

*The*

Winter 2017

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# Internationalist



Aftermath of Irma and María ... and the Devastating Debt Crisis

## Colonial Capitalist Disaster in Puerto Rico



Alex Wroblewski/Getty Images

San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico, plunged into darkness on the night of September 20. Two and a half months later, most residents of the island colony still do not have electrical power.

**First International Conference of the LFI. . . . . 20-35**  
**Imperialist Social Democracy vs. Black Liberation . . . 45**

**The ABCs of the DSA . . . . . 36**  
**Imperialist War Drums Over Korea . . . 3**

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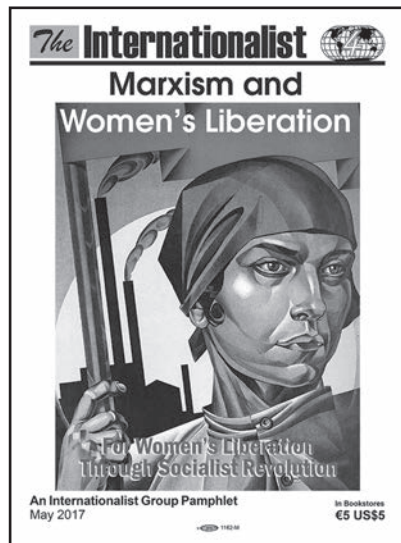
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## The Internationalist



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Winter 2017



Defend North Korea, Defeat U.S. Imperialism!

# U.S. Beats War Drums Over North Korea

Drew Angerer/Getty Images



Kim Hong-ji/Reuters

**Donald Trump threatens at the United Nations, September 19, to “totally destroy” North Korea. The U.S. already did so, in the Korean War (1950-53). Right: U.S./South Korea joint live-fire exercise near the DMZ, April 21.**

DECEMBER 27 – As we go to press, the U.S. is giving off multiple indications that it is gearing up for military action against North Korea. This goes beyond the bellicose threats that the seriously unstable U.S. president has been bandying about, the “preemptive war” scenarios emanating from the fevered brains of neoconservative strategists, and “table-top war exercises” in the Pentagon. The escalating economic sanctions and military maneuvers are deliberate provocations designed to elicit a response from the embattled North Korean regime, that could then be used as the excuse to strike. The aim is “regime change” in Pyongyang, seizing or destroying its nuclear deterrent and restoring capitalism. The ultimate target is China. Contrary to the media hysteria, *it is the predatory warmongers in Washington who are aiming at mass murder*. Against the mounting imperialist assault, it is the duty of all class-conscious workers and revolutionaries to **unconditionally defend North Korea** – and all the bureaucratically deformed workers states.

Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to slaughter millions of people on the Korean peninsula, evoking images of a totally bombed-out wasteland with whole villages and cities fried to a crisp by napalm. At a press conference in August he vowed to unleash on North Korea “fire and fury like the world has never seen.” A few days later he followed that up with the threat that “military solutions are fully in place, locked and loaded.” At the United Nations in September he started referring to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un with the sneering epithet “Rocket Man,” later

saying in a tweet that Kim “won’t be around much longer,” and declared that the U.S. may have “no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.” This is nothing short of a threat of genocide: Trump’s “final solution.” The North Korean population is well aware that the U.S. is the only power ever to use nuclear weapons in wartime, murdering hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians with its A-bombs in 1945. And they know well that *the U.S. already “totally destroyed” their country* in the Korean War (1950-53) when every city in the North was leveled.

That anti-Communist and racist U.S. war on Korea, carried out under the guise of a United Nations “police action,” never officially ended. The United States military still maintains over two dozen army camps, munitions depots, air fields and 28,000 troops in South Korea. Command Post TANGO, the U.S.’ tactical air/naval/ground operations center, is reputedly able to withstand a nuclear blast. Some in the Pentagon are itching to use that arsenal. A renewed imperialist war would be vastly more destructive. But this time North Korea could make the U.S. imperialists and South Korean militarists pay. South Korea’s capital Seoul is barely 35 miles from the de-militarized zone (DMZ), with 25 million people within range of North Korean artillery and short-range missiles. An article in *Newsweek* (25 April) on “What War With North Korea Looks Like” showed a graphic proclaiming “ONE MILLION DEAD,” adding “(and that’s if it doesn’t go nuclear).” A recent article in *Foreign Affairs*

(November-December 2017), the voice of “establishment” imperialists, went into detail:

“According to a detailed study published in 2012 by the Nautilus Institute ... North Korea has thousands of conventional artillery pieces along the demilitarized zone that by themselves could inflict some 64,000 fatalities in Seoul on the first day of a war. A major attack on South Korea could also kill many of the roughly 154,000 American civilians and 28,000 U.S. service members living there. If the North Korean regime used its large arsenal of chemical and biological weapons, the fatalities would be even higher. Finally, there are a number of nuclear power plants near Busan that could be damaged, spreading radioactive materials, in an attack. All told, one million people could die on the first day of a second Korean war.”

