsky’s Transitional Program, encapsulated in the sentence that ‘the historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.’ So what kind of party? A party that is the memory of the working class, a tribune of the people, tempered in class struggle.”

The CSEL checked out several left groups. They spoke with Left Voice, an Internet outlet linked with the Fracción Trotskista internationally. Gath noted: “When we met with them, it was sort of, ‘Hi, how are you. I don’t want to join a media project, I want to join a Leninist vanguard party.’” The CSEL rejected LV also for its refusal to defend North Korea and its tailing after the DSA. About the Spartacist League/International Communist League (SL/ICL), of which Gath had been a member as a teenager, he noted the SL’s thesis about a post-Soviet historic retrogression in working-class consciousness, which it uses to claim that the working class today is too backward to be mobilized on the basis of Trotsky’s Transitional Program. So then what is the task today? he asked. “SAlt said you have to go further into reformism. The SL in practice retreated into a kind of abstract propagandism. In both cases, these are reasons not to intervene in the class struggle fighting for a revolutionary program, which is what we want to do.” He concluded: “So what brought us to the Internationalist Group? It comes down to a motto of the Brazilian comrades, that there should be a coherence of words and deeds. We thought that was really important. We wanted to bring our actions into line with our instincts.”

Charlie Morán, a member of the Internationalist Group and a founder of Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (Class Struggle International Workers), spoke of the experience of organizing immigrant workers, including at the Hot and Crusty bakery where workers won a union hiring hall after 55 days on the picket line (and where he was subsequently fired for his union activity). He cited the work leading to the unionization of several hundred workers at B&H Photo & Video. Seeking to bust the union, management shut down its New York City warehouses, but the store workers (whose ranks include members of TIC) still have a union. In particular, he emphasized that while many ostensible Trotskyists have abandoned the Transitional Program, for the IG and TIC, “it is our program, our guide for daily work.”

Morán pointed to the action of the Brazilian comrades in winning and defending the six-hour workday at the giant CSN steel plant. In 1999 they sparked a strike by the Rio de Janeiro teachers union demanding freedom for class war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal. This was followed the next day by the action of longshore workers in the U.S. shutting down ports up and down the West Coast for the same demand. Looking to Mexico he pointed out that in 1999, the Grupo Internacionalista started out with only two comrades, but in the strike at the National University against attempts to

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Protests Denounce Torture Attack on Family of Left and Labor Activists in Mexico



Internationalist photo

Demonstrators outside Mexican consulate in New York May 13 protest against attack on activists in Oaxaca.

Support is growing for union activist and Grupo Internacionalista spokesman Dr. Arturo Villalobos, his wife Patricia Méndez and their family, who were the target of a vicious torture attack on their teenage son Nizván in their home in Oaxaca, Mexico on May 7. Nizván is now recovering after having been released from the hospital and the family is safe. What follows is a brief report on the solidarity activities. An expanded account will be available on the website of the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International, www.internationalist.org.

Oaxaca: A demonstration of solidarity was held in the city of Oaxaca on Thursday, May 10 that brought out 80 people who marched to the Zócalo (central square) denouncing the repression against Arturo Villalobos and also against compañeros who were imprisoned following the election boycott of June 2015. The march was sponsored by Section 22 (Oaxaca) of the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (CNTE). In the photo to the right, Arturo is speaking on the microphone. GI banner says: "Against Bourgeois Repression, Class-Struggle Mobilization." His sign calls to forge a revolutionary workers party.

A video of the March 10 Oaxaca march can be seen at: <https://www.facebook.com/LevjanTarira/videos/10216344050224003>

Portland: Simultaneously, a protest was held in the United States outside the Mexican Consulate in Portland, Oregon. Among those attending were members of the Ironworkers, Painters, Stagehands, Operating Engineers and Writers Guild unions, along with members of the Voz day laborers' center.

At the end of the demonstration a motion of solidarity with Dr. Villalobos from the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) Local 28, passed in a special union meeting the day before, was read via a telephone hook-up to the demonstrators in Oaxaca:

During the protest, Univisión Portland did a video interview with a spokesman for the Internationalist Group, which can be seen at: <https://www.facebook.com/UnivisionPDX/videos/1657346990997904/>

Later on Thursday, Local 1503 of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters in Portland passed a second solidarity motion. On May 15, the Painters Union Local 10 also passed a motion denouncing the torture attack on the family of steadfast unionists.

Los Angeles: Another solidarity action was held in Los Angeles, California on Saturday, May 12, where activists handed out fliers and gave impromptu speeches about the repression in Oaxaca in the city's center of Mexican culture. Members of the California Faculty Association and Amalgamated Transit Union participated along with students from Pasadena City College.

Oaxaca: Also on Saturday, the State Assembly of Section 22 of the CNTE in Oaxaca approved a motion declaring:

"Agreed, to provide political and legal support to Dr. Arturo Villalobos

Ordóñez, member of the Grupo Internacionalista and a worker in the public health sector, as well as to his family, who were targets of an onslaught by the state, ransacking their home and physically and psychologically torturing their adolescent son Nizván Villalobos Méndez, we demand an end to state terrorism and punishment of those guilty of carrying it out."

The motion is No. 29 in a list of decisions by the State Assembly, available online at: <http://www.cencos22oaxaca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Acuerdos-AE-12-de-mayo-de-2018.pdf>

Section 22 has also carried coverage of the solidarity actions on its Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/cencos22oaxaca/>

Boston: On Sunday morning, May 13, a solidarity demonstration was held outside the Mexican consulate in Boston by the Class Struggle Education League. Members of the Teamsters and Machinists unions participated.

A video of the powerful speech by Mike G. of the CSEL is available on-line at: <https://www.facebook.com/comrade.keating/videos/2092923290737122/UzpfSTEwMDAwMDU4NDE1NTkxNzoyMDkyOTMyNjI0MDY5NTIy/>

New York: At noon on Sunday, a protest called by the Internationalist Group was held in front of the Consulate General

of Mexico in New York City that drew more than 40 participants. In addition to the IG, attendees included members of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, Class Struggle Education Workers, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (Class Struggle International Workers), Running for Ayotzinapa, La Otra NY and the Laundry Workers Center. There were union mem-

bers from the United Federation of Teachers, AFSCME District 37, Professional Staff Congress-CUNY, Taxi Workers Alliance and Teamsters. Despite a steady rain, the protest lasted for well over an hour, with a number of speeches. Demonstrators chanted "¡Ayotzinapa, Oaxaca – fue el estado!" (From Ayotzinapa to Oaxaca, it was the state), referring to the kidnapping of the 43 teachers college students in 2014 and pointing to the hand of the authorities behind the latest gangster attack. A sign proclaimed, "Hands Off the Heroic Medics of Nochixtlán," referring to the action of Dr. Arturo Villalobos in leading a team of health workers who defied a police cordon to bring medical attention to the surviving victims of the 19 June 2016 police massacre in that Oaxacan town. Emphasizing the importance of international workers solidarity, the protesters noted that repression in Mexico is "made in U.S.A." As the protest ended, the demonstrators called out, "Arturo's family, we are with you."

A partial video of the end of the demo is available on the site of Victor Cabrera News at: <https://www.facebook.com/VCNTuCanal/videos/2066482103677704/?t=111>

Thanks to the compañeras and compañeros of Running for Ayotzinapa, a full video (1 hour 15 minutes) of the demonstration is available online at: <https://www.>



Protest at Mexican consulate in Portland, May 10.



Protest at Pueblo de Los Angeles Monument, May 12.

Internationalist photo

Internationalist photo

URGENT CALL FOR SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

Brutal Torture of Son of Grupo Internacionalista Leader in Oaxaca

MAY 8 – Around noon on Monday, May 7, thugs entered the house of comrade Dr. Arturo Villalobos Ordóñez and his wife, Patricia Méndez Jiménez in Oaxaca, Mexico. Both are prominent oppositional activists in the movement of health workers against government “reforms” that are gutting Mexico’s public health system. Not finding our comrade there, the attackers brutally tortured and beat the couple’s adolescent son, Nizván, and proceeded to ransack the house. As the thugs left, they slashed him and struck the teenager’s head, leaving him unconscious. When his mother returned home she found her son semi-conscious. Nizván is currently in the hospital recovering and undergoing tests for injuries to the head (in addition to the blow, his head was submerged in water) and neck (from being dragged by a rope).

Arturo Villalobos is a well-known spokesman in Oaxaca for the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International, and a member of the GI’s Executive Committee. In addition, the attackers asked the whereabouts of two other family members who are also members of the GI. The assault was clearly a political act of repression directed against the GI. Earlier, in February, menacing phone calls had been received by family members and in March there was a break-in at the house. This followed the arrest of Paty and an arrest order against Arturo on trumped-up charges in July 2017, and threats of legal action a year earlier.

A formal denunciation of the crime is being made, and an investigation by human rights groups is underway. A press conference denouncing the vicious attack was held this morning at the headquarters of Oaxaca’s militant teachers union, Section XXII of the CNTE (National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers), with which the dissident health workers and the Grupo Internacionalista have



Press conference, May 8, at headquarters of Section XXII, CNTE, the combative teachers union in Oaxaca, Mexico, denouncing the vile torture of the teenage son of Dr. Arturo Villalobos (second from right), a prominent leader of dissident health workers and spokesman for the Grupo Internacionalista.

worked closely during struggles over the last two years. This coming Thursday, May 9, Section XXII and health workers have called a mobilization in the city of Oaxaca to denounce the vicious attack.

We are calling on comrades and friends to launch an urgent campaign of workers solidarity with Dr. Arturo Villalobos and his family and of denunciation of this vile act of political repression. Declarations by unions would be particularly welcome.

We do not know at this time who perpetrated this heinous assault. Recently, our comrade Arturo was a main leader of a two-month work stoppage which the corporatist SNTSA (Health Department Workers), a pseudo-union which acts as labor police for the government, sought to shut down. But as the attached press statement by the Grupo Internacionalista notes, whoever carried out the attack, everything points to one conclusion: *fue el estado* (it was the state), as protesters chanted over

the 2014 disappearance of 43 teachers college students from Ayotzinapa.

BACKGROUND: In addition to the information in the GI press release, it should be noted that the comrades have been targets of state repression going back to the Oaxaca uprising of 2006, when Arturo treated many protesters attacked by police. Ten years later, in 2016, Dr. Villalobos organized and led the courageous action by Oaxaca doctors in defying a police blockade to provide medical assistance to the surviving victims of the police massacre in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca on 19 June 2016 that left eleven dead during the militant three-month teachers strike. Not long after, the threats of legal action by the state attorney general began.

Also significant is the fact that the Grupo Internacionalista in Oaxaca was recently attacked by supporters of Morena (Movement of National Regeneration), the bourgeois populist party of Andrés Manuel López Obrador. During the May Day march

Grupo Internacionalista
Liga por la IV Internacional

Boletín de prensa

Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, 7 de mayo de 2018

¡Ante la represión burguesa, movilización clasista!

El día de 7 de mayo de 2018, Nizván Villalobos Méndez, hijo adolescente del Dr. Arturo Villalobos Ordóñez y Patricia Méndez Jiménez, ambos activistas en el movimiento de trabajadores de la salud y opositores a los cambios de la Sección 35 del SNTSA, fue brutalmente torturado en el marco de un allanamiento de su domicilio. Al final, lo dejaron inconsciente con un golpe en la cabeza. Los dos golpistas que perpetraron el ataque lanzaron amenazas y pasaron un largo tiempo torturándolo física y psicológicamente.

Recientemente, nuestro camarada Arturo Villalobos fue uno de los dirigentes más prominentes de la lucha de más de dos meses de los trabajadores del sector salud en Oaxaca, lucha que la dirección clara intentó deponer para mantener la “paz laboral” que el gobierno priista le exige. Mientras torturaban al adolescente le preguntaban sobre las actividades políticas de su papá, de su mamá y de otros dos familiares, estos últimos también militantes del Grupo Internacionalista. Asimismo le preguntaron sobre su hermana, una niña de once años. Además lo amenazaron, diciéndole que si contaba algo asesinarían a su papá, a quien le “sacarían el corazón” y le mutilarían las piernas, al tiempo en que le enseñaban fotografías donde se veía a personas con las extremidades destrozadas. Con arma punzocortante le rasgaron la camisa y lo hirieron superficialmente. Cuando su mamá lo encontró, estaba semiconsciente.

Más recientemente, a inicios de marzo del presente año, denunciaron el allanamiento de morada del domicilio de Patricia Méndez y Arturo Villalobos. Quienquiera que haya perpetrado el ataque, todo apunta a una conclusión: fue el estado, como se corea en las manifestaciones de protesta por la desaparición de los 43 normalistas de Ayotzinapa en septiembre de 2014.

La represión contra nuestros camaradas en el sector salud no es nueva. El año pasado, la compañera Patricia fue detenida con base en acusaciones falsas y se emitió una orden de aprehensión en contra de nuestro camarada Arturo. El ataque de hoy ha pasado de las amenazas verbales a un brutal ataque físico y a amenazas aún más brutales contra nuestro camarada y su familia. Ataca a todos los defensores de los derechos democráticos y al movimiento obrero en general movilizar en defensa de Arturo Villalobos y su familia y en repudio de este vil acto de represión que trae a la mente las tácticas asesinas de la guerra sucia.

¡Un golpe contra uno es un golpe contra todos!

Grupo Internacionalista, sección mexicana de la Liga por la IV Internacional

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From the Grupo Internacionalista press release: “While they were torturing the teenager, they asked about the political activities of his father, of his mother and of two other family members, who are also members of the Grupo Internacionalista. They also asked him about his sister, an eleven-year-old girl. In addition they threatened him, telling him that if he said anything they would kill his father, would “rip out his heart” and would mutilate his legs, meanwhile showing him photos of people with their extremities crushed. Then with a sharp blade they slashed his shirt and wounded him superficially. When his mother found him, he was semi-conscious.”

last Tuesday, Morena activists attacked the GI banner that called for opposition to all capitalist parties, including the ruling PRI, PAN, PRD and Morena. There are various reports of cooperation by the PRI state government of Alejandro Murat and Morena in the lead-up to July 1 elections. ■

facebook.com/Running43ayotzinapa/videos/2125927884345817/

On this video a recounting of this attack on labor and left activists in Oaxaca and the history of repression in Mexico by Sándor of the CSEW begins at 0:17:25. The moving remarks by Antonio Tizapa, whose son Antonio was one of the 43 teachers college students from Ayotzinapa abducted in September 2014, begins at 0:31:00. The stirring speech by Antonio of Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas emphasizing the need for international workers revolution begins at 0:47:00. A spokesman for the Internationalist Group noted that on May Day the GI banner calling for no to all the bourgeois parties – PRI, PAN, PRD and Morena – was attacked by supporters of Morena, underscoring the importance of the LFI’s struggle to forge revolutionary workers parties in Mexico, the U.S. and around the world.

Brazil: In Brazil, thanks to the action of the Comitê de Luta Classista, union ten-

dency affiliated with the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (LQB), section of the League for the Fourth International, the teachers union of the state of Rio de Janeiro (SEPE-RJ) put an appeal for solidarity with Dr. Villalobos on its website, available at: http://seperj.org.br/ver_noticia.php?cod_noticia=20474. Over the years, teachers unions in Rio (SEPE) and Oaxaca (CNTE) have mutually supported each other’s struggles due to the efforts of the GI in Mexico and the LQB in Brazil.