Recall that *the last U.S. imperialist war on Korea slaughtered some three million Koreans*. During 1950-53, the U.S. dropped 635,000 tons of conventional bombs on the Korean Peninsula, compared to the 503,000 tons of bombs that were dropped in the entire Pacific theater of World War II. As for chemical weapons, the U.S. dropped over 32,000 tons of napalm on Korea. This sticky, flammable gelatin adheres to skin and is virtually impossible to put out with conventional means. It was used in the “democratic” imperialists’ terror bombing of Berlin and Tokyo in 1944-45. Korea was a testing ground for the future devastation they would wreak in Vietnam, where between 1963 and 1971 the U.S. dropped 338,000 tons of napalm (as well as 100,000 tons of Agent Orange).<sup>1</sup> Smarting over its failure to conquer the whole of the Korean peninsula in Democrat Harry Truman’s anti-Soviet war, the U.S. sponsored a military dictatorship in the South whose leaders were collaborators in Japan’s colonial occupation of Korea, in addition to funding death squads of fascist youth to round up and murder leftists.<sup>2</sup>

Let us be clear: any consequences of such a new war in Korea would be the *direct* responsibility of the U.S. imperialists and the South Korean regime of counterrevolutionaries, who since the Korean War have tried to strangle the deformed workers state by imposing ever-harsher economic sanctions. As defenders of the revolutionary program of the Bolsheviks Lenin and Trotsky, the League for the Fourth International and its U.S. section, the Internationalist Group, stand for the defeat of the imperialist warmongers and for *defense of*

<sup>1</sup> See the Internationalist Group pamphlet, *The Great Chemical Weapons Hoax* (May 2003).

<sup>2</sup> “U.S. War on North Korea Never Ended,” *The Internationalist* No. 32, January-February 2011.



Korea Central News Agency

**North Korea’s nuclear deterrent: even U.S. experts say Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile could hit the U.S. East Coast.**

North Korea, while giving no political support to the Stalinist regime in Pyongyang. In defending North Korea against imperialism we also defend the collectivized property forms on which it is based – and the same goes for China, Cuba and all the remaining deformed workers states. At the same time, the Stalinist misleaders of these states, with their nationalist dogma of building “socialism in one country” (or in Korea’s case, in half a country), their yearning for illusory “peaceful coexistence” with the imperialists and their bureaucratic rule, endanger the remaining revolutionary gains. The LFI and IG call for:

*“revolutionary reunification of North Korea, political revolution in the North to replace the conservative ultra-Stalinist bureaucracy with internationalist soviet democracy, and socialist revolution in the South to overthrow capitalism and drive out the imperialists.”*

–“Lies, Dumb Lies, and Imperialist Whoppers,” *The Internationalist* No. 49, August 2017.

### **Tightening the Economic Screws as an Act of War**

The latest round of U.N. sanctions passed on December 22 were accurately described by the North Korean government as an “act of war.” Ominously, after Trump’s December 13 phone call to Vladimir Putin, complaining that Russia must get on board over North Korea, and his November 11 tweet praising Xi Jinping for “upping the sanctions on #NoKo,” Russia and China both signed on to the sanctions. This economic blackmail would severely restrict North Korea’s oil supplies and mandate all North Korean “guest workers” abroad to return home within two years. Now Russia is urging the U.S. and North Korea to engage in diplomacy, and the Chinese Foreign Ministry is advocating “restraint”



and easing of tensions. Fat chance: both Russia and China just signed off on fast-tracking imperialist war moves on the Korean Peninsula. This conciliation of the imperialists could be even more dangerous than in February 2011 when China and Russia both abstained (i.e., failed to veto) the U.N. Security Council “no-fly” resolution that set off the NATO attack on Libya.

On December 18, Trump delivered a speech on the newly released White House “National Security Strategy” document, where he declared about North Korea that “America and its allies will take all necessary steps to achieve a denuclearization and ensure that this regime cannot threaten the world.” The North Korean “threat” was its successful launch of the Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), that experts believe can reach the U.S. East Coast. Republican senator Lindsey Graham, who frequently serves as a conduit to leak the thinking of Pentagon top brass, said that as of December 14 he calculated there was a “three in ten chance we use the military option,” which would be “an all-out war against the regime.” Graham elaborated that “if you ever use the military option, it’s not to just neutralize their nuclear facilities – you gotta be willing to take the regime completely down.” To that end, Graham advised the Pentagon in early December to begin moving the families and spouses of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea off the peninsula.

The latest U.N. Security Council Sanctions would cap North Korea’s oil imports at 500,000 barrels per year. The imperialists have been pushing for an oil embargo for some time, but the North has vast reserves of coal which can be liquefied and used as fuel. According to Pierre Noel, a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, a London foreign-policy establishment think tank:

“North Korea does not, strictly speaking, *need* oil from China.

It gets its liquid hydrocarbons from China out of convenience, not necessity....

“North Korea would need to liquefy about six million tonnes of coal to cover all of its 2015 reported oil imports. North Korea produces more than enough coal to do this; its total anthracite-coal exports, mostly to China, were reported to be 25 million tons in 2015.”

–“North Korea: An oil embargo probably wouldn’t work,” The Survival Editors’ Blog, 6 September

Economic sanctions have been the U.S.’ weapon of choice against North Korea, whether it’s over the country’s dramatic achievements in missile technology and nuclear weaponry, or dubious claims of “cyberterror-

ism” (like a 2014 cyber attack on Sony Pictures Entertainment, allegedly for distributing a comedy movie in which Kim Jong Un is assassinated). Republican and Democratic presidents alike have tried to strangle the economy of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK, the official name for North Korea), hoping that this would persuade the regime to abandon its nuclear weapons program. But Kim Jong Un and the bureaucrats in Pyongyang know full well that a nuclear deterrent is key to ensuring the survival of the deformed workers state against imperialist aggression. As we wrote this past April 17, after Trump announced a U.S. Navy battle group was heading to Korea (and eleven days after he had launched an air strike against Syria), “it is crucial to *defend North Korea* and uphold its *right to develop nuclear arms* for its defense against predatory U.S. imperialism” (“Defend North Korea Against Crazy U.S. War Threats,” *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017).

### Imperialist Provocation Against North Korea Is No “Accident”

The bourgeois media opinion-manufacturing machine has been mobilized to sell the population the myth that North Korea is an aggressor and a mortal threat to the so-called free world. This “free world” is where undocumented immigrants have no rights, are seized on the streets and deported from the U.S. by the millions, where refugees are barred, where African Americans and Latinos are under constant threat of imprisonment or murder by the racist police and “justice” system, and where millions struggle to make ends meet. It’s where Wall Street profiteers make money hand over fist by busting unions and privatizing public services, and free marketeers like the Koch brothers and Walmart

*continued on page 16*



Thousands protest in South Korean capital of Seoul, November 11, denouncing visit by Donald Trump and demanding “no war” in Korea.

Reuters

# Left Voice of Social Democracy

Left Voice is part of the “international network of left dailies” on-line promoted by the “Fracción Trotskista” (FT), a right-centrist grouping led by the Argentine Partido de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (Party of Workers for Socialism). Defined by its “democratist” politics (calling for constituent assemblies just about everywhere on the planet) and constant electoralist maneuvers, the PTS grew out of the break-up of the pseudo-Trotskyist current led by the late Nahuel Moreno. The Morenoites achieved notoriety on the Latin American left as consummate “political chameleons,” presenting themselves as Peronists, Castroite guerrillaists, social democrats, and once upon a time posing even as “orthodox Trotskyists,” depending on the prevailing political winds. Though the FT claims to have transcended Morenoism, it is thoroughly imbued with the cynical maneuverism its founders learned at the feet of the master.

When it comes to bedrock Trotskyist principles, the PTS and FT were marked from their inception by their rejection of Trotsky’s intransigent defense of the USSR against world imperialism, as they tailed the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet-bloc degenerated and deformed workers states in 1989-92. Since that time, they have established affiliates in several Latin American countries, and more recently in Europe plus a toehold in the U.S. The latest FT ploy is to pose as undifferentiated Internet leftists via its web “dailies,” sometimes combined with soft “independent” groupings on a deliberately vague basis.

Established a little over two years ago, the small circle of FT supporters and friends in the U.S. called Left Voice wants to get in the swim in the “progressive” political swamp by presenting itself as an on-line outlet for “activists with many viewpoints and from many traditions.” Rather than defending a consistent revolutionary program, it chases after whatever movement is moving at the moment. Its statement, “Like Left Voice? Be Left Voice” (6 June), proudly proclaims that it does not present “a coherent political ‘line’.” This blurriness is the *opposite* of how Lenin and Trotsky sought to build a revolutionary party on the basis of sharply delineated principles. Tailored to the anti-Leninist prejudices of left and not-so-left social democrats and academics, Left Voice tries hard to be “with it” in a soft milieu in which principled struggle is seen as an obstacle to tailist maneuverism.

Since the 2016 elections, Left Voice has enthused over the growth of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), the voice of U.S. social democracy that has expanded rapidly in the wake of Bernie Sanders’ campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination. Featuring a photo

of DSAers at a labor protest in Manhattan, a *Left Voice* (25 April) article by the FT’s Wladek Flakin gushed: “The DSA’s upsurge is leading new activists into the workers’ movement – a promising sign for the US left.” When the DSA held its convention last summer (where it called the cops on Internationalist activists for distributing communist literature on the sidewalk outside), *Left Voice* (5 August) declared: “the events taking place at the DSA convention signal auspicious changes brought on by the growing new members and influx of youth.”