Germany: The denunciation of the torture attack on left and labor activists in Oaxaca has also had an effect in Europe. LabourNet Germany published on May 11 a translation of the appeal for a campaign of solidarity by the Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the LFI at: <http://www.labournet.de/interventionen/solidaritaet/solidaritaet-gegen-den-brutalen-ueberfall-auf-familie-und-haus-eines-linken-aktivisten-in-mexiko/>

And the leftist daily *Junge Welt* (14 May) published an article on the “Brutal Attack in Mexico” at: <https://www.jungewelt.de/artikel/332385.brutaler-%C3%BCberfall-in-oaxaca.html>

On Monday, the same day the *Junge Welt* article appeared, striking student workers (TV-Stud) in the universities in Berlin, Germany responded to the appeal for solidarity by the Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the LFI, by gathering with signs calling for solidarity with Arturo Villalobos and his family.

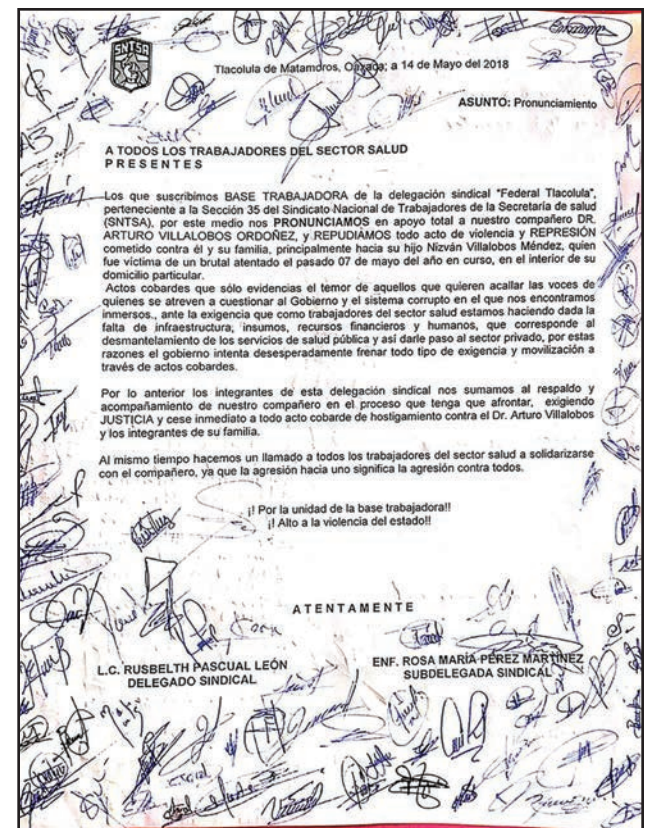
Then on Tuesday, May 15, when a delegation of TV-Stud strikers visited the strike of hospital workers in Berlin, now in its 35th day, they all

gathered for an impressive show of solidarity. The signs read: “Brutal Attack in Oaxaca. For International Workers Solidarity with Dr. Arturo Villalobos and His Family.”

Articles on the attack against Dr. Villalobos’ family have also been published in the on-line media outlets of the Fracción Trotskista, *Left Voice* in the



Protest at Mexican consulate in Boston, May 13.



(Left) March in city of Oaxaca, May 10, to denounce the gangster attack on the family of Arturo Villalobos (speaking with microphone) and Patricia Méndez. (Right) Letter signed by more than 200 colleagues from Tlacolula, Oaxaca, declaring their support for Dr. Villalobos against this repression.

U.S. (at: <http://www.leftvoice.org/Oaxaca-Barbaric-Attack-on-Son-of-a-Socialist-Activist>) and *Klasse gegen Klasse* in Germany (at: <https://www.klassegegenklasse.org/oaxaca-sohn-eines-sozialistischen-aktivisten-brutal-gefoltert/>). The Revolutionary Communist International Tendency has also published a statement of solidarity on its website at: <https://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/latin-america/protest-against-brutal-torture-of-son-of-socialist-leader-in-mexico/>

Tlacolula, Oaxaca: Finally, one of the most important and powerful demonstrations of solidarity is from fellow health workers, Dr. Villalobos' colleagues in Tlacolula, Oaxaca. They issued a "pronunciamiento" (declaration) with over 200 individual signatures declaring their "total support" for the family and denouncing the government's attempts to silence critics who oppose its health care "reforms" that aim at the privatization and destruction of the public health system. This is doubly important because these workers, along with those in the Civil Hospital in Oaxaca City, were some of the most militant sectors that rebelled against the attempts by leaders of the corporatist "union" to end the recent two-month strike in which Dr. Villalobos and other Grupo Internacionalista militants played a leading role, and which is certainly a key

reason for the recent torture attack.

The text of their letter reads (translation):

Tlacolula de Matamoros, Oaxaca, 14 May 2018
SUBJECT: Declaration
TO ALL WORKERS OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH SECTOR
DELIVERED BY HAND

We the undersigned, RANK-AND-FILE WORKERS of the federal employees chapter of Section 35 of the National Union of Workers of the Department of Health (SNTSA), hereby DECLARE our total support for our colleague Dr. ARTURO VILLALOBOS ORDÓÑEZ, and CONDEMN all acts of violence and REPRESSION committed against him and his family, principally against his son Nizván Villalobos Méndez, who was the victim of a brutal attack on May 7 of this year in his own home.

Such cowardly acts are only evidence of the fear of those who wish to silence the voices of all who dare question the Government and the corrupt system in which we find ourselves, in the face of the demands that we, as health sector workers, are making about the lack of infrastructure, supplies, financial and human resources, which reflects the dismantling of public health services in order

to open the way for the private sector. For these reasons, the government is resorting to cowardly acts as it desperately seeks to put the brake on any kind of demands and mobilization. For the above reasons, the members of this union chapter join in supporting and standing with our colleague in this time of trial he has had to go through, while demanding JUSTICE and the immediate cessation of all cowardly acts of harassment against Dr. Arturo Villalobos and the members of his family.

At the same time, we appeal to all workers of the health sector to show solidarity with the compañero, because an attack on one is an attack on all.

For the unity of the rank-and-file workers!

Stop state violence!

Sincerely,
Licenciado Rusbelth Pascual León
Union Delegate
Nurse Rosa María Pérez Martínez
Union Deputy Delegate

The document bears the signatures of more than 200 health workers from Tlacolula.

As we have indicated, the assault on Dr. Villalobos' 16-year-old son was carried out by professionals, trained in torture. This is part of an intensifying campaign of police repression against leftists and independent workers organizations in Mexico

as the presidential election campaign heats up. Particularly targeted is the combative Oaxaca teachers union, Section 22 of the CNTE, which has suffered firings, attempted arrests using phony judicial orders, and the assassination on January 15 of Mario Vallejo, the head of the union at Technical High School No. 50 in Juchitán, Oaxaca, which was one of the bastions of the 2016 strike. The union is currently deliberating on calling an unlimited strike.

Who is responsible for such vile attacks is clear – as with the Ayotzinapa 43, *It was the capitalist state*. This underscores the urgent need for a campaign of international workers solidarity against the bourgeois repression. In the face of escalating state terror we urge defenders of democratic and workers rights to send declarations of support for Dr. Arturo Villalobos and his family to the Grupo Internacionalista/México at: grupointernacionalista@yahoo.com.mx. *An injury to one is an injury to all.*

The family of Arturo Villalobos and Patricia Méndez has been encouraged by and would like to thank all those in Oaxaca and around the world who have shown support that has greatly raised their spirits in these trying conditions. The outpouring of solidarity has shown that they are not alone.

League for the Fourth International
18 May 2018



Striking hospital workers and student workers in Berlin, Germany show solidarity with Arturo Villalobos and his family in Oaxaca, Mexico, May 15.



Grupo Internacionalista banner was attacked on May Day by supporters of Morena, the bourgeois populist party led by Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

On May Day 2018, the international workers day, the Internationalist Group together with comrades of the Class Struggle Education League (CSEL) from New Hampshire, Revolutionary Internationalist Youth (RIY), the CUNY Internationalist Clubs, Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) and Tabajadores Internacionales Clasitas (TIC) organized a contingent of more than 50 demonstrators in the annual May Day march from Union Square in New York City. The Internationalist contingent was the largest on the march and was very visible, both at the starting point and at the destination in Foley Square, where it formed a semi-circle with its flags, banners and signs.

The Internationalists led off with six red flags with the hammer, sickle and “4” symbol of Leon Trotsky’s Fourth International. The lead banner called for “Workers Action to Stop Deportations” as well as “Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants.” A second called to “Fight Trump ... and the Democrats” and to “Build a Revolutionary Workers Party.” This was followed by the banner of *Trabajadores Internacionales Clasitas*, the immigrant workers group fraternally allied with the IG. Additional banners called for “Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes,” “Down with Anti-Immigrant Racism and Bigotry” and “Smash the Capitalist State – Workers to Power.” The Internationalist contingent stood out not only for its size but also for its organization.

Chants for the demonstration included “Defend Syria, Defeat U.S. imperialism,” “Asian, Latin, black and white, Workers of the world, unite,” “*Luchar,*



Internationalist demonstrators at the assembly point of NYC May Day 2018 march in Union Square.

vencer, Obreros al poder” (Fight to win, workers to power) and, referring to the recent teachers strikes, “West Virginia, Oklahoma, Colorado, Arizona, How about New York? Smash the Taylor Law!” Also “Not Trump, Not Democrats, Build a workers party!” Underscoring the struggle against police murder, marchers chanted “Stephon Clark, Saheed Vassell, Michael Brown, Shut the whole system down!” In a call-and-response chant they listed the names of two dozen victims of the racist killer cops. Students at the City University of New York called for “CIA, Out of CUNY Now!” And the slogan of the TIC was particularly popular, “*Ni ilegales, ni criminales, somos obreros internacionales*” (Neither illegal nor criminal, we are international workers).

There were several rallies around the city on May 1, both at Union Square, where around 300 leftists gathered, and at Washington Square, where workers

centers, syndicalists (IWW) and various social democrats brought out a couple hundred in the early afternoon, and later several city unions (SEIU 32BJ, DC37, LIUNA) drew a reported 500 in the evening to hear various labor bureaucrats and Democrats. The DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) marched from Union Square back to the pro-Democratic Party event in Washington Square. Overall, the rallies were small, as they have been in recent years, with the union leaderships insisting on their own events separate from the left. More than 150 copies of *The Internationalist* were sold at the rallies and marches.

A particularly infuriating aspect of the protests was how Democratic mayor De Blasio’s NYPD confined the march of several hundred demonstrators to the sidewalks for the entire length of the route, enforced by a moving wall of bike cops. Last year, police threatened to arrest the entire

demonstration, and ended up arresting 32 protesters.

After the march, the Internationalists held a social in a Midtown bar where several dozen of the participants and others relaxed, including with revolutionary and workers songs from Latin America, the U.S. and the Bolshevik Revolution, concluding with the singing of the *Internationale*.

A key factor in building the Internationalist contingent was the participation of supporters of the CSEL, who traveled from New Hampshire to participate in the April 30 demonstration in Philadelphia demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, and to join in the New York City May Day march. The Internationalist contingent was also the largest single group in the Philly demo. Two comrades from the Internationalist Group/Portland and Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP), former leading activists in the IWW, traveled from the West Coast to participate in the mobilizations, selling, marching and passing on their own experiences in the class struggle.

At the social, Mike from the CSEL expressed pride in the mobilization and underscored the perspective of an early fusion between the Class Struggle Education League and the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International. A spokesman for the IG emphasized the importance of the contingent in fighting for class independence and a proletarian revolutionary program at a time when virtually the entire left is tailing after the Democratic Party, both in the “women’s marches” and the mobilization for gun control. In conclusion, as the Trotskyists chanted on May 1, “Long live May Day, Workers to power!” ■

LOS ANGELES – There were three demos/marches in Los Angeles. The Internationalist Group mobilized for the third one, in the afternoon – the most left-wing march, organized by Union del Barrio. The IG marched together with around two dozen people, headed up by Transport Workers Against Deportations and including students and supporters, in a militant, class-struggle formation, politically counterposed to the “people power,” popular-frontist politics of the organizers.

The first march, in the morning, that started off at Pershing Square and marched to the Federal Building was the “official” march blessed by the mayor, the Democrats and the L.A. Federation of Labor. There were some union contingents (Teamsters, Roofers, SEIU among others), but they seemed to be largely composed of labor bureaucrats. In addition, there were various immigrant rights coalitions and social-democratic groups, the largest being Democratic Socialists of America.

A second rally put on by the Party of Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and its ANSWER Coalition was a pathetic event of only about 30 people, soaked in American flags (they had a giant Stars-and-Stripes draped over the podium from which they spoke).



Internationalist Group marched in Los Angeles with Transport Workers Against Deportations and students at L.A. May Day 2018 demonstration. The transport workers mobilized in January to protest threat of deportation of Salvadoran immigrants and in February against I.C.E. raids.

For the afternoon march, a group of students came from Pasadena City College, where many had been handing out fliers and making signs with the PCC Internationalist Club in the days leading up

to May Day. The transport workers arrived shortly after and raised their two banners (in English and Spanish) calling for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and to unionize immigrant workers. Most

of the workers wore bright red union-printed shirts with “Transport Workers Against Deportations” on the front and “*La lucha obrera no tiene fronteras*” on the back.

We built a formation with the transport workers front and center, together with students and supporters. A speaker for the transport workers talked about how immigrants, black people and other targets of racist terror are not just victims, but as workers have the power to shut it down, and to unleash that power in defense of immigrants and all of the oppressed, workers. He emphasized the need to break from the Democrats and build a workers party. Thereupon march organizers scrambled to get their sound system set up and told everyone to gather around the truck with the speakers.

The speeches from the truck included the usual reformist appeals to cross-class unity of “the people,” and promoting the illusion that justice is possible under capitalism. After they chanted “No justice, no peace”, we responded with “Only revolution can bring justice!” A right-winger caused a ruckus near the truck, trying to disrupt the demo. The police handcuffed an immigrant Workers World supporter, but were later forced to let him go. Cops

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Organizing Workers Strikes Against War and Repression

Lessons of the 2008 Longshore Strike

Against U.S. Imperialist War

By Jack Heyman

We reprint below an article first published in *CounterPunch* (1 May 2018).

May Day 2018 is the tenth anniversary of the longshore strike against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which shut down all West Coast ports from the Canadian to the Mexican border to demand the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops. The shutdown and protest by members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) was a stunning show of labor's power and a call to action addressed to other unions and anti-war activists and drew much attention and support in the Bay Area and Seattle. It was the first strike action by U.S. workers against a U.S. imperialist war in 90 years.

And the effect of the 2008 strike continues to this day. On May Day 2015, ILWU Local 10 shut down the Port of Oakland and marched to Oscar Grant Plaza in front of City Hall demanding "Stop Police Terror." Last year the Longshore Caucus, with delegates representing all West Coast ports, voted to stop work every May Day, the international workers day. This year the port workers are protesting in particular the police killing of Stephon Clark in Sacramento and Saheem Tindle, gunned down by BART police in West Oakland. Yet, when directed by the highest body in the union's longshore division to take unified Coast action, the ILWU International officers have not mobilized the membership into action.

In 2008, the marquee on the Grand Lake Theater in Oakland proclaimed: "We salute the longshoremen's May Day strike to protest the criminal occupation of Iraq." Few unions aside from ILWU longshoremen actually took any action that day, but postal workers held "moments of silence". The faculty union at the largest public university, the City University of New York (CUNY) called events in solidarity with the longshore workers. Unions from around the world sent messages of solidarity, as did the Vermont and South Carolina state AFL-CIO's. As the Brass Band played *The Internationale*, spirited demonstrators marched from the San Francisco longshore union hall at Fisherman's Wharf along the Embarcadero, the site of historic maritime labor struggles. They were joined by other transport workers, like the Inland-boatmen's Union, the Oakland teachers, S.F. State students, even the SEIU dancers from the Lusty Lady strip club and many others.