Not unlike the ISO or Socialist Alternative (SAIt), Left Voice sometimes accompanies its cheerleading with friendly critiques and helpful “suggestions” to their social-democratic brethren. Thus a *Left Voice* (10 November) article titled “Anti-Trump Elections Signal Opening for Socialist Politics” enthused in a subhead: “Progressive candidates and even socialist candidates did well in Tuesday’s election. How can we use this to build a mass anti-capitalist movement?” The article hails the “advance of socialists, and particularly of DSA members and endorsed candidates.” Yet almost all these “victories” were of candidates of the imperialist Democratic Party, or of the small-time bourgeois Green Party!

While criticizing the DSA for wanting to “contribute to the revival of the Democratic Party,” Left Voice was particularly taken with “the stellar electoral race” of SAIt’s Ginger Jentzen who ran for the Minneapolis City Council. Yet like SAIt’s city council member in Seattle, Kshama Sawant, Jentzen ran as a fervent supporter of the Democrats’ sheepdog Bernie Sanders. In fact, Jentzen’s campaign was prominently endorsed by Sanders’ Our Revolution electoral operation. But for Left Voice, the bottom line is, if SAIt “can run independent candidates and win, why can’t the DSA?” It writes:

“We have a world to win, comrades. All of the successfully-elected DSA candidates – and the nearly-elected Jentzen – should put their political positions at the service of furthering a struggle against Trump, against deportations, for Medicare for all, for a living wage, and for other working-class demands.”

This is the reformist pro-Democratic Party line in a nutshell.

Running on an “independent” ballot line while supporting bourgeois Democratic politics and politicians is the *opposite* of the revolutionary political independence that Marxists stress as key to genuine working-class politics. Back in 1871 in the First International, Marx declared that “the workers’ party must never be the tagtail of any bourgeois party.” Today, Left Voice are tagtailists par excellence. ■



DSA, ISO, Left Voice...

# On North Korea: “Socialists” Who Capitulate to Imperialism

U.S. imperialism’s threats of annihilation against North Korea pose a fundamental test for the left. What is the response of ostensible socialists when the most powerful ruling class in the world menaces to rain “fire and fury” on a nation where it already killed 3 million people, in the Korean War of 1950-53? When the only country that has ever used atomic weapons in war threatens, as Donald Trump did in his speech to the United Nations this past September, to “totally destroy North Korea” with its population of 25 million?

As revolutionary Marxists intransigently opposed to both wings of imperialism’s capitalist War Party, we have stressed that Trump is building on the threats and provocations of his Democratic and Republican predecessors. Four decades after Democrat Harry Truman’s genocidal war against Korea, Colin Powell – the Republican war criminal who led the U.S. into the Iraq War with Big Lies about “weapons of mass destruction” – said the U.S. could turn North Korea into a “charcoal briquette.” A year before Trump’s U.N. speech, then-president Barack Obama said the U.S. “could, obviously, destroy North Korea with our arsenals.” Now the U.N.’s December 22 resolution to further isolate and strangle the Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea raises the stakes even further.

The Internationalist Group has taken a clear and unambiguous stand, defending the DPRK, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, against U.S. imperialism, and stating:

“Against these warmongers, it is the duty of all class-conscious workers and opponents of imperialism to stand with North Korea and its right to nuclear, or any other kind of weapons to defend itself against the imperialist behemoth....

“As the bipartisan War Party builds up for a showdown and possible first-strike attack in Korea, internationalist workers and opponents of imperialist war must stand ready to take to the streets to oppose the plans of U.S. imperialism and defend North Korea (and China, the U.S.’ main target). That starts by shooting down the dangerous Big Lies that are coming from the White House and every quarter of capitalist media.”

– “Lies, Dumb Lies and Imperialist Whoppers,” *The Internationalist* No. 49, September-October 2017

Genocidal racist wars against Asian peoples have been central to U.S. imperialism since the “pacification” of the Philippines after the U.S. seized it (together with Puerto Rico, Guam

and, de facto, Cuba) from Spain in 1898. This set a pattern the imperialists followed in the Korean and Vietnam wars, and against semi-colonial countries from Central America to Iraq. The struggle to defeat the imperialist aggression of one’s “own” capitalist ruling class should be fundamental to any genuine leftist, all the more so within the U.S. itself. Yet most of the U.S. “left” has echoed liberal apologists for U.S. imperialism and their line that what’s going on between the U.S. and North Korea boils down to a face-off between two “unhinged despots.” With most of the left cozying up to Democrat-led “resistance,” among the only protests against the imperialist war threats have been speak-outs organized by the CUNY Internationalists, and a demonstration in August where we joined Korean peace activists, as well as supporters of the Workers World Party (WWP), outside the U.N.