In the port of Oakland where all the cranes were boomed up in a salute to labor action, railroad workers honored anti-war picket lines at the vast intermodal rail yard and refused to work the trains. Undoubtedly the most action was the work stoppage by the Iraqi General Union of Port Workers who sent a solidarity message to the rally:

"The courageous decision you made to



ILWU contingent in San Francisco May Day march in conjunction with West Coast port shutdown against war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

carry out a strike on May Day to protest against the war and occupation of Iraq advances our struggle against occupation to bring a better future for us and for the rest of the world as well.... We in Iraq are looking up to you and support you until the victory over the US administration's barbarism is achieved."

Clarence Thomas, a former Black Panther and member of San Francisco longshore union Local 10, had gone to Iraq during the war to express ILWU's solidarity with Iraq port workers against the U.S. imperialist war and now they were returning that solidarity gesture by striking. Yet, U.S.-kindled conflagration continues to ravage the Middle East from Syria, to Iran, to Yemen, to Gaza and still Iraq and Afghanistan.

A Brief History of Labor Strikes Against Imperialist Wars and Reaction

The 2008 U.S. West Coast longshore strike against war and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan was not a unique event. There is a history of workers strikes against imperialist wars. In 1921, under the influence of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, French dock workers refused to ship arms to suppress a rebellion by independence fighters in the Rif area of the French colony of Morocco.

After WWII when "Free" French troops were being transported back to Indochina attempting to re-colonize Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, seamen who were members of the National Maritime Union aboard U.S. ships sent telegrams to President Truman protesting the imperialist venture. That was the first U.S. protest against that colonialist war. Later, the port of Marseilles dockworkers, members of the Communist Party-led CGT, refused to load war materiel on ships bound for Vietnam as Communist troops at Dien Bien Phu encircled and defeated French troops. A similar scenario prevailed in the French colonial war against Algerian independence.

While the U.S. imperialist Marshall Plan in Europe was being implemented, witchhunt hysteria was erupting in America. Commu-

nists were being jailed, deported and purged from U.S. maritime unions. The Communist-led Canadian Seamen's Union strike was broken and the union destroyed. In the U.S. this dark page of history came to be known as McCarthyism. But the drive to purge "reds" who had built the unions was spearheaded not by right-wing Republicans like Senator Joseph McCarthy but by liberal Democrats, including inside the unions. The "red purge" was especially ferocious in the once militant Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The only place in the U.S. where there was a successful protest of this anti-red repression was in Hawaii. When Jack Hall, the ILWU union official instrumental in organizing the islands, was arrested, accused of being a Communist, plantation workers, longshoremen, hotel and restaurant workers went on strike. Hall was released from prison the next day. Thus, imperialist war abroad was and is inextricably linked to capitalist class repression at home and labor strikes can stop it.

Perhaps the first and most spectacular strike by American workers against imperialist war occurred in 1919. In the midst of the civil war that followed the successful Russian workers revolution, Seattle longshoremen while loading a ship discovered that crates marked "sewing machines" were actually rifles intended for the counterrevolutionary White Army commanded by Admiral Kolchak in Vladivostok, buttressed by the U.S. Military Expedition there. The longshore union, in solidarity with the Bolshevik Revolution, declared it "hot cargo" and notified other ports of their strike action. The *Seattle Union Record*, newspaper of the IWW-influenced Labor Council, reported "Pacific Coast longshoremen will tie up the coast from Seattle to San Diego before they will load rifles or munitions for Siberia or any part of Russia...." Eventually scabs from the American Legion loaded the cargo but by the time the ship reached Vladivostok the port was in the hands of the Red Army, founded and led by Leon Trotsky, which had driven out the counterrevolutionaries and imperialist forces of which the U.S. military was part.

2003 Police Attack in the Port of Oakland: Prelude to the 2008 Anti-War Strike

After the 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center and the build-up to war, the ILWU was facing hard-nosed longshore contract negotiations. The California Anti-Terrorism and Information Center threatened that any job action on the docks to support union negotiators or protest against the impending war could be seen as an act of terrorism. When it comes to class war at home or imperialist war abroad Republican and Democrats are of one mind. President Bush warned the ILWU that he would send in U.S. troops

to occupy the ports to quash any job action. When the employers' Pacific Maritime Association locked out longshore workers, California Senator Diane Feinstein working in tandem with Republicans, implored Bush to invoke the slave labor Taft-Hartley Act. He did, forcing longshoremen back to work under the bosses' yoke.

At the start of the war in 2003, a few thousand protesters chanting "War is for profit, workers can stop it" demonstrated in the port of Oakland. Police in riot gear, under the guise of fighting terrorism, attacked the protesters and longshoremen, firing rubber bullets, wooden dowels, concussion grenades and tear gas canisters, while motorcycle cops in brigade formation ran over protesters, as Czarist Cossacks on horseback had done 100 years earlier. Dozens of anti-war protesters and longshoremen were injured, some seriously. As the ILWU business agent on site, I was attacked by a squad of police, pulled from the car, pummeled and arrested. Democrat Jerry Brown, then mayor of Oakland, now governor of California, commanded the police who attacked demonstrators. The UN Human Rights Commission later characterized it as one of the bloodiest assaults against protesters, who were claiming that the war was based on lies asserted by the government, and dutifully repeated by the mainstream media. The city of Oakland ended up paying over \$2,000,000 to those injured by the police brutality. This police attack was compared to the police attack on maritime strikers, killing two, that provoked the 1934 San Francisco General Strike. On May Day 2008, longshoremen tagged the anti-war coastwide strike action "payback."

Organizing the 2007 Longshore Workers Anti-War Conference

The Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) appealed to the industry arbitrator to stop the 2008 action. Twice the arbitrator ruled that the work stoppage would be illegal. Twice dockworkers stood defiant in their determination to carry out what many believed was to be the first anti-war

Internationalist photo

strike in U.S. history.

Where did this workers' intransigence come from? The anger brewing from the police assault was necessary but not sufficient by itself to organize the action.

In fact, from 2003 on, almost every year a resolution was presented calling for a coastwide port shutdown against the war on Iraq and Afghanistan. Almost every year, it passed the historically militant Bay Area Local 10, only to be "deep-sixed" (buried) or voted down in the Longshore Coast Caucus. But after 2006, something changed, which we who were fighting for labor action against the war didn't pick up on right away. Many port workers, solidly against the war from the start, thought of it as "Bush's war," as the antiwar movement proclaimed. They figured that if the Democrats got in, the war would stop. After Bush was reelected in 2004, in the 2006 mid-term elections the Democrats won control of both Houses of Congress. But nothing changed in the war. In fact, it intensified with the so-called "surge," killing tens of thousands of Iraqis. So by 2007, there was a sea change in the mood of the longshore ranks.

So, many longshoremen figured, if the Democrats aren't going to stop it, it's up to us. At the Coast Caucus in June 2007 we saw the possibility that the "strike to stop the war" resolution could finally pass. The call for labor strikes against the war had been first raised earlier by the Internationalist Group to longshore workers. Now that it seemed concretely possible, we were concerned that the Bay Area local, the militant and only predominantly black local in the ILWU, could be isolated. So we pushed for Local 10 to call an international "labor against the war" conference in San Francisco at our union hall to back up the call to action.

Speakers at the conference included Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn, Alexander Cockburn, then-editor of *Counterpunch*, Bob Crow, General Secretary of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union (UK), Robert Mashego of the South African Transport and Allied Workers Union, Takumi Shimizu of Doro-Chiba, the Japanese Rail Union and longshore union leaders. With workshops like "Class Struggle and the War" and "Soldiers Organizing Against the War" participants were steered in the lessons of working-class struggles. During the conference feisty members of Code Pink announced that they were going to picket the docks. Longshoremen, Leo Robinson and Howard Keylor, organizers of the longshore 1984 anti-apartheid ship boycott, took the deck to explain that the best way to organize an effective action is for the workers themselves to raise resolutions at their union meetings to call for strikes against the war at the point of production where workers wield the real power. Substitutionalism, they argued, doesn't work. That resolution passed overwhelmingly with the support of the Code Pink sisters.

A few months later, at the Local 10 membership meeting a resolution was passed to go to the Longshore Caucus, in which elected delegates from all 29 West Coast ports meet to discuss the pressing issues of the day. Bob McEllrath, the International President, and other officers of the union knew ahead of time which resolutions had passed the locals. They didn't want the Local 10 resolution to pass, afraid that shutting down all West Coast ports to oppose the war would interfere with contract negotiations. McEllrath's backers in Local 10 tried to stop its chances of passing the Caucus



Internationalist contingent calls for workers strikes against the war in New York antiwar march, 18 March 2006.

by reducing the usual number of delegates to exclude the maker of the resolution. Although they were able to keep out the messenger they didn't kill the message because by then it had resonated deeply in the ranks.

At the Caucus, when Local 10 delegates presented the resolution, former International President David Arian from Los Angeles Local 13 and other officers spoke against the resolution warning that a coastwide job action would imperil contract negotiations. But then Vietnam veterans hit the mike and suddenly the momentum of the entire debate changed. A vet from Seattle and another from San Francisco passionately agreed with the anti-war resolution, saying that workers had campaigned for Democrats who promised to end the war but were betrayed as the war continued with working-class youth being used as cannon fodder to fight another rich man's war for oil. They argued that workers, by shutting down the coast for 24 hours and stopping global trade, could show the working class the power they have at the point of production to stop the imperialist slaughter.

It was contagious. Delegate after delegate joined in supporting the resolution. When McEllrath saw the tide turning against him, he asked the delegates to reduce the action to one shift instead of the entire day. The resolution shutting down the whole West Coast passed overwhelmingly. Even then there was bureaucratic resistance. The president of the largest local on the Coast, Local 13, let it be known in days leading up to the May Day port action that he wasn't going to shut down Los Angeles/Long Beach. The International tops saw that that would divulge weakness and undermine contract negotiations. All West Coast ports were shut down tight. Shipowners, terminal operators and stevedoring companies were forced to concede to the power of the union.

The International bureaucracy kept trying to sabotage the action right up to May Day. As a last ditch effort "Big Bob" McEllrath tried to turn the anti-imperialist strike which demanded withdrawal of the U.S. military into a patriotic parade calling for supporting the troops, i.e. the Pentagon brass. This was directly contrary to the Caucus resolution itself. In Seattle a sea of American flags were waving. Not so in San Francisco. Marchers, the heart of the action, were adhering to the resolution for troop withdrawal. We were prepared to explain to marchers that the Iraqi port workers were striking in solidarity and that if they saw the American flag being carried, they could think it was directed against them. But all along the march you couldn't see a stars-and-stripes. Instead marchers carried the red-lettered May Day banner "No Peace, No Work" to the tune of

The Internationale, the anthem of the international working class, and the solidarity message from the striking Iraqi port workers was read to an enthusiastic rally.

For Class Struggle to Fight Against Imperialist War

At the same time as the 2008 May Day strike and march against the war, an economic crisis was brewing across the U.S. With the housing bubble bursting and more generally the continued falling rate of profit the capitalists intensified a general assault on workers – their wages, social benefits, working conditions and jobs. The "too big to fail" bailout of the banksters and automakers "socialized" losses for the capitalists while working people were thrown out of work and out of their homes. It exposed the corruption in both capitalist political parties, Democrat and Republican. The bailouts resulted in a redistribution of wealth upwards from labor to capital, i.e. a transparent theft of wealth to the upper echelons of the capitalist class using fraud and force. Over half of the wealth of African Americans was stolen through the loss of homes and jobs while a black president was sitting in the White House. Neo-liberal capitalism has meant bailout for the capitalists and brutal austerity for the working class and oppressed.

Yet, there has been virtually no labor fight-back because the trade-union bureaucracy and, in Europe, the social democracy have collapsed in the face of this neoliberal capitalist attack. Worse yet, they've become the cheerleaders and enforcers of these new social contracts. Here's a litany of betrayals: IAM bureaucrats forced a revote of a rejection of the Machinists concessionary contract until the members got it "right". UAW bureaucrats collaborating with the automakers have held wages down, imposed a tier system in a pathetic and failed attempt to organize autoworkers in the South. ILWU President McEllrath ensured the EGT grain contract was ratified without a rank-and-file vote and without effectively stopping the scabbing. He surrendered the union-controlled hiring hall and grievance machinery.

Now we are seeing a bright light on labor's horizon, teachers' strikes in West Virginia, Kentucky and Oklahoma. Government workers fighting austerity can be contagious and could spread to other sectors of the working class. But the *labor bureaucracy* still acts as a brake on these struggles and an obstacle to workers' victory. In France railroad workers have taken the lead in fighting the austerity measures of banker-President Macron. Over the last 15 years port workers led by the International Dockworkers Council have been organizing protests against neoliberal

capitalist port privatizations at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. But in crucial battles such as in Greece, the unions have failed to use their power to occupy the docks to spike these assaults. And the result is one defeat after another.

Until a fighting leadership can be forged with the program and guts to fight for the interests of working people and all oppressed sectors through to the end, the promise contained in the 2008 May Day West Coast port shutdown cannot be realized. That means ousting the "labor fakers" who tried to prevent, then undercut and then divert this signal example of militant class-conscious workers action.

Today, we are witnessing an intensified inter-imperialist rivalry in Europe and imperialist provocations most apparent in the Middle East with Trump's recent attack on Syria, his blood-curdling threats to wipe out North Korea, his attempts to strangle Venezuela and U.S. neocolonial military intervention in Africa. In every single case, the imperialist marauding of the Republican Trump have been backed and even spurred by the Democrats. The fact is that these machinations are rooted in the dying capitalist system.

Clearly, fighting for capitalism's elimination must be the point of departure for the working class and the left. But there is no mass political party to represent workers in this struggle in the U.S. "Socialist" Bernie Sanders only serves to rope potential dissent back into the Democratic Party. In Britain there is the reformist Labour Party and in Brazil, the reformist Workers Party, both of which have carried out the bosses' attacks on the working class, although perhaps not as successfully as more right-wing sectors had wished. The crisis in working-class leadership is clear as day. What's needed here and now is to oust the bureaucrats, break with the Democrats and build a class struggle workers party that will mobilize for workers struggles, for immigrant rights, women's rights and against racist police and fascist attacks.

At the April 15 Oakland antiwar rally billed as "No to U.S. Wars at Home and Abroad" barely a reference was made to the working class. There was not one speaker representing a trade union. And this happens repeatedly at U.S. antiwar events. On this May Day, longshore union Local 10 will be organizing a rally in the port of Oakland calling for "Workers Rights for All" and "Stop Police Repression." Three longshore union members in the Bay Area have had sons and a nephew killed by police recently, one black, one Latino and one white. The latest, Sahleen Tindle, was killed by BART transit police in January. This local, which overwhelmingly rejected a contract extension pushed by PMA employers and ILWU International Officers, is now shutting down Bay Area ports to protest police killings, just as they did in the 1934 Big Strike. The struggle against capitalist class repression at home is directly linked to the struggle against imperialist war abroad. As demonstrators chanted at the start of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, "War is for profit, Workers can stop it." And longshoremen replied "No Peace, No Work!" ■

Jack Heyman, a retired Oakland longshoreman, has been organizing ILWU union protests since the 1984 South Africa ship boycott to protest apartheid. His 2008 Longshore Caucus resolution sparked the anti-war West Coast ports shutdown. He chairs the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee (www.transportworkers.org).