For Trotskyists, defense of the DPRK against U.S. war threats is not only a question of basic anti-imperialist struggle but an expression of “the Russian question” – that is, of revolutionary policy towards those parts of the world that the imperialists have sought to reconquer all the way back to the onslaught against Soviet Russia they launched after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. When years of war, scarcity and capitalist encirclement of the workers state gave rise to the conservative nationalist bureaucracy that usurped political power under Stalin in 1923-24, Leon

*continued on page 18*



Internationalist photo

**April 21 speak-out against imperialist war by City University of New York Internationalist Clubs at Hunter College.**

Aftermath of Irma and María ... and the Devastating Debt Crisis

# Colonial Capitalist Disaster in Puerto Rico

The effects of “natural” disasters are always refracted through the prism of the man-made class societies in which they occur. The horror show that followed the double-whammy of back-to-back Category 5 hurricanes that swept through the Antilles island chain in September is no exception. In Puerto Rico, the immediate toll of death and destruction has been magnified many times over by U.S. imperialist rule, which ever since it conquered in 1898 has treated the population as colonial subjects and second-class citizens. Now with the wholesale destruction of the island’s industry since 1996, intensified by the decade-old world capitalist economic crisis, imperialist domination increasingly threatens the very existence of the Puerto Rican nation.

On September 20, Hurricane Maria made landfall in Puerto Rico. The Caribbean island was still struggling to recover from the damage done by Hurricane Irma, which had hit two weeks earlier. María exacerbated the damage by orders of magnitude. Debris created by Irma became deadly projectiles as Maria wreaked havoc. 80% of the crops were destroyed. Floodwaters reached a depth of 15 feet in some areas. Power lines and the concrete poles holding them were blown to the ground. Dozens of hundred-foot-tall transmission towers for high-voltage trunk lines collapsed, cutting off the whole northern side of the country from electricity. Two and a half months later, over half of Puerto Rico’s population still is without electrical power.

The U.S. government has consistently tried to minimize the vast extent of the damage. President Donald Trump dismissively compared María to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, which he called a “real catastrophe,” repeating Puerto Rican governor Ricardo Rosselló’s statement that “only” 16 people had died in Puerto Rico.

The colonial government kept repeating for weeks that only 55 people perished in the aftermath of María. But CNN reported in late November that just by calling half the funeral homes on the island it came up with at least 499 deaths because of



Above: Contingent of the UTIER electrical workers union march on May Day 2017 demanding “No to the Financial Control Board.” *La Junta* now controls Puerto Rico’s finances, ordering brutal anti-worker austerity and privatization. Below: UTIER linesmen repairing electrical grid devastated by Hurricane María. Years of neglect by the colonial government due to the debt crisis were the result of Bill Clinton’s elimination of tax break, leading to devastation of the island’s industry.

the hurricanes, suggesting a much higher toll, while social scientists comparing the numbers of reported deaths to past years calculated the actual count at well over 1,000 people (*Vox*, 29 November).

Photos: (top) Metro PR; (bottom) Xavier García/Bloomberg



Many Puerto Ricans, and millions of others, were outraged at the sight of Trump, the would-be capitalist savior of Puerto Rico, throwing paper towels into a crowd of people, as if he were tossing out T-shirts at a sports event. This image summed up his flippant attitude towards the crisis the hard-hit island faces. Proclaiming the utterly inadequate Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) efforts “amazing,” “tremendous,” “incredible” and “really good,” he gave his administration a “10” out of 10 for its belated relief actions. Trump even dedicated a golf tournament trophy to the people suffering the effects of the storm. But golf trophies and paper towels have done nothing to ease the torment the Puerto Rican people have been enduring ... which didn’t begin with Hurricanes Irma and María.

### Colonial Subjugation and the Depopulation of Puerto Rico

Even many liberals, generally oblivious to the workings of U.S. imperialism, were shocked by the egregious mistreatment of Puerto Rico following the storms. More than once we heard the comment, including from clueless union bureaucrats, that the island was being “treated like, like a colony,” which is exactly what it is – the United States’ oldest territorial “possession” and the largest remaining colony in the world. Although Puerto Ricans are American citizens and subject to federal laws, island residents have no representation in Congress and



**Donald Trump during his four-hour visit to hurricane-battered Puerto Rico tosses paper towels into a crowd at a chapel in San Juan. They were “beautiful, soft towels . . . very good towels,” the U.S. president said later in an interview. “I was having fun.” The people of Puerto Rico, not so much.**

cannot vote for president – not that elections controlled by Wall Street and other billionaires give working people on the mainland any say in “their” government. But since last year, an unelected capitalist junta tightly controls the island’s finances under the “Puerto Rico Oversight, Management and Economic Stability Act” (PROMESA, or “promise” in Spanish).