SPD and Left Party Are Both Enforcers for Capitalist Austerity!

For a Multiethnic Revolutionary Workers Party!

Germany's "Grand Coalition": Stepped-Up Attacks on Workers, Refugees, Leftists

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APRIL 25 – “The *Große Koalition* is dead – long live the GroKo!” After six months of uncertainty, political normality seems to have returned to Germany, since a “Grand Coalition” (a broad government coalition composed of both major parties) is back in power. Combining the conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) and the Social Democrats (SPD), this round of the “GroKo” is an unappetizing dish, even for those who compose it. But they had no choice, and Chancellor Angela Merkel was once again confirmed in office after 13 years of rule. Order reigns both in Berlin and the banking district of Frankfurt. The euro-bureaucrats in Brussels can breathe easy. Germany remains a “factor of stability” and central pillar of the European Union. For the powers that be, the sun is shining. Down below, however, the wages of working people are being ground down, immigrants are under attack and youth are saddled with unemployment and precarious jobs.

What was supposed to be a boring “walk-through” election turned into a racist nightmare. The CDU lost heavily, but the SPD even more. No one found the Social Democrats’ posturing as an opposition to Merkel particularly credible, since it was upholding the anti-worker Hartz IV program of the previous SPD-Green government.¹ The “alternative” social democrats of the Left Party (Die Linke) made minor gains in the West but suffered losses in the former East Germany, their stronghold. The only real victor in last September’s elections was the fascistic Alternative for Germany (AfD), which shot up from less than 5% and 0 seats in the Bundestag (parliament) in 2013 to 12.5% of the vote and 94 seats in 2017.

The new/old regime can only mean stepped-up racist repression, more austerity and privatization measures, and continued neo-colonial military actions abroad. The new interior minister can and will expand on the police-state measures deployed during the G20 summit last summer.² This poses the urgent need for action against repression of the left, in defense of refugees and the right of asylum, as well as antifascist mobilizations based on mobilizing the power of the working class.

¹ Under the vicious Hartz IV “labor market reforms,” enacted by SPD chancellor Gerhard Schröder in 2003, unemployment benefits were slashed, as was the length of time they would be paid out (12-24 months); those receiving them were required to take any legal job; and eligibility requirements were imposed limiting the amount of savings, housing space (400 square feet) and auto (a car worth no more than \$8,500) they could have.

² See “G20 Summit Police State Terror in Hamburg” (July 2017), reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 50, Winter 2017.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and coalition partner Martin Schulz

And above all: the nucleus of a multiethnic revolutionary workers party has to be built.

Most blamed the stoppable rise of the AfD on the massive influx of largely Syrian refugees in 2015 that was permitted by the Merkel regime largely as a “quick fix” for long-term labor problems. But after the right to asylum was rolled back in 1992-93, German imperialism built up a system of concentric rings (consisting mainly of so-called secure third-party states) to filter out refugees. And it worked so well that the necessary infrastructure to handle the incoming refugees had been run down, Merkel’s airy “we’ll manage” (*wir schaffen das*) notwithstanding.

The racist Green Party mayor of Tübingen Boris Palmer can now cold-bloodedly tell the U.S. magazine *The Atlantic* (April 2018), “most of them [the refugees] are of little value to our labor market”. The significance of the AfD is not in any long-term parliamentary presence, but that its success provides another alibi for anti-refugee, anti-Muslim measures – a consensus stretching from the CSU³ and CDU to the SPD all the way to parts of the Left Party. Earlier, the racist pogroms of 1992-1993 gave cover to the mainstream parties’ decision to gut asylum rights. Mobilizations led by the AfD this year thus led to a freeze on accepting refugees in the town of Cottbus in Brandenburg.

The SPD Steps Into the Breach

The stuffy atmosphere from over a decade of CDU-dominated government and the success of its export offensives notwithstanding, the long-term problems of German capitalism are accumulating. The bad debt held by the German banks, covered up by accounting tricks, far exceeds that of their U.S., Spanish or Italian counterparts. The lack of investment in infrastructure, which began back in 1990s, will take its toll sooner or later. Despite differences on how to deal with Russia, there is also now a broad bourgeois consensus (which emerged even before Trump’s election) that Germany will increasingly have to take an international

³ Christian Social Union, the Bavarian branch of the Christian Democrats.

course independent of the U.S. and beef up its own military. At this critical juncture, the failure to form a new government coalition had to be overcome.

Since the SPD’s initial reaction was to avoid responsibility for the federal government in order to somehow staunch its electoral hemorrhaging, an attempt was made to throw together a cabinet of the CDU, the FDP [Free Democrats] and Greens. The failure of those coalition talks did not lie with the Greens, who have been quite prepared to govern with the CDU at the state level. But the FDP had decided to take an oppositional stance as a watered-down version of the AfD. Since the SPD is not prepared to govern with the Left Party at the national level, and this would not produce a parliamentary majority anyway, the SPD was ordered back into the coalition.

No one wanted new elections. A minority government, in which Merkel would have to wheel and deal or even beg for votes in parliament, was also considered unsuitable for Germany’s international role. By late November, a columnist in *Die Zeit* was proclaiming “Germany cannot afford to be absent as an anchor of stability.” Not only French president Emmanuel Macron, but also German imperialism’s Greek vassal Alexis Tsipras weighed in for the GroKo. In addition to the Employers’ Association, those pleading for a renewed coalition also included the labor bureaucracy – even the Green Frank Bsirske, the head of ver.di [public employees union].

With the indispensable aid of former “leftist” Andrea Nahles, participation in the “grand coalition” was rammed through at a special SPD congress in January. Next, in a membership referendum, the opposition of the Young Socialists and its chairman Kevin Kühnert had to be overcome. Young careerists certainly don’t want to inherit a heap of ruins! But Kühnert made it clear again and again that he was no kind of leftist and was not opposed to reinforcing the military and police or any of the other policies of the previous coalitions. Evasive about new elections, his personal preference would have been “toleration” of a Merkel government while remaining outside it.

After the membership had been worked over (the ballot sent to them included pro-GroKo propaganda) they also did their duty. On March 4, the SPD leaders announced a two-thirds majority in favor (actually only 52% of the SPD membership). No sooner had the referendum been settled than the interim government announced it would expand German military intervention in both Afghanistan and Iraq...

The SPD tops had promised that “this time” they would force some real concessions from their governmental partner. In practice, this amounted to getting the finance ministry in addition to foreign affairs. The lucky winner here was “Mr. Law and Order”, Hamburg mayor Olaf Scholz, who also became vice-chancellor and promptly nominated a creature from Goldman-Sachs as his advisor. But having ceded on this front, the CDU then had to reassure its allies on the right, making Horst Seehofer from the CSU interior minister. In this game of musical chairs, the fact that war minister Ursula von der Leyen retained her job is indicative. Merkel is promising to double military spending so that it indeed reaches 2% of GDP [as stipulated by a NATO agreement]. When German imperialism really starts throwing its weight around, it will not be pretty.

New European Offensive Against Refugees – Germans to the Front

Seehofer has added a new “Heimat” (Homeland) sub-department to his ministry. This is not just a bit of folklore from Bavaria, where CSU politicians don’t hesitate to talk of a “final solution of the refugee problem.” It is part and parcel of the coalition’s anti-Muslim campaign and defense of the “Christian West” (which the SPD has accepted). It is against the backdrop that there were roughly three attacks on Muslim individuals or institutions every day last year.

The reactionary Seehofer proclaims that Germany is currently in a state of anarchy that can only be overcome by instituting a rigorous policy of “no tolerance” for various misdemeanors. This in turn means more cops, more video surveillance and more police raids. It will mean an extension of Bavarian police-state laws (the cops there have permission for virtually unlimited preventative detention unequalled even by Putin’s Russia) to the rest of the country. Announcing that Germany needs a “deportation culture” rather than a “welcoming culture,” he made clear he intends to treat refugees as so much refuse with his “master plan,” speeding up hearings and isolating them in internment camps until they can be removed en masse. This in turn means maintaining and extending border controls, such as those instituted along the Austrian border.

Meanwhile, up-and-coming CDU politician Jens Spahn, who is supposed to be in charge of health, but who seems to think he is actually interior minister, has baited the SPD as “soft” on crime, and proposes the milita-

Agence France-Presse



Massive protests successfully blocked the racist February 19 “women’s march” by AfD, Pegida, NPD and other reactionaries.

rization of the entire Mediterranean basin to block refugees. This would-be chancellor has already shown his contempt for the unemployed, claiming charity soup kitchens will prevent Hartz IV recipients from starving.

Across Europe, various governments have made anti-refugee measures an integral part of their anti-working-class drive in the service of capitalist austerity. In Italy, the recent electoral campaign dominated by vile xenophobic anti-immigrant chauvinism (including from the “center-left” Democratic Party) was prepared by all-sided repression against immigrants and asylum seekers. A decree of April 2017 accelerates and simplifies deportations with summary proceedings without debate or appeal. The state has reinforced police operations directed against immigrants (and demonstrators), established “voluntary” unpaid (i.e., slave) labor by those seeking refugee status, and extended deportation centers.

In France, mini-Napoleon Macron unveiled a new law in February that reduced the amount of time people have to apply for asylum by a third, halved the time permitted for appeals against decisions and tripled the amount of time they may be kept in a detention center. Border patrols are being expanded (they have even strayed over the Italian border), and summary detention and deportation by the police made easier. But Macron’s austerity measures have unleashed responses by both students and railway workers which pose the necessity for a generalized working-class counteroffensive that could sweep him away.

Anti-Muslim hysteria is also being whipped up in Austria, where the fascist Freiheitliche Partei Österreich (FPÖ) is part of the government. FPÖ interior minister Herbert Kickl intends to strip refugees of their cellphones and “concentrate” them (the choice of language is deliberate) in barracks under curfew. The FPÖ intends to make it more difficult to become a citizen and is also targeting Muslim businesses. Its ultimate goal is to drive out settled immigrant communities, which will indeed mean shredding any remnant of bourgeois democracy. The coalition with the conservative Austrian People’s Party has authorized a 12-hour workday and attacked abortion rights, in addition to its education cuts and accelerated privatizations. The road to all this was paved by preceding governments and campaigns: in the last elections the Austrian social democrats proposed militarizing the Italian border.

Each of these countries now possesses a significant fascist party, which serves the

respective governments as alibi for these vile measures: they are merely responding to the *vox populi* (“voice of the people”)... In fact, this is a case of ventriloquism on the part of the ruling class. As we wrote around the beginning of this century, when the fascist Le Pen made it onto the second round of the French presidential elections:

“The League for the Fourth International has uniquely warned that the very real danger represented by the fascists in Europe is that they are on the cutting edge of a drive toward bonapartist and semi-bonapartist regimes. Their central aims are to go after immigrants, rip up workers’ gains and break the power of labor. We have underlined that bourgeois conservatives and liberals as well as reformist workers parties have joined in this drive, voting for police-state measures in the name of fighting ‘terrorism’ and ‘crime’.”

– *The Internationalist* No. 14, September/October 2002

The AfD – What It Is and How to Fight It

In this context, the rise of the fascistic AfD is both cause and effect of the stepped-up state repression. The party was originally a somewhat academic opponent of the introduction of the euro and the European Union (although the original Nazi party was also an adjunct to engineer Gottfried Feder’s sermons against “interest slavery”), but it was soon clear that a clientele that believes the EU is merely a device to channel their tax money to lazy Greeks is just as convinced that their taxes are wasted on fake refugees driving Mercedes. It is likewise indisputable that the AfD’s electoral success was prepared by extra-parliamentary action – the anti-refugee mobilization on the streets by the racist mobs of Pegida⁴ and the like. Founding AfD member Björn Höcke openly acknowledged this.

The rise of Pegida and its success in Saxony is no great mystery. Commenting on a new documentary film, “Montags in Dresden” (Mondays in Dresden), journalist Peter Nowak noted:

“Pegida is a continuation of the mainly nationalist marches with German flags which were seen in the fall of 1989 in the Saxon cities.

[...]Saxony was the source of that nationalist wave which the CDU under Helmut Kohl and all previous Saxon state governments made use of. In 1989 a party – the

⁴ Pegida: European Patriots Against Islamization of the West. See “Defend Muslims in Europe Against Racist ‘War on Terror’ Backlash!” *The Internationalist* No. 39, April-May 2015

German Social Union – already surfaced which soon became part of the right-wing scene. Saxony is still a ‘bastion of order,’ as Bavaria became for the Weimar Republic after the suppression of the Soviet Republic after 1919.”

– Telepolis, 20 April

The AfD has gradually sloughed off many of its merely conservative leaders. Ironically, Frauke Petry, who championed a focus on anti-immigration agitation and sidelined founder Bernd Lucke, was in turn isolated. With no

little contempt for her electorate, she quit the party hours after they elected her to the Bundestag. This left Höcke and Alexander Gauland in charge. The former is an outright fascist fulminating over the rape of blonde Aryan women, and the latter is comfortable with serving as the “respectable” façade for suchlike. By the time of its Hanover congress last December, it was clear to anyone interested that the AfD was not just another rightist party, even if its electoral support is unstable and the number of its voters doesn’t extend much beyond the membership figures (as was also the case with its fascist predecessors that achieved temporary breakthroughs at the state level). A solid core has come over from the NPD and other fascist gangs. The AfD now provides them with a legal veneer – and jobs distributed by the parliamentary fraction.

Like the FPÖ, the AfD keeps piling up provocations – anti-Semitic conspiracy theories, use of Nazi vocabulary and favorable references to the Third Reich, etc. – until they become commonplace. There were and are fascists who are not pro-Nazi, but this is not the case here! And then there is the endless abuse of and threats against any critics. Do they mean what they say? You bet.

The proof is provided by the latest variants of the NSU affair,⁵ in which the repressive organs of the German bourgeois state have preferred to be depicted as incompetent imbeciles rather than admit the depth and breadth of their ties to the fascist terror gangs. First, we had the strange story of Franco A., a fascist army officer who stockpiled weapons and masqueraded as a refugee (!) with the apparent goal of carrying out some kind of attack that could be attributed to immigrants. Prosecutors can’t seem to find anything to charge him with yet. One of his accomplices, another officer, is employed by AfD parliamentary deputy Jan Nolte. And among those investigated last year in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern for stockpiling weapons and drawing up death lists of leftist politicians is a cop who was recruited to an AfD leadership committee to prepare a position paper on “inner security”.

Since entering parliament, the AfD has

⁵ NSU affair: The National Socialist Union, a Nazi terror group, was implicated in at least nine murders of immigrants, the murder of a policewoman, bombings in Cologne in 2001 and 2004, and more than a dozen bank robberies. After they were uncovered in late 2011, a scandal broke out when it was revealed that the NSU was infiltrated by German (and possibly U.S.) intelligence agencies, which had undercover agents present during some of the murders.

lost any inhibitions it might have had about getting involved with racist street mobilizations in the West as well as in Eastern Germany. Thus it supported a campaign by fascists in the town of Kandel in Rheinland-Pfalz in March which tried to exploit an incident in which a 15-year-old Afghan teenager stabbed his ex-girlfriend. (Protection of “German womanhood” against alleged racial inferiors has been a fascist staple since the false rape accusations against black French soldiers in the Ruhr after World War I. Recall also the infamous Nazi propaganda film “Jud Süß”.) A similar attempt to lead a so-called “women’s march” on February 19 through Berlin-Kreuzberg using the Christian fanatic Leyla Bilge as a figurehead and with NPD and Pegida members as foot soldiers was nipped in the bud when an anti-fascist mobilization blocked their march.

In contrast, a counterprotest (against the fascists) in Kandel sponsored by the German Trade-Union Federation (DGB) and including the CDU was more interested in defending the good name of the town and denouncing “left-wing extremists.” This will not discourage the fascist demagogues. They have to be smashed. In the present climate of anti-immigrant hysteria and fascist attacks, what is needed are *mass mobilizations bringing out the power of the working class to stop the fascists, including the formation of workers defense guards; and worker-immigrant actions to stop deportations while fighting for full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. But the necessary leadership for such mobilizations – a revolutionary leadership – is sadly lacking.

The Dead End of the Left Party

It will not come from the Left Party, embroiled in a faction fight over how to finally get the SPD to accept it as a coalition partner. In the September 2017 election the Left Party’s results stagnated – it picked up some votes in Western Germany and lost some in the East. It has shown itself to be quite ready to implement capitalist austerity and anti-immigrant repression as part of various state governments in East, particularly in Berlin, severely damaging its pretensions to be any kind of “left” alternative.

Of the two factions, it would be absurd to consider the duo Lafontaine-Wagenknecht⁶ as the more left-wing. Lafontaine’s fiery denunciations of the U.S. are basically expressions of German nationalism. As Lafontaine declared on his Facebook page on July 25 of last year: “Unfortunately, despite all its mistakes, the Left Party is the only party that is not being dragged along in the wake of the only remaining world power. As against any conceivable coalition of the neoliberal parties, a strong Left Party in the Bundestag could constantly push for ... giving the interests of Germany and Europe more priority than the ‘illicit’ goals of U.S. policy.”

As for Wagenknecht, we have already noted her pro-police declarations around the G20 summit. When the Essener Tafel, a charity organization distributing food to the poor, stopped accepting non-Germans in February

⁶ Oskar Lafontaine is a longtime social democrat, having served as SPD prime minister of the state of Saarland and federal finance minister. Adopting increasingly populist/nationalist policies, he cofounded the Left Party in 2005 together with the PDS, social-democratic heirs of the SED, the former Stalinist ruling party of East Germany. Sarah Wagenknecht was a prominent figure in the Kommunistische Plattform of the PDS and has since become a Bundestag deputy of the Left Party. Lafontaine and Wagenknecht are married.



Far-right, racist Pegida held marches and demonstrations against allowing Muslims and refugees into Germany and Europe. Shown here in Cologne, 9 January 2016.

of this year, she found it understandable. It is important to be clear that when Wagenknecht points to growing poverty among Germans or Lafontaine points to competition between Germans and immigrants for low-wage jobs or the lack of housing and schools exacerbated by the presence of refugees, they are not proposing a united working-class struggle against the results of capitalist austerity, but rather to abandon the immigrants. In the same way, their supporters in the Left Party intend to “engage” with AfD supporters by keeping mum about their racist delusions. After all, as head of government in Saarland in the ’90s, Lafontaine targeted Roma and Sinti for expulsion. As such, he personally came up with the formulation of “secure third countries” to which immigrants could be deported without legal proceedings (“Late Summer Debates”, *Die Zeit*, 9 August 1991).

Insofar as their proposals for a “collective movement” going beyond the bounds of the Left Party involve something more than repackaging, it would be a copy of “La France insoumise” [“France unbowed”], the bourgeois movement that Jean-Luc Mélenchon has constructed around himself. That would not only mean an organization dominated by “Team Wagenknecht”, but what is more, a populist/nationalist one. Mélenchon, also no great defender of immigrant rights, has literally wrapped himself in the French tricolor.

Yet the bulk of pseudo-Trotskyists have now liquidated into the Left Party. The “state capitalist” social-democrats of Marx21, heirs of the late Tony Cliff, are part of a center, non-oppositional, faction, with three parliamentary deputies of their own. Marx21 is busy dreaming up an ideal “immigration law” for the bourgeois state, which it will then peddle as “socialism from below.” A section of the German followers of the late Ernest Mandel, the RSB (Revolutionärer Sozialistischer Bund) essentially capitulated by reuniting with a competing group, the ISL (Internationale Sozialistische Linke), that has been part and parcel of the Left Party for decades. The united organization, Internationale Sozialistische Organisation (ISO) has now produced an article titled “How to Defeat the AfD?” which copies the title (but only the title!) of one of Trotsky’s texts about how to smash the Nazis. The ISO has only a few vague recipes about how to build “alliances” and a vague hope that successful economic struggles would somehow sap the popularity of the AfD. All of these organizations peddle reformist

nostrums about getting the bourgeois state to somehow ban layoffs, especially if the bosses can’t plead bankruptcy.

SpAD “Realpolitik”

The opportunities for the inveterate tailists who pass themselves off as ostensible Trotskyists in this country are so meagre that several groups became quite excited about a brief flash of resistance to the Gro-Ko among the ranks of the SPD. Arbeitermacht, the German subsidiary of Workers Power – which has liquidated lock, stock and barrel into Corbyn’s Labour Party – was full of tactical tips and tricks for the SPD naysayers. But that train left the station in 1914. Unlike some of the social-democratic left factions in the ’30s in various countries, Kühnert et al. are not repudiating class collaboration in any way, shape or form.

This makes the interest shown in the matter by the so-called Spartakist Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SpAD – Spartakist Workers Party of Germany), German section of the International Communist League (ICL), including a supplement directed at SPD members, all the more remarkable. The absence of anything more than a bare mention of the AfD is likewise notable. The SpAD then reprinted this tract in the next issue of *Spartakist*, which informs us with great solemnity that the Merkel/Scholz government is an enemy of the working class. The introduction again avoids raising the AfD and fascist terror against refugees. The previous issue of *Spartakist* (no. 219 winter 2017/2018) had argued at great length against characterizing the AfD as fascist, which it illogically alleges would prettify the on-going racist state repression. Although ignoring the informal ties between the AfD and the smaller fascist terror gangs, it did admit that these gangs were actually attacking refugees, which it said could be crushed in the egg by workers mobilizations. But this tangential recognition of reality was then once again deemed unimportant in addressing the SPD.

At the turn of this century, the ICL redefined all of the parties that it previously held to be fascist, including the Austrian FPÖ and Le Pen’s Front National in France to be “purely electoral” phenomena. Why? For the ICL the answer to the question, “when is a fascist not a fascist?” is first of all, “when they get a lot of votes.” The deeper justification, as re-explained in *Spartakist* in the case of the AfD is, since the proletariat does not currently pose an immediate threat to the capitalist order, the capitalists are not about to resort to fascist dictatorship. These successes

can thus only be electoral. According to *Spartakist*, the AfD is thus only a re-edition of the old “Stahlhelm” clique of the CDU⁷ – which cannot explain why it is leading racist mobs through the streets of Cottbus.

The SpAD emphatically insists upon a connection between the growing support for the AfD and the European Union. While the ICL supported Brexit and urges other imperialist countries like Italy to quit the EU, what concrete form can the SpAD’s denuncia-

tions of the EU take in Germany? The ICL does still counterpose a Socialist United States of Europe. It also calls for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, although that is now qualified with the phrase “for all those who have made it here.” (Refugees need not apply, as ICL no longer calls for asylum.) But these slogans are reduced to ritual incantations.

The ICL’s line on European fascism is an expression of a profoundly defeatist outlook which despairs of winning the working class to revolutionary consciousness. The bottom line is that these parties are not fascist because the bourgeoisie doesn’t need fascism, since the workers’ consciousness is so hopelessly backward that there is no danger of the workers taking power. (If that were true, the bourgeoisie wouldn’t need popular fronts either.) The ICL mouths incantations about the need to build a revolutionary party as a kind of talisman to ward off the need to intervene in the class struggle to build such a party.

As we wrote in “Focal Point Europe: Capitalism in Crisis, Class Struggle Erupts”: “A decaying capitalist order in the throes of the deepest economic crisis in three-quarters of a century is seeking to ensure its survival by impoverishing the proletariat and destroying its ability to resist. From Athens to London, the ruling classes have launched an across-the-board offensive against the working class, taking aim at every social gain and even, in some cases, threatening its very existence. But no matter how severe the crisis, capitalism will not fall by itself. To defeat this onslaught, the usual fare of bourgeois pressure politics (‘coalition building,’ ‘peaceful protest,’ electoral politics and limited defensive struggles) is wholly inadequate. It is necessary not only to resist the particular attack but to turn the tables and direct the fight not merely against the policies of ‘neo-liberalism,’ but the capitalist system itself. To lead that struggle, we must begin to build a party of the proletarian vanguard like the Bolsheviks of Lenin and Trotsky, reforging the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution.”

– *The Internationalist* No. 32, January/February 2011 ■

⁷ The Stahlhelm (steel helmet) faction of the CDU is an informal grouping of right-wing, militaristic and pro-law and order elements in this mainstream conservative party. The name was taken from the rightist paramilitary World War I veterans organization in the 1920s Weimar Republic in Germany which was a rallying point for right-wing revanchists.

Open Letter...

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Democratic (Party) Socialists of America

Like many other self-styled socialist groups on the U.S. left, Socialist Alternative has faced something of a quandary with the dramatic growth of the DSA since Sanders’ campaign and the election of Donald Trump. On the one hand, the DSA is a pressure group on and in the Democratic Party, and has a whole history of embodying social-imperialism (see the IG pamphlet, *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats*). But, on the other hand, marvel the smaller social-democratic groups who lost out in the bid to be the best Bernie-builders, the DSA is so big!

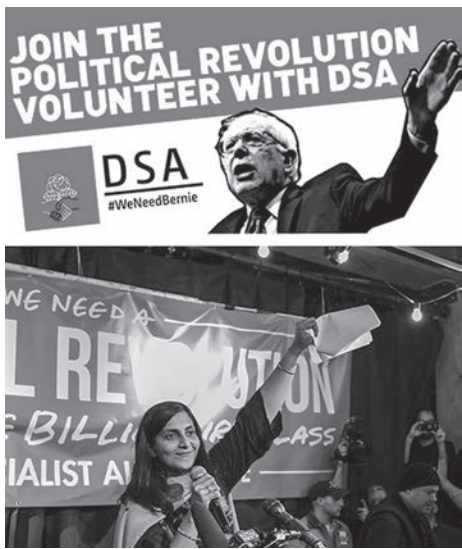
SAlt has, thus far, maintained organizational independence from the DSA, but this hasn’t stopped SAlt from tailing after the DSA. SAlt joins the chorus of reformist well-wishers cheering on the DSA and applauding its electoral victories. This includes when DSAers are explicitly elected as Democrats, as just happened in Pittsburgh (see “Socialist Candidates Defeat PA Democratic Establishment in Primaries,” socialistalternative.org, 26 May).

Meanwhile, in “Democratic Socialists of America: The Case for Strong Independent Campaigns to Build the Left in 2018” (socialistalternative.org, 30 March), Kshama Sawant enthuses over the DSA Refoundation Caucus and its proposals. Far from calling for a clear break with the Democratic Party of war and racism, the Refoundation Caucus calls for “taking steps to move away” from “being a pressure group on the Democratic Party” and eventually some time “seek to decrease and eventually cease” endorsing Democrats. (Even the hedging is double- and triple-hedged.) Meanwhile, this caucus for mildly pressuring the DSA to kind of think about eventually becoming a bit less of a pressure group on the Democrats advises: “Any socialist running on a Democratic ballot line should do so in a strategic way that leads a base constituency away from the Democratic Party and toward independent political power” (dsarefoundation.org, “Endorsement: Towards an Independent Electoral Strategy for DSA”). Break with the Democrats ... by running as a Democrat?!

To this claptrap, Sawant responds: “Socialists should be sympathetic to those genuinely looking to transform the Democratic Party,” while taking care to remind readers that the Democrats are a party of capitalism. It would be best, she writes, if the DSA ran “five to ten serious electoral campaigns drawing from the lessons of the most effective independent left efforts,” in order to “help activists gain experience, build the profile of socialist ideas, and counterpose our approach to the corporate hacks in the Democratic Party leadership.” But if DSA doesn’t follow that counsel, never fear, as in Pittsburgh, SAlt will congratulate them anyway. Once again, SAlt’s pandering to current (bourgeois) consciousness “where it’s at” means keeping workers and youth wandering in the labyrinth of electoral reformism. It stands in the way of developing revolutionary, working-class consciousness. Tailing the DSA, SAlt acts as a tagtail on a tagtail.

Green Party: Third Wheel of U.S. Capitalist Parties

So following Clinton’s nomination and the DNC walkout, SAlt enthusiastically backed Jill Stein and the Green Party.



Social democrats of all denominations unite to hailed “political revolution” of Democrat Bernie Sanders. Above: Democratic Socialists of America. Below: Kshama Sawant, Socialist Alternative city council member in Seattle. While these pseudo-socialists helped Sanders round up votes for Democrats, Trotskyists opposed all capitalist parties and call for a revolutionary workers party.

This is in keeping with pre-“Bern turn” SAlt arguments about breaking the two-party duopoly and supporting “the strongest possible pro-worker, anti-corporate challenge to the two corporate parties” (sic). (See Socialist Alternative pamphlet, *Challenging Capitalism & the Two Parties*, 2012.) Some of our former comrades in the SAlt opposition argued that the organization should have been backing the Greens from the beginning. As we mentioned, one whole branch (Mobile Bay) resigned to join the Greens *en masse*. But the Green Party is also a capitalist party, albeit a minor one. Supporting a capitalist “third party” is no less a violation of the principle of working-class political independence.

Some members of the SAlt opposition, for example in the Worcester, Mass. branch, rightly saw James P. Cannon as a key figure for those who want to be Trotskyists. It’s worth recalling what the founder of U.S. Trotskyism had to say on this topic. In 1948, Henry Wallace was running in one of the long line of “people’s”/third-party gambits in American capitalist politics. Inside the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party, Sam Marcy, who later formed the Workers World Party, advocated supporting Wallace. Against claims that this would be like tactical maneuvers that Lenin’s Bolsheviks had carried out, Cannon emphasized, in his February 1948 speech on election policy: “The maneuvers of the Bolsheviks were always within class lines,” not “to maneuver within the parties of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary, their whole tactical line...was to make a sharp cleavage between the working class organizations and those of the bourgeoisie.”

At a time when SAlt and the International Socialist Organization were debating the best way to tail Sanders, the Internationalist Group quoted Cannon’s 1948 speech in an article that present and former SAlt oppositionists ought to go back and read today (“Bernie Sanders and the Pressure Politics of the Opportunist Left,” June 2015, internationalist.org, reprinted in the IG’s above-mentioned pamphlet on the DSA). Cannon dotted the i’s and crossed the t’s:

“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.”

In 2016, Jill Stein campaigned on a platform of liberal nostrums and called for a “Green New Deal,” shot through with red-white-and-blue nostalgia for the Democratic Party liberalism of yesteryear. Calling to “Fix Our [sic] Broken [sic] System,” her website proposed slashing the military budget in half – leaving it with over \$300 billion for imperialist militarism! Support to this mishmash of warmed-over liberalism is just as much being a tagtail to a bourgeois party as support to the Democrats.