There is a lot of finger-pointing going on in the post-María blame game. Donald Trump made sure to remind Puerto Ricans about the “broken infrastructure and massive debt” the island faces, complaining that “we’ve spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico.” When acting Homeland Security secretary Elaine Duke incredibly claimed that the response to the hurricane was a “good news story,” San Juan mayor Carmen Yulín Cruz responded, “This is a ‘people are dying’ story.” Trump’s answer was to blame the slow response to the crisis on “poor leadership ability by the mayor of San Juan, and others in Puerto Rico, who are not able to get their workers to help.” Trump and other U.S. capitalists create the racist stereotype of supposedly lazy Puerto Ricans – as they are desperately struggling for survival! – in order to blame their situation on the victims, and thus to perpetuate the cycle of debt and poverty.

Mayor Cruz described Trump’s four-hour photo-op visit to the island as “insulting to the people of Puerto Rico.” Yet she also said that Trump’s staff “seemed to want to approach this a different way” than their boss. What willful blindness! Donald Trump is hardly the only proponent of racist, imperialist policies toward Puerto Rico. Cruz is affiliated with the Popular Democratic Party (PDP), linked to the Democratic Party in the U.S. It was



**Internationalists at December 20 NYC rally against foreclosures in Puerto Rico outside offices of TPG Capital, whose mortgage companies have been aggressively evicting families affected by Hurricane María.**

Democratic president Bill Clinton who set off the deindustrialization of Puerto Rico, and Democratic president Barack Obama who last year appointed the grotesquely misnamed PROMESA junta to pay off his Wall Street backers while imposing vicious austerity on Puerto Rican workers. As a member of a colonial ruling class, Cruz is part of the *structure of imperialist domination* of Puerto Rico.

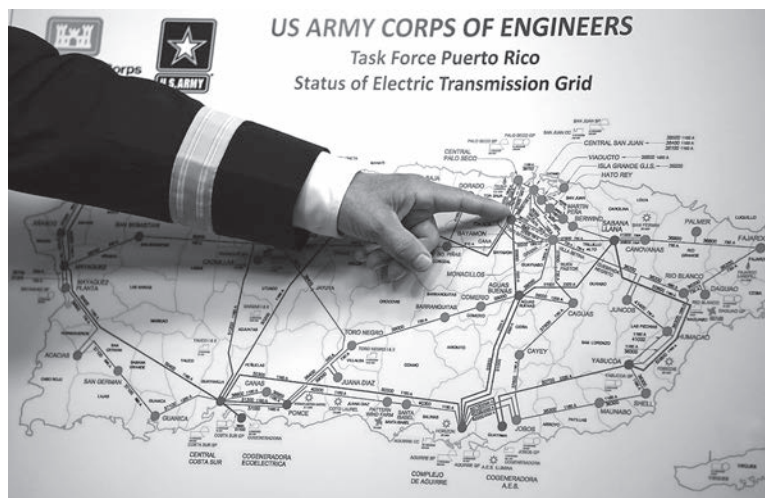
During Trump's brief visit to Puerto Rico, Mayor Cruz said to him, "Mr. Trump, it's about saving lives. It's not about politics." Asked about Cruz's pleas for disaster relief, FEMA director Brock Long responded: "We filtered out the mayor a long time ago. We don't have time for the political noise." To categorize requests for water and other essential resources as "political noise" is to treat the suffering of a subjugated people as a mere nuisance. Their lives are of little concern to the imperialist rulers. And, of course, this crisis is all about politics. It is about a U.S. colony that has faced over a century of economic, social and political oppression. The political debility of even bourgeois Puerto Rican politicians reflects this status, and that subjugation will not cease because of absurd calls on the imperialists to be "caring" overlords.

Under Republicans or Democrats, U.S. policy toward Puerto Rico is anything but altruistic. What has Washington actually done during the present crisis? It eventually sent the hospital ship USS *Comfort*, which mostly sat empty in the San Juan harbor. It dispatched 10,000+ troops to "keep order," distribute some meals-ready-to-eat and bottled water for a few days and install some mobile cell phone towers. Meanwhile, hundreds of masked mercenaries hired by private businesses roamed the streets of San Juan (Centro de Periodismo Investigativo, 10 October). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took its time in beginning repairs of power lines in the eastern third of the island. In recent days, it awarded an \$841 million contract to Fluor Enterprises, which made billions off of reconstruction contracts in New Orleans and Iraq.

Meanwhile, poor and working people in Puerto Rico are fighting for survival. Many still lack clean water, cell service and electricity. Many homes have been either destroyed or flooded. The result of the hurricanes and their aftermath has been a massive exodus from the island. In early October, a report by the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College in the City University of New York projected that "between 114,000 and 213,000 Puerto Rico residents will leave the island annually in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria," with as many as 82,000 moving to Florida.<sup>1</sup> The actual figures are much higher. By late November, some 208,000 Puerto Ricans had left the island for Florida alone, and flights to Miami and Orlando are fully booked through the end of the year. But this only intensifies a trend that has been going on for the last decade.