And before Stein, there was Ralph Nader. SAlt supported his campaigns for president in 1996 and 2000 when he ran as a Green, as well as his “independent” campaigns in 2004 and 2008. Like Sanders and Stein, Nader repeatedly made it clear that his goal was to push Democratic nominees to mouth more populist rhetoric in order to get *them* elected. He even met with John Kerry during the ’04 election to advise him on his vice-presidential pick. Nader ranted against “illegal” immigration and welcomed the endorsement of the right-wing populist Reform Party, whose candidate in 2000 had been fascistic “America First” Patrick Buchanan. (See “Capitalist Nader’s ‘Socialist’ Foot Soldiers,” internationalist.org, October 2004). In 2008, SAlt lamented having to decide between Nader and the Green Party’s candidate, former Democratic Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney. Nader also pushed rabid anti-Chinese protectionism – not that this would much bother the CWI, which repeatedly (as on its stophkrepression.net site) promotes materials from Radio Free Asia, notoriously a creature of the CIA.

Everywhere the Green Party has held government office, it has upheld capitalism. In Germany in 1999, the Green Party held the foreign ministry and loudly clamored for sending imperialist troops into the Balkans (which Germany did, the first time since World War II) during the U.S./NATO bombing and invasion of Serbia. The record of left-populist, “multi-class” parties underlines much the same point – as shown by SYRIZA in Greece, which was all the rage among the gamut of left opportunists not long ago. (The CWI ran candidates on SYRIZA slates, as SAlt boasted on its site; see “Greece’s Syriza Tops Euro Elections – CWI Supporters Elected to Volos Council,” 17 June 2014.)

Here in the U.S., the Greens do not win much of anything, but to cite one example, Jason West, Green Party mayor of New Paltz, NY, ordered a crackdown on Occupy protestors in 2012. The Greens in the U.S. are basically a home for homeless liberal Democrats. As Cynthia McKinney said in 2008, she didn’t leave the Democratic Party, the Greens were “a place to go when the Democratic Party left me.”

In the 30 March article hailing DSA election campaigns that we cited above, Kshama Sawant also mentions SAlt’s endorsement of the Richmond (California) Progressive Alliance slate, centered around longtime Green mayor Gayle McLaughlin’s bid for the position of lieutenant governor. Clicking over to the RPA’s website, we discover that the RPA is composed of “Greens, Democrats, and Independents.” Some SAlt oppositionists wanted to “return” to the or-

ganization’s pre-Sanders “tradition.” But as decades of examples show, this is a tradition of supporting capitalist politicians for offices small and large, including commander-in-chief of U.S. imperialism. This has nothing to do with Marxism, but it is certainly an “alternative” ... to socialism, that is.

Kshama Sawant and the CWI Tradition: Municipal Socialism and Chasing Liberals

One of the most famous and important quotations from Lenin is his statement that the Marxist’s “ideal should not be the trade-union secretary, but the *tribune of the people*,” that is, of all the oppressed and exploited. In contrast, Socialist Alternative’s ideal seems to be the social-democratic city councilor. In fact, many of our former comrades in the SAlt opposition upheld the campaigns for Kshama Sawant’s election and reelection as a supposed alternative to the “Bern turn,” and one they saw as fitting more with the “CWI tradition.”

What the Marxist movement has traditionally known as “municipal socialism” is focused on local legislative reforms and improvements rather than socialist revolution, and thus also known disparagingly as “sewer socialism.” Together with spreading illusions in a “peaceful socialist transition” through a parliamentary “enabling act,” a dismal record on Northern Ireland, and so much more, this is indeed, a tradition of the CWI going back to the Militant tendency in the British Labour Party. The CWI’s international leader Peter Taaffe is, after all, co-author of that bible of municipal socialism, *Liverpool: A City That Dared to Fight* (1988), harking back to the Militant’s administration of the city in the 1980s. This is definitely not an alternative to SAlt’s enthusiasm for Bernie Sanders.

Kshama Sawant’s rise to prominence has illustrated SAlt’s reformist acceptance of what is “possible” under capitalism, and the alliances with liberal capitalist politicians that this entails. SAlt hails the role of Sawant’s campaign for raising the minimum wage. However, the way the issue was chosen and formulated was closely calibrated to how it was being picked up by liberal Democrats. Originating in the wake of Occupy Wall Street, the “Fight for \$15 and a Union” demand was taken up by the Service Employees International Union as part of a national campaign centered on rallies to pressure Democratic politicians to support raising the minimum wage. SAlt did get into the action early, it’s true, but its \$15 Now front group time and again caved to the needs of small business owners and the sensibilities of petty-bourgeois liberals (for example, dropping the “and a Union” part because it would scare away some Seattle voters). It meant offering loopholes like the collective bargaining opt-out which would have exempted certain unionized workers from the wage hike! In the end, with a years-long phase-in, \$15 Now became \$15 Later for most Seattle workers.

While we welcome any reforms or improvements that benefit working people and the oppressed, it is important once again to call things by their right name. What really happened with the \$15 Now campaign was not a “class-struggle” explosion but a liberal campaign to pressure the Democrats. Far from being linked to transitional demands to strengthen the class power of the proletariat, pointing the way toward socialist revolution, it was posed in the fashion of the

social-democratic “minimum program” of what’s deemed achievable under capitalism.

During our time in SAlt, we were constantly barraged with make-work electoral activities that were peddled as “class struggle,” from “class-struggle” petition drives to “class-struggle” non-binding ballot referendums. This was quite maddening and was a clue that what SAlt is selling is warmed-over activist liberalism masquerading as “Trotskyism.” This can be seen once again in the recent campaign for the Seattle “Head Tax” targeting, in particular, Amazon’s contemptible Jeff Bezos. Let’s preempt SAlt loyalists demagogically saying, “Oh, you oppose a tax on the wealthy to fund housing and services for the homeless?” The point is that “Tax the Rich” is lifted from the program of liberal Democrats, there is nothing “transitional” about it. What was eventually passed (despite a reactionary cartoonist depicting Sawant operating a guillotine) was a watered-down bill, acceptable to SAlt’s liberal Democratic allies on the Seattle City Council.

The end result of this playbook of passing off activist New Dealism as revolutionary politics is twofold. First, it disorients those who look to SAlt for leadership as to what “class struggle” really means. Second, it reinforces SAlt’s accommodation to liberal Democrats in order to get enough support for the electoral initiatives that have become their, and Sawant’s, calling card. Even before the “Bern turn” SAlt was suggesting that votes for certain liberal Democrats in the Seattle City Council election of 2015 would make things easier for Sawant to get her reformist agenda passed by that body (“Seattle Politics at a Crossroads – the 2015 City Council Elections,” 2 August 2015). Her courting of liberal Democratic King County Council member Larry Gossett (who then turned around and voted for the youth jail targeted by the “Block the Bunker” campaign to which Sawant lent her support) was cut from the same cloth.

How SAlt adjusts its program the better to swim with, not against, the liberal stream of confidence in the capitalist state has been shown again in its shameless tailing after the Democrats’ racist gun control schemes (see “‘Socialists’ Chase After Anti-Gun Movement,” April 2018, on internationalist.org) and trying to get in on the Women’s March/#MeToo action by organizing a “Take Back the Night” march in Boston as an International Woman’s Day event. (Take Back the Night has a long history of appealing to the racist, sexist capitalist state, usually calling for more cops on campus and featuring police commissioners.)

More on the CWI Tradition: Cops, Capitulation to Chauvinism, and Counterrevolution

Of course, SAlt and the CWI have a long history of embracing cops, corrections officers, and security guards as part of the labor movement, claiming they are “workers in uniform.” Trampling all over the Marxist understanding of the state as “special bodies of armed men” whose job is defending the power and property of the ruling class, this flows from their aspiration to be social-democratic administrators of the capitalist state. Examples range from the inclusion of the Prison Officers Association in their British electoral vehicle (the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition) to joining with SEIU-organized security guards in \$15 Now campaigns such as the

one at Boston's Northeastern University in 2015. (For more on this, see "Her Majesty's Social Democrats in Bed with the Police," Summer 2009, on internationalist.org.)

We defend SAlt and Kshama Sawant – as all leftists should – against the vicious lawsuit by Seattle police officers who killed Che Taylor in 2016 and are suing her for "character defamation." Yet the topic of the Seattle police is another one where SAlt has contributed to the CWI's tradition of obscuring the role of the cops. While in the end voting against the appointment of Kathleen O'Toole as Seattle chief of police, Sawant praised the decision to hire a woman police chief, giving a speech praising O'Toole's commitment "to really build a relationship with the community" and her proposal for a "tiered approach for policing protests," going on to complain about "gang violence," "ineffective policing" and not enough cops on the beat. In 2017, Sawant followed this up with the suggestion that Seattle cops could be used to resist I.C.E.'s immigrant-snatching squads. This is, once again, SAlt's trampling over the Marxist understanding that the bourgeois state cannot be pressured to defend the interests of the working class and oppressed, and must be smashed through workers revolution.

This anti-Marxist view of the state even includes district attorneys. In Philadelphia in 2017, the SAlt branch's blog hailed the election of "progressive" district attorney Larry Krasner ("Krasner Wins! Keep Building the Resistance!", phillysocialistalt.com, May 17). Since his election, Krasner has stalled on handing over the DA office's files regarding the prosecution of former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal. Mumia's attorneys have demanded these files to help show the effects of former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice Ronald Castille's failure to recuse himself at Jamal's appeal, despite the fact that Castille was an assistant district attorney in Jamal's original case. And who was Krasner's first choice to lead his transition team? None other than Ronald Castille! We can't help but note that SAlt's website has published no articles on Mumia for the past ten years, and that SAlt was absent on both January 17 and April 30 when we traveled to Philly to participate in demonstrations outside the courtroom calling for Krasner to turn over the files and for Mumia to be released.

We have been told that the Philadelphia branch has long avoided Mumia's case because it might taint branch leaders' reputations in unions they're active in. We do not know if this is accurate, but we do have our own experiences with SAlt's willful blindness toward special oppression – another hallmark of Labourite social democracy. In 2013, Boston SAlt ran a supporter for an at-large seat in the city council. The mayoral race that year was largely about the legacy of the Boston busing plan for school desegregation in the mid-1970s – in which racist thugs threw stones at schoolchildren, attacked black bathers on public beaches and assaulted black men with American flagpoles at City Hall. John Connolly, who ended up losing to Marty Walsh, made the centerpiece of his campaign a return to "neighborhood schools," which, as any Bostonian to the left of Jeff Sessions will tell you, is a call to roll back the scraps of the busing plan.

It was in this atmosphere that Boston SAlt chose to debut their campaign on St. Patrick's Day in the historically Irish American enclave of South Boston, which was ground zero for the racist attacks on school integration, with a leaflet demanding,



Danny Fetonte (front left), together with Bernie Sanders. Fetonte, who was long-time leader of the Austin, Texas branch of the Democratic Socialists of America, was for years an organizer for a cop "union," the Combined Law Enforcement Associations of Texas (CLEAT). Police are the enforcers of racist capitalist repression. Cops, prison and security guards out of the unions!

together with standard reformist wish-list items, "fully funded *voluntarily integrated* schools" (our emphasis)! At a meeting later that day, when first presented with a copy of the leaflet, one of us (Mike) objected to this pandering to Southie racists. Much of the local SAlt leadership doubled down on their defense of the capitulation, saying that they had thought "long and hard" about how to distinguish their campaign from other leftists' defense of "forced busing" (!!! – another racist codeword). According to them, certain "ultralefts" were running around Southie telling the poor residents of that neighborhood that "if you're against busing, you're racist." The truth, of course, is that if you're against busing, you *are* racist. To his credit, one National Committee member in the room, who hadn't seen the leaflet before the meeting, was also shocked, spoke against the horrific formulation and put a stop to attempts by the chair to quash the conversation.

After multiple discussion rounds, we were told that a new leaflet, *sans* the formulation, would be produced. When we showed up for the next campaign event there was, in fact, a new leaflet ... but there were also hundreds of copies of the old leaflet as well. We probably should have quit then and there, but instead, when no one was looking, we threw the old leaflets in the trash like the garbage they were.

These local examples of SAlt/CWI's social-democratic opportunism are part of the big picture in which one of the biggest historic elements is their swimming *with* the stream of capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and Eastern European deformed workers states. As Cannon said at the height of the factional battle with the followers of Max Shachtman on the eve of World War II: "Who touches the Russian question touches a revolution." Therefore, be serious about it. Don't play with it." Well, the CWI, despite its Trotskyist pretensions, has certainly played along with counterrevolution. In 1991, their Russian members proudly manned the barricades of George H.W. Bush's man in Moscow, Boris Yeltsin. They deny this now, but in the October 1991 issue of *Rabochaya Demokratiya* they boasted of it openly, bragging of how they built barricades around the monument to the martyrs of the 1905 revolution and crowing that unlike 1905, the 1991 "revolution" (read: counter-

revolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union) was victorious.

In 2013, SAlt played into imperialism's anti-North Korea hysteria in an article titled "Dictator Threatens Nuclear Attack" in which the U.S. imperialists, fresh from their invasion of Libya, appear as the face of peace-loving rationality. Genuine Trotskyists, on the other hand, defend the right of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a bureaucratically deformed workers state whose cities were flattened by the U.S. imperialists in the Korean War, to defend itself, including with nuclear weapons as an elementary deterrent against imperialist assault. In Hong Kong in

2014, the CWI abandoned any pretense to the Trotskyist program for deformed workers states (unflinching defense against capitalist counterrevolution from within or without; proletarian political revolution to oust the anti-revolutionary bureaucratic Stalinist excrescence) to cheer on the CIA-funded so-called Umbrella Revolution and its program of capitalist counterrevolution under the guise of (classless) "democracy." Despite their paper-thin pretensions of Trotskyism, SAlt, in keeping with the CWI tradition, are social-democratic opportunists through and through.

Reforge the Fourth International, World Party of Socialist Revolution!

We have watched with dismay as some of our former comrades in the anti-"Bern turn" opposition within SAlt have erroneously come to the conclusion that, if SAlt represents Trotskyism, then they want nothing to do with Trotskyism. Some have retreated into the Greens, or the DSA, or the Socialist Party; others have embraced Maoism, black nationalism, anarchism... But in their different ways, they (like SAlt) turn their backs on the principle of working-class political independence that we cited at the beginning of this Open Letter. In the class struggle, when the crunch comes, there are two sides of the barricades, like the picket line. If you support the Democratic Party, directly or indirectly through the DSA, if you support the Green Party, if you embrace the historic tradition of the CWI on the police, you end up on the other side, on the wrong side of the class line. In the end it's really quite simple. It's which side are you on? That's the question we are directing to our former comrades.

We are determined to go forward in the fight for the revolutionary Marxism of our time. We come out of the fight over the "Bern turn" and our years in SAlt more convinced than ever that as Trotsky put in 1938, "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership." We remain convinced that the international proletariat remains the only force capable of overthrowing capitalist exploitation and oppression and building a new, socialist world. As we move toward fusion with the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International, we uphold the conviction that

the central task of revolutionaries today is the forging of a Bolshevik-Leninist party that, armed with a genuinely Trotskyist program, can lead the workers and all of the oppressed to the seizure of power through world socialist revolution. We urge our former comrades in the SAlt opposition, and all those who want to fight for that revolution to study the program and practice of the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International. We look forward to talking with you about the issues raised in this Open Letter, and many others, as we prepare for new struggles.

For the Class Struggle Education League,

Danny K.

Mike G.