The most dramatic population change shown by the CPRS report is that from the start of the island's economic

<sup>1</sup> CPRS, Estimates of Post-Hurricane Maria Exodus from Puerto Rico (October 2017)



**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers virtually blocked restoration of power lines in eastern Puerto Rico. Shown here: Pentagon briefing, October 20.**

crisis in 2006, when the number of Puerto Ricans living on the island and in the mainland U.S. were roughly equal, the island population has dwindled to about 3.4 million people while the number of "stateside" Puerto Ricans has risen to 5.5 million. On this island where before Irma and María the average income per person was half that in the poorest U.S. state (Mississippi) and 43.5% of the population had incomes below the federal poverty level, things just got much worse. The number of industrial jobs in Puerto Rico has been cut in half since 1996, and many plants are still not up and running following María, or are barely limping along for lack of power and supplies.

The depopulation of Puerto Rico reflects the deep cuts in its living standards. The massive destruction could have been largely prevented, if it had the resources to properly maintain its infrastructure and prepare for natural disasters. For decades, the island colony was treated by the U.S. as a backwater with rampant poverty. There was a period of economic growth in the 1960s and '70s as the U.S. pumped resources into the island to make it a showcase and military bastion in response to the Cuban Revolution. Tax breaks (Section 936) attracted pharmaceutical giants. But the end of the anti-Soviet Cold War at the onset of the 1990s led to the canceling of these programs. As its tax base dwindled, Puerto Rico's colonial government resorted to growing debt as poverty escalated. The hurricane exacerbated existing deteriorating conditions on the island.

### **Privatizers, Profiteers and Union Busters Take Aim at PR Electrical Workers**

Puerto Rico is undergoing perhaps the longest nationwide blackout in history. The entire electrical system on the island effectively collapsed. While the number of those affected is vastly smaller than giant power outages in India, Turkey, Brazil and elsewhere, those were relatively brief. In this case, well over a million people may be without electricity for four months or more. The Puerto Rican Electrical Power Authority says that as of November 27, 58% of its power generating



capacity has been restored. But the power plants were not crippled, it was the distribution system, and some priority users like hospitals use far more electricity than a single family. In fact, most Puerto Ricans homes are still without power, and on St. Croix, the largest of the U.S. Virgin Islands, almost three-quarters of the population has no electricity.

Moreover, prior to the hurricanes, Puerto Rico had severely polluted drinking water due to its dilapidated infrastructure and financial inability to improve conditions. Flooding from the hurricanes has caused further contamination of fresh water by sewage. Two and a half months after María, one-fifth of the population still does not have access to potable running water. While so far a major outbreak of water-borne disease has been avoided, contaminants abound in Puerto Rico. The outlying island of Vieques was used as a site for bomb testing by the U.S. government. Next to a power plant in Guayama in southern Puerto Rico there is a mountain of coal ash, containing arsenic, mercury and chromium. Most landfills are full to overflowing, and desperate people have been drinking water from wells on Superfund toxic waste dumps.

As for a long-term solution to Puerto Rico's energy crisis, a group of electrical engineers at the University of Puerto Rico's Mayagüez campus argues that switching to greater use of solar power makes sense on an island with lots of sun, limited hydroelectric potential and no oil. South African capitalist wunderkind Elon Musk sent hundreds of Tesla solar panel battery packs to the disaster-stricken island, hoping to eventually



**UTIER, Coordinadora Sindical and other Puerto Rican labor federations march on offices of the Financial Control Board in San Juan's Golden Mile, August 30, protesting cuts to wages and pensions to pay off Wall Street vulture financiers.**

rake in big bucks in profits. But while Puerto Rican governor "Ricky" Rosselló says he is enticed by Musk's offer, there is a crisis that needs to be dealt with *now*, and that doesn't stem from nobody ever having thought of a better way to provide power for the island. The energy crisis is the direct result of years of criminal negligence of upkeep, managerial corruption, financial looting by creditors and flat-out union-busting.

Puerto Rico's Autoridad de Energía Eléctrica (AEE, or PREPA, for Puerto Rican Power Authority, in English) is the focus of a privatization offensive fostered by Rosselló of the New Progressive Party (PNP, linked to the U.S. Republicans) and the rest of the colonial capitalist rulers. The aim is to drive this largest publicly owned utility on U.S. territory into the ground, and then sell it off. The AEE is \$9 billion in debt. With no money to properly sustain the power grid, even before the hurricane hit, the authority said it needed \$4 billion for urgently needed repairs and upgrades. There were not even enough funds to prune trees growing too close to power lines, which could have helped prevent this widespread loss of power. In July, the AEE filed for bankruptcy, saying it was unable to maintain its "degraded and unsafe" infrastructure.

A main purpose of the privatization offensive is to break the historically militant electrical workers union UTIER (the Unión de Trabajadores de la Industria Eléctrica y Riego). For decades, Puerto Rico's capitalist rulers have been going after UTIER, as well as other unions on the island. When, in 1998, then-governor Pedro Rosselló (father of "Ricky") launched a drive to privatize the profitable Puerto Rico Telephone Company, this culminated in a general strike of which the UTIER was the backbone. Hundreds of thousands of workers shut down most of the island's economy and government for two days but were eventually defeated by vicious police repression and the capitulation of the union leaders (see "Puerto Rico General Strike – Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!" and "Balance Sheet of the General Strike: Puerto Rican Workers Mobilize, Union Tops Cave In," in *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998).