31 May 2018

IG-CSEL Fusion...

continued from page 9

impose tuition they insistently fought for workers defense guards. Then that July they succeeded in sparking the formation of a defense guard of the electrical workers union, which defended the strike in the face of threats of army repression. The occupation by tens of thousands of students lasted for ten months, ending with the mass arrest of strikers in February 2000. But it succeeded in keeping the university free, with no tuition, as it continues to be today.

The speaker noted the IG's struggle in the United States for workers strikes against the war from 2002 on. This call was finally realized on May Day 2008 when all 29 West Coast U.S. ports were shut down by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union demanding an end to the war on Afghanistan and Iraq and for defense of immigrant rights. Morán cited the work of the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico in militant teachers strikes in 2006, 2013 and 2016, and of the action of health workers in the state of Oaxaca fighting to break the stranglehold of state-controlled corporatist pseudo-unions. These workers, led by GI spokesman Dr. Arturo Villalobos, brought emergency medical aid to the victims of the 19 June 2016 police massacre in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca during that year's teachers strike. It was in reprisal for such courageous actions that Villalobos' son was beaten and tortured last month. In response, the IG and CSEL protested outside Mexican consulates while the sections of the LFI won support from unions in the U.S., Germany and Brazil, along with hundreds of supporters of labor and democratic rights, to denounce this state terror.

Abram Negrete, speaking for the Internationalist Group, began by noting that the day before, June 2, there was a demonstration in Mexico City in defense of our comrade Arturo and his family that was attended by 150 people and 16 organizations including several left groups – with the notable absence of the Grupo Espartaquista de México (the Mexican section of the ICL). He stressed that "the struggle to reforge the Fourth International is a struggle for the most vital, the most basic needs and interests of working people all around the world. And in places like Oaxaca, this is a question of life and death, in the literal sense." In particular, he stressed, the question "Is the Transitional Program applicable?" has "a lot to do with our differences with many of the different tendencies that claim to be revolutionary or Marxist or Trotskyist." As in, we seek to apply it, they don't.

The fusion with the CSEL reminded

him of the fusion, some 40 years ago, of the Spartacist League (of which the founders of the IG were then member) with a group that had been called the Lavender and Red Union and then changed its name to Red Flag Union. To the opportunists who spend their lives chasing after one petty-bourgeois movement after another, embracing lifestyleism and what is today known as identity politics, it must have seemed inexplicable for a group coming out of the gay movement to be fusing with hard Trotskyists. But it was possible precisely because of the fight for the revolutionary principles of Marxism.

“I think that the fusion with the Class Struggle Education League is a lot like that,” Negrete commented. Here are comrades who come out of Socialist Alternative, which is the very embodiment of social-democratic, “color-blind” economism, which considers cops to be workers and which threw itself headlong into the Sanders campaign as he was running for the Democratic presidential nomination. But “if you look at the trajectory of the comrades, they come out of all kinds of real struggles, they come out the working-class struggle in a place that is pretty far from the center of U.S. politics.” Their experience in struggle underscored the need for Marxist clarity, leading them to make a sharp break with opportunism and insist on genuine Bolshevik politics.

The IG speaker focused on “What is revolutionary regroupment, and what is it not?” He noted that “Revolutionary regroupment doesn’t mean that all leftists get together into one big group. It doesn’t mean a ‘big tent’ like the Democratic Socialists of America call themselves. Inside this big tent what is purveyed is subordination to the ruling class in the form of the Democratic Party. It doesn’t mean all leftists being nice to each other and pretending that they don’t have disagreements. It doesn’t mean sanding off the sharp edges. It doesn’t mean tailing after the DSA, like Left Voice does, for example, and advising the DSA. No, it means a hard struggle against class-collaborationist politics.”

He cited examples of revolutionary regroupment, including the fusion of the Mezhrainitsy, the Inter-District Group of Trotsky, Joffe, Lunacharsky and others, with Lenin’s Bolsheviks in July-August 1917 leading in short order to the Bolshevik Revolution. Another example of revolutionary regroupment on a large scale was when Grigori Zinoviev went to the congress of the Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany, and after a lengthy speech two-thirds of the delegates came over to the Communist Party. But there were also many examples of smaller revolutionary regroupments, including the East Oakland Women, the Buffalo Marxist Collective and other groups coming out of the breakup of the New Left that were won to the Spartacist League at the start of the 1970s. A number of those comrades were in the room at this forum.

Revolutionary regroupment – bringing together cadres coming from ostensibly revolutionary or other organizations of the working class and oppressed and winning them to the program of authentic Marxism, i.e., Trotskyism – is a key tactic in times when potential revolutionaries are dispersed, often as the result of earlier defeats. But such a regrouping cannot be achieved on the basis of a lowest-common-denominator platform papering over differences.

The *sine qua non* or essential condition for success is that it be on the basis of the revolutionary program. After World War II, the decimation of the Trotskyist cadres by the Nazis and Stalinist repression (following the 1940 assassination of Trotsky himself) and disorientation over the rise of Stalinist-governed deformed workers states led to the growth of tendencies, headed up by the international secretary of the Fourth International, Michel Pablo, that abandoned the struggle for a Trotskyist vanguard in favor of chasing after or joining with non-proletarian and non-revolutionary forces.

As stated in the 1998 “Declaration of the League for the Fourth International”:

“The reforging of the Fourth International requires defeating Pabloism and all other currents which betray the revolutionary Trotskyist program. An important component of this fight, and of the struggle to overcome the disparity between the tasks we face and our limited forces, will be the tactic of revolutionary regroupment on the program of Leninist internationalism. We foresee a series of splits from revisionist organizations and fusions with those genuinely seeking to be communists, in building the vanguard party.”

Spelling this out at the panel on revolutionary regroupment, the IG speaker Negrete emphasized:

“When we talk about reforging the Fourth International, we’re talking not about piecing together the fragments of various opportunist organizations, but rather overcoming the historical crisis that destroyed the Fourth International organizationally, in 1951 to 1953, through Pabloite revisionism. Many of the fragments that claim to be Trotskyist in the world today are either derived from Mandelism, or from Morenoism – such as in the case of the Fracción Trotskista – or from the Lambertistes or from other tendencies which basically reflected the destruction of the Fourth International by Pabloite revisionism. “The Spartacist tendency, in our view, fought for and defended, and in some cases even extended, Trotskyism for three decades. That’s not nothing – we’re based on that. It was the only organization that told the truth about Allende’s popular front in Chile; the only organization that said ‘All Indochina Must Go Communist,’ calling for workers strikes against the war; the only organization that didn’t swim with the stream of New Leftism, that didn’t pretend that black liberation could be accomplished without proletarian revolution; the only organization that tried to understand – and put forward a program – for ‘interpenetrated peoples’ in places where different peoples were mingled together.”

But the aftermath of counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc – which the ICL in some of its finest moments and uniquely on the left fought tenaciously against, undertaking bold actions in the bureaucratically deformed/degenerated workers states while the pseudo-Trotskyists almost without exception sided with the capitalist-restorationists – led to a fundamental crisis in the Spartacist tendency.

This crisis was based on an accumulation of a number of factors, including aging and the weight of the labor aristocracy in the organization but centrally on loss of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat – a hallmark of all revisionism. Following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR, a world-historic defeat for the proletariat, the ICL began to draw defeatist conclusions and write them

into its program. It began with the assertion that the Stalinist bureaucracy – a brittle parasitic layer – not only paved the way to disaster but “led the counterrevolution.” This phony claim, which was invented in order to drive out the founders of the IG/LFI, not only whitewashed the imperialists and their stooges who actually led the counterrevolution, it contradicted Trotsky’s analysis of the contradictory character of the bureaucracy and the ICL’s own actions in East Germany and the Soviet Union.

Soon the ICL was concluding that the Transitional Program was outdated, and blaming this on the workers with its thesis of a “historic retrogression” in working-class consciousness.¹

From there, the SL/ICL went from one programmatic departure from Trotskyism to another, usually while railing against the Internationalist Group/LFI. This included: dropping the call for independence for Puerto Rico in 1998 (while accusing the IG/LFI of Latin American nationalism for upholding it); dropping the call to defeat U.S. imperialism in the wake of 9/11 (accusing the IG of pandering to anti-Americanism for upholding it); dropping the call for hot-cargoing military goods in the 2002 lead-up to the invasion of Iraq (accusing the IG of adventurism for upholding it), and most infamously supporting the U.S. invasion of Haiti following the 2010 earthquake (while denouncing the IG’s call to kick the imperialists out as a “deranged and grotesque fantasy”).

So every few years there is another crisis in the SL/ICL, complete with “regime change” – chucking out the previous ostensible leaders and replacing them with another set – and bringing new revisions of Leninism and Trotskyism. IG spokesman Negrete noted at the June 3 panel:

“The latest one is fairly spectacular. It is embodied in a creature, the fearsome hydra. So they put out a document called ‘The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra.’ It turns out the chauvinist hydra was them, according to them. According to them, for 40 years they had a chauvinist line on the national question. Now, it is true, as many of the comrades in this room can attest, that they engaged in chauvinist behavior and actions, notably against our comrades. But that’s not what they’re talking about. They’re saying that what’s necessary is to revise the understanding of the national question.”

In contrast to the SL/ICL’s centrist gyrations, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have been constant in upholding the program of revolutionary Trotskyism, and on the basis of seeking to put the Transitional Program into practice have been able to intervene in the class struggle, achieving some modest successes, as noted earlier. This caught the attention of the comrades splitting from

¹ The same claim is made by almost every other tendency falsely claiming to be Trotskyist. See “In Defense of the Transitional Program,” in *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998.



Supporters of the Class Struggle Education League traveled from New Hampshire to participate in the May Day march in New York City in a joint contingent with the Internationalist Group.

Socialist Alternative, as CSEL spokesman Keating commented, with some exaggeration: “We were impressed by the IG. People said, ‘why would you want to join that.’ And we would say, here’s a list of 90 things they’ve done, what have you done?” So we started engaging with the IG, and that’s why we’re here today.”

On the basis of programmatic continuity and fidelity to Trotskyism and Leninism, the IG/LFI has continued to pursue revolutionary regroupment. More than once, the unexpected has occurred. In joining with the Portland Trotskyist Study Group, the Internationalist Group won cadres out of the International Socialist Organization. It began with a late-night phone call in mid-2011 when these comrades called to say that they had “had it with the ISO” and wanted “the real Trotskyism.” But that was only the beginning of a process. After visits, joint study focusing on the “Russian Question,” from Kronstadt to China, and several months of common work around the Occupy movement and in support of longshore workers fighting union-busting in Longview, Washington, the fusion of the IG and PTSG took place in July 2012.²

The LFI reaffirmed the perspective of “revolutionary regroupment(s) of cadres breaking from opportunist organizations to embrace authentic Trotskyism” in its April 2015 document “International Perspectives of the League for the Fourth International,” while adding that “the immediate prospects may be limited” for such regroupments.³ Little did we know that in the following year, two separate groups of cadres from in and around the ICL would come knocking on our door seeking the regroup with the LFI.

This included the former leaders of the Italian section of the ICL, who declared their solidarity with the LFI in a document titled “Back to Trotskyism.”⁴ And the Better-Late-Than-Never Faction of the ICL in Los Angeles made contact

² See “Portland Trotskyist Study Group Fuses with Internationalist Group,” *The Internationalist*, Summer 2012.

³ Reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015.

⁴ Reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 43, May-June 2016.

with the IG/LFI after they were summarily expelled from the Spartacist League the day after handing in their declaration of faction calling to “Return to the Road of Genuine Spartacism! Regroup with the IG/LFI on the Basis of *Their* Revolutionary Continuity!” After several days of intense discussion and several months of joint work – notably at May Day 2016 in New York City, the Lutte Ouvrière Fête in France and the Left Forum in NYC a few days later, and attending the Second Conference of the Grupo Internacionalista in Mexico in early July – the BLTN faction and IG fused.⁵

With the CSEL as well there has been a process of joint study and common work. This included the Black History Month forum in New Hampshire, where IG members and a member of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth spoke on the Haitian Revolution and its legacy. It included two trips to Philadelphia to show solidarity with Mumia Abu-Jamal, in January and April when we had a joint IG-CSEL contingent of a dozen people. CSEL statements were published in *The Internationalist* (No. 51, April-May 2018). On May Day, there was a joint IG-CSEL contingent of over 50 people in New York City. There were the protests over the torture attack in Mexico, and finally the open letter and joint panel at the Left Forum in New York. In the end, Mike Gath said, “when I started working with the Internationalist Group more, the big sense that I got was of coming home again, after a long time. This was revolutionary Trotskyism as I remembered it, as I understood it.”

Summing up the discussion, Negrete remarked:

“We’re talking about a regroupment between a small organization and an even smaller one. But this is part of something much bigger. This is a little taste of what we can and must accomplish if we fight for our principles, if we do that intransigently, if we don’t sand the edges off of it, if we look for the real opportunities, if we’re smart about it, if we’re determined about it, but above all, always remembering that every single tactic is subordinated to the principles of communism. Nobody will carry out revolutionary regroupment if when they have the tiniest opportunity they sell out, or they adapt, or they tail after the existing leadership. Only the people who fight for those principles now are able to carry out all sorts of regroupments and splits and fusions in a much bigger way. “The lesson of this is that these principles are valid, that they guide the work in Oaxaca, they guide the work for workers strikes against the war, the fight for workers defense guards, and a workers militia where it’s possible, to smash the fascists. This is what we’re talking about when we talk about the potentials and lessons of revolutionary regroupment.”

Following the successful conclusion of the forum, the comrades decided there was no point in delaying further, and they should just do it. So by a vote of the CSEL comrades and polling the IG Executive Committee the fusion was formalized then and there. Meeting subsequently, on July 5, the IG executive committee (now expanded to include a comrade of the ex-CSEL) chartered a New England local of the Internationalist Group. ■

⁵ See “Better-Late-Than-Never Faction Fuses with Internationalist Group,” *The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016.



Class Struggle International Workers call for “Workers Action to Stop Deportations” at NYC May Day 2018 march.

May Day L.A....

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tried to tell organizers that they could not march, but the truck pulled into the street and the march began.

The demonstration was led by the Unión del Barrio truck and banner that read “*Esta es mi tierra/Esta es mi lucha*” (This is my land, this is my struggle). The march went for two and a half miles from MacArthur Park to City Hall. The transport workers and Internationalists chanted “*Luchar, vencer obreros al poder*” (Fight to win, workers to power), “Stop deportations, this is the hour, labor/black/immigrant power,” “Defend immigrants, this is the hour, union labor has the power,” “Smash the fascists, smash the Klan, only workers defense guards can” and “Not Democrats, not Republicans, build a workers party,” among other slogans. Repeating the names of A.J. Weber, a 16-year-old black youth gunned down by L.A. County Sheriff’s deputies in February; Stephon Clark, shot to death by Sacramento police in his back yard in March; Michael Brown and other victims of racist cop murder, they called to “Shut the whole system down.” It was the most militant group in the march and made a lot of heads turn.

There was a Progressive Labor Party contingent marching behind us that picked up many of our chants. The ICWP (International Communist Workers Party, a split from PL) “Red Flag” was in front of us, but abruptly relocated to the back of the march a block after it began. Other groups in the march included Bayan (Filipino Stalinist mass front), IWW, Workers World Party, Koreatown Popular Assembly, United Electrical Workers, Corriente Obrera (sympathizers of the LIT, partisans of the political tradition of pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno) and a group of indigenous dancers.

Partway through the march, Jasmine Abdullah (the Black Lives Matter organizer who was framed up in 2016 for “felony lynching”) was confronted with the presence of a white “protester” who has been working with the cops in setting her up for state repression. When this character showed up right in front of our formation, we gave an impromptu speech about who this guy is and chanted, “Cop informants not welcome here!” and “Defend Jasmine against this cop informant!” Soon after, the nefarious rat scurried away. ■

Brazil Strike...

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lucionário dos Trabalhadores (MRT, Revolutionary Workers Movement), affiliated to the Fracção Trotskista led by the Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas (PTS, Socialist Workers Party) in Argentina.. In an article published on May 24 on its virtual daily *Esquerda Diário*, the MRT opposes the mobilizations of the truck drivers, claiming that they are employers, period. To back this up they use the argument that “their demands only affect diesel and don’t even mention gasoline and cooking gas, the fuels most used by working people rather than companies.” As an alternative, they call on the CUT to present a plan for struggle to lower the price of gasoline. What suicidal blindness!

The truth is that the truckers have a mixed social composition, including workers at big trucking companies as well as small truckowners. In any case, the target of the rightist attack is the workers as a whole. Faced with an outbreak of petty-bourgeois rebelliousness against the imperialist policy that is leading to their ruin, rather than condemning it, the policy of genuine Trotskyists must be to call for workers mobilization to provide a working-class leadership for struggle. And the MRT’s request that the CUT’s popular-frontst bureaucrats come up with a plan of “proletarian struggle” amounts to beating a dead dog. What’s needed is to break from the straitjacket of the popular fronts that chain the workers to the bosses, and to build genuinely revolutionary proletarian leaderships.

In the heat of the current struggle the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil calls to transform the truckers’ mobilization into a real class struggle to defeat Temer and stop the repressive maneuvers of the army and the police, and to

forge a revolutionary leadership – a Leninist communist party based on the program of permanent revolution – that is indispensable to organize the proletarian counteroffensive to break out of the siege that the exploited and oppressed face at this critical moment. ■

Libérenlos...

sigue de la página 24

- Otros informes de niños a los que se administra medicamentos psiquiátricos para mantenerlos en silencio.

El macabro procurador general Jeff Sessions sólo pudo responder a las comparaciones de todo esto con los nazis hitlerianos con la patética excusa de que los nazis querían era “impedir que los judíos se fueran”.

En los dos meses transcurridos entre abril y junio, más de 2,300 niños inmigrantes –la mitad de los cuales tiene menos de doce años– fueron secuestrados por el gobierno norteamericano mientras sus padres eran encerrados en prisiones para inmigrantes. Un hondureño en busca de asilo, Marco Antonio Muñoz, se suicidó en una celda de detención después de que su hijo de tres años le fuera arrebatado por agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza. Y la Patrulla Fronteriza que arranca a los niños de los brazos de sus madres que los amamantan es la misma institución criminal que asesinó a Claudia Patricia Gómez González a sangre fría después de que ésta viajara más de 2 mil kilómetros desde Guatemala.

Las manifestaciones en contra de la separación de las familias han sido organizadas por diversas “organizaciones no gubernamentales” estrechamente vinculadas al Partido Demócrata. La indignación por estas atrocidades es tan intensa que podría representar un punto de inflexión para la oposición al régimen de Trump. Aunque

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cuenta con el respaldo de racistas de línea dura, las encuestas de opinión muestran que dos terceras partes de la población se oponen a sus políticas migratorias y que un número igual de personas dice que los inmigrantes indocumentados deben quedarse. Pero hasta ahora esta oposición se ha canalizado al apoyo a favor de los demócratas, lo que es un callejón sin salida.

El abuso de los niños a manos del sistema migratorio no es nada nuevo. La American Civil Liberties Union dio a conocer recientemente un informe sobre el trato brutal del niños inmigrantes bajo Obama, de 2009 a 2014, que incluía golpizas, posturas de estrés, la negativa a conceder cuidado médico, amenazas de muerte y abuso sexual.¹ Además, el gobierno sólo ha permitido un muy limitado acceso a unas cuantas instalaciones, impidiendo la presencia hasta de importantes figuras del partido demócrata como el alcalde de Nueva York Bill de Blasio y al senador de Oregon Jeff Merkley. Pero entonces Melani Trump viajó a un centro de detención en McAllen, Texas, portando de manera ostentosa una chamara con las palabras “Realmente no me importa” en la espalda.

La “crisis” migratoria es resultado directo de las depredaciones causadas por el capitalismo imperialista. El incremento en el numero de detenciones comenzó en los años 1980, con un flujo de refugiados que huía de las guerras sucias patrocinadas por Estados Unidos en Centroamérica. Se intensificó después de que Bill Clinton impusiera el Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte en 1994, que destruyó buena parte de la agricultura mexicana, obligando a millones de campesinos a emigrar. La Reforma a la Inmigración Ilegal y por la Inmigración Responsable de 1996 hizo que el número de detenidos cada día pasara de 5 mil a 16 mil.

Pero fue Obama —el deportador en jefe— quien realmente estableció el gigantesco sistema de detención que tenemos hoy en día. Obama expandió el sistema hasta contar con unos 200 centros a lo largo y ancho del país. Las prisiones para niños también fueron construidas por Obama, quien las expandió en respuesta al flujo de menores no acompañados que huían de la violencia en Honduras y Guatemala en 2014. Hoy hay aproximadamente 34 mil inmigrantes retenidos en centros de detención en un día cualquiera en el mayor sistema de prisiones para inmigrantes en el mundo, que encarcela a unos 400 mil inmigrantes al año. La detención es ahora un

¹ ACLU, *Neglect and Abuse of Unaccompanied Immigrant Children by U.S. Customs and Border Protection* (mayo de 2018).

Donald Trump, entretanto, ha continuado con sus arengas racistas en contra de mexicanos y centroamericanos. Su última fue para declarar que los inmigrantes indocumentados “no son personas. Son animales”. Y los trata en consecuencia. El propósito más amplio de esta masiva maquinaria represiva consiste en aterrorizar a los inmigrantes, deshumanizarlos, hacerlos vulnerables y convertirlos en chivos expiatorios, como parte de la estrategia de divide y vencerás que utiliza la burguesía para mantener sojuzgada a la multirracial clase obrera. Éste es el estado putrefacto del capitalismo norteamericano en decadencia terminal: ¡la clase dominante más rica y más poderosa en la historia mundial arrebatando a los niños de los más desesperados para recluirllos en campamentos! Decimos: ¡Liberen a los detenidos! ¡La clase obrera debe movilizarse para desmantelar los centros de detención!

Ciertamente, Trump tiene lo necesario para sondear las profundidades de la depravación humana. Ataca a los inmigrantes que vienen de “países de mierda”, se refiere a los inmigrantes mexicanos como violadores y asesinos y ataca a los niños. Mientras que Trump y los republicanos son abiertos en su vil racismo, los demócratas fingen tener interés en los inmigrantes y los trabajadores. En manifestaciones convocadas por grupos de fachada del Partido Demócrata, dicen que la política de separación de los niños de sus padres es “antinorteamericana”. De hecho, en una protesta realizada el 26 de junio en Nueva York en contra de la decisión de la Suprema Corte de respaldar el “veto antimusulmán” de Trump, los organizadores comenzaron a corear de manera grotesca “U.S.A., U.S.A.”. Sin embargo, bajo la esclavitud era común que los esclavistas separaran a las madres negras de sus hijos. También hay una larga y vergonzosa historia de robo de los niños nativos americanos de sus padres y de obligarlos a hablar inglés, en lugar de sus lenguas originales. Esto era llamado “civilizatorio”.

La mayor parte de las protestas que han tenido lugar en las últimas tres semanas en contra de las políticas migratorias de Trump se han centrado en torno al llamado de “mantener a las familias juntas”. Organizadas por grupos de fachada demócratas como Rise and Resist, han tenido el cuidado de enfocarse

A lo largo y ancho del país, hemos protestado prácticamente a diario. El local de Nueva Inglaterra del Internationalist Group organizó una protesta el 18 de junio afuera de la estación de autobuses en Nashua, New Hampshire, para exigir que la policía del I.C.E. se largue y que la compañía Concord Coach deje de cooperar con la migra. En Nueva York, el IG junto con la Juventud Internacionalista Revolucionaria y sus organizaciones fraternalmente aliadas, la Class Struggle Education Workers y Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas, protestaron afuera de la cárcel del condado de Hudson en Nueva Jersey donde el trabajador inmigrante Pablo Villavicencio estaba recluido tras ser entregado al I.C.E. cuando entregaba pizzas en una base del ejército. Nos sumamos a la protesta en contra del “veto musulmán”, marchamos hacia una cárcel del I.C.E. y participamos en el bloqueo OccupyICE que ahí se realizó. En Portland, el IG y el Class Struggle Workers participaron en el campamento de OccupyICEPDX mientras prepara simultáneamente una movilización sindical para el 30 de junio en contra de los fascistas.

Los internacionalistas hemos enfatizado la necesidad de movilizar el poder de la clase obrera para poner alto a las deportaciones. Hemos insistido en que la persecución de los inmigrantes ha sido realizada por los dos principales partidos capitalistas, e incluso por los verdes, quienes postularon como candidato a la presidencia al antiin-

migrante Ralph Nader (con el respaldo de reformistas como la International Socialist Organization y Socialist Alternative). Hemos coreado “¡Fuera el I.C.E.!” y respondido con “¡Libérenlos a todos! ¡Plenos derechos para todos los inmigrantes!” Los internacionales exigimos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes, y a diferencia de la ex trotskista Spartacist League, que explícitamente limita su llamado a “aquellos que han llegado”, llamamos por asilo para los refugiados de las guerras, el terror y la devastación producidos por el imperialismo. Para la SL, las mujeres y niños que se encuentran justo al otro lado de la frontera no tienen derecho a entrar a EE.UU.

El ala liberal de la burguesía, representada por Bernie Sanders, sólo ofrece poner alto a los “inhumanos programas de deportación y a los centros de detención privados”. De este modo, Sanders, con el respaldo de los Democratic Socialists of America, quiere un programa de deportación “humano” y centros de detención públicos. También llama a “Asegurar que nuestra frontera sea segura y proteja a las comunidades locales”.

No puede ser de otro modo mientras que el sistema de la propiedad privada siga en pie. La burguesía necesita la superexplotación de inmigrantes desprovistos de todo derecho, justo como extra súper ganancias de las empobrecidas neocolonias. No es que el sistema migratorio no funcione, sino que lo hace perfectamente para lo que fue diseñado: aterrorizar, dividir y convertir en chivo expiatorio a la clase obrera. Este sistema no puede ser reformado: debe ser destruido.

El Internationalist Group y la Liga por la IV Internacional insisten en que la única salida ante estos horrores es la revolución socialista internacional. Únicamente con la construcción de una economía colectivizada planificada bajo en estado obrero, será posible satisfacer las necesidades de toda la población. Para ello hace falta construir partidos obreros revolucionarios en todo el orbe, sobre la base del programa de los bolcheviques Lenin y Trotsky. Ésta es la tarea central que enfrentan quienes realmente quieren defender hoy en día a los inmigrantes. ■

¡Echar al I.C.E.! ¡Clausurar los centros de detención!

¡Que devuelvan a los niños! ¡Dejen entrar a los refugiados!

¡Libérenlos! ¡Que se queden!

Acción obrera para poner alto a las deportaciones

Tras una oleada de indignación, el 20 de junio Donald Trump se vio obligado a dar marcha atrás en su grotesca política de arrebatar a los niños inmigrantes de sus padres. En lugar de ello, decretó una orden ejecutiva para mantener a familias enteras encerradas en jaulas en almacenes abandonados y en bases militares. Esto sólo sirvió para intensificar las protestas. De inmediato, salieron a la superficie riñas entre agencias policíacas en el seno de la Casa Blanca, cuando funcionarios comenzaron a decir que no tenían los recursos suficientes para hacerse cargo de los inmigrantes que estaban siendo arrestados al por mayor bajo la política de “cero tolerancia” de Trump.

Cinco días más tarde, el gobierno volvió a recular, cuando el principal encargado del control fronterizo anunció que la agencia había dejado por el momento de entregar a inmigrantes con niños al sistema de justicia. Esto no impidió que el xenófobo presidente volviera a arremeter con furia contra los inmigrantes, amenazando con simplemente echarlos del país en lo que representa una violación flagrante del derecho al debido proceso. Entretanto, los niños robados no han sido devueltos; miles de jóvenes siguen encarcelados y niños pequeños están siendo enviados sin sus padres a los tribunales para tener audiencias para su deportación.

No debe haber ilusiones en que ya se ha logrado poner alto al presidente anti-inmigrante y sus robaniños de la Patrulla Fronteriza y de la Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.). Tampoco debe pensarse que elegir a los demócratas en noviembre traerá alivio a los más de 15



Foto: The Internationalist

Demócratas y republicanos: enemigos de los inmigrantes, ¡Forjar un partido obrero revolucionario!
Contingente del Grupo Internacionalista y de Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas el 1° de Mayo de 2018 en NY.

millones de inmigrantes indocumentados que viven en Estados Unidos, ni a los que desesperadamente buscan refugio y se encuentran en campos a lo largo de la frontera. La monstruosa maquinaria de depor-

tación empleada por el republicano Trump fue montada por su antecesor, el demócrata Obama, quien echó de EE.UU. una cantidad récord de más de 8 millones de personas durante su gobierno.

Ambos partidos capitalistas son enemigos de los inmigrantes. Atañe a la clase obrera, junto con los negros, latinos y otros sectores oprimidos movilizar nuestro poder para librar una guerra de clases en contra de la guerra contra los inmigrantes. El Internationalist Group exige: **¡libérenlos! ¡Que se queden!** Hacemos un llamado a favor de la **movilización masiva obrera e inmigrante** en las calles para **bloquear las deportaciones** y **exigir que los campos de concentración en que están reclusos los inmigrantes sean clausurados**. Decimos: **¡Alto a las detenciones! ¡Devuelvan los niños a sus padres! ¡Admitan a los refugiados! ¡Plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes!** Para dirigir esta lucha hace falta construir un **partido obrero internacionalista multiétnico** para derribar el dominio racista del capital por medio de una revolución socialista.

Patrulla fronteriza roba niños

Todo el país ha estado sumido en una profunda agitación a lo largo de las últimas tres semanas, toda vez que el bárbaro

trato dado a los niños inmigrantes impactó la conciencia de vastos sectores de la población y provocó su horror y su furia. Lo anterior incluye:

- Imágenes de líneas de niños durmiendo en jaulas bajo luces fluorescentes en delgadas colchonetas amontonadas en el piso de concreto con papel aluminio para cubrirse.
- Grabaciones de niños que lloran llamando a sus padres mientras los agentes de la Patrulla Fronteriza se burlan de ellos.
- “Refugios para la temprana edad”, es decir, cárceles para niños en las que se aloja a bebés y niños pequeños arrancados de los brazos de sus madres.
- Las instalaciones abandonadas de un Wal-Mart reacondicionadas para alojar a 1,500 niños varones dentro de jaulas durante 22 horas diarias.
- Un campamento en Tornillo, Texas, donde las temperaturas son de más de 38 grados para mantener encerrados a miles de niños.
- Informes de espantosos abusos, como niños inmigrantes esposados, golpeados dejados en celdas de concreto desnudos y amarrados a sillas con bolsas en sus cabezas.

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Foto: The Internationalist

Manifestantes del Grupo Internacionalista y de Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas en una manifestación en Nueva York, el 19 de junio, en contra de la separación de las familias de inmigrantes.