**UTIER struck and marched in May 2012 against plans to privatize Puerto Rican Power Authority.**

Ever since the 1980s, Puerto Rican colonial governments under both the PNP and PDP have been pushing the privatization drive, preparing the way by starving government-owned services of funds. As a result, the AEE cut its workforce by 30% and the number of linesmen was slashed by more than half. Even before the recent hurricanes destroyed the power grid, the shortage of trained electrical workers and deferred maintenance resulted in frequent power outages. In September 2016, the entire island was left without electricity for three days after an explosion damaged the key Central Aguirre plant on the south coast. This past August the giant Palo Seco plant, which supplies San Juan on the north coast, was shut down as unsafe. After Hurricane Irma, all the Power Authority's emergency supplies were used up.

Using the debt and energy crises as levers, Wall Street financiers are looking forward to a fire sale of Puerto Rico's public utility. Like pigs at a feeding trough, they are drawn to the smell of profit above all else. The PROMESA Oversight Board has appointed a retired Air Force colonel as "chief transformation officer" to prepare the privatization of the AEE, and they are eagerly assisted by the endlessly corrupt satraps in the colonial government. AEE chief executive Ricardo Ramos awarded the now-notorious no-bid, no-oversight contract to Whitefish Energy for the clear purpose of buying influence with the Trump regime, whose Interior Secretary is from the same small town in Montana and pals with the company's owner. The fact that the contract was canceled and Ramos was forced to resign is little consolation for the millions suffering in the dark on "generator island."

None of the bourgeois forces give a damn about the suffering of the poor and working people of Puerto Rico, or even the hard-hit middle class now facing ruin in the island's economic and physical collapse. The only real solution is to bring out the power of the working class in a fight leading to socialist revolution on the island and the U.S. mainland. The answer to the rampant patronage, looting and gutting of the vital electrical energy authority is for the electrical workers to seize the plants and distribution system and run them in the interests of the population. Marxist revolutionaries say: ***Defend UTIER! No to Privatization of the AEE! For workers control of the electrical power industry!***

### **Drive Out Yankee Imperialism – Independence for All Colonies!**

#### **For a Puerto Rican Workers State in a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean**

Profit for investors has been a top priority for as long as Puerto Rico has been a colony of the United States. An even more fundamental reason for keeping the island nation in colonial servitude is its geostrategic importance to Yankee imperialism. It wrested control of Puerto Rico from Spain in 1898, in the first U.S. imperialist war, when it also seized Cuba and Philippines. A few years later, during World War I, the U.S. expeditionary forces occupied Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Nicaragua and other countries around the Caribbean rim. By the 1930s, Washington withdrew troops from the rest, turning them into neo-colonies

ruled by U.S.-installed puppets and economically controlled by Wall Street. But Puerto Rico was kept as a colony, a launching pad to ensure that the Caribbean would be an "American lake."

For the last 65 years, Puerto Rico has been called a "commonwealth" in English, a term with no precise meaning (the states of Kentucky, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Virginia are also "commonwealths"), and in Spanish an "*estado libre asociado*" (ELA, or free associated state), which is a bald-faced lie. At the time this status was enacted in 1952, it was illegal to display a Puerto Rican flag or to advocate in print, campaign for or even talk of independence. In 1950, the U.S. bloodily smashed a pro-independence revolt. These designations are subterfuges aimed at disguising the fact that the island is a colonial possession of the United States which is subject to Washington's dictate on every substantial issue. At times the U.S. has doled out a few economic crumbs, as long as the island was firmly under the imperialist boot. But not these days.

The current crisis, in which Puerto Rico is at the mercy of an unelected Junta de Control Financiero (JCF – in English, Financial Oversight and Management Board), with its recovery from the devastation of hurricanes Irma and María dependent upon FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is the quintessence of its dependent colonial status. Governor "Ricky" Rosselló and his PNP argue that if Puerto Rico were a state, it would be better able to recover from disasters. You think? Think again. The island might get some more Medicaid dollars, but as for federal aid for relief and rebuilding, all you have to do is look at New Orleans, where the feds' response to Hurricane Katrina was to drive poor black people out of the city, and Flint, Michigan where FEMA refused to declare the water crisis affecting the largely black city a major disaster.

Various social democrats duck the issue of Puerto Rico's colonial status while arguing that "Congress can and should provide funds for reconstruction, which also requires the cancellation of Puerto Rico's public debt," as two leaders of the Partido del Pueblo Trabajador (PPT, Working People's Party) wrote in an "Open Letter to the People of the United States" (*Counterpunch*, 20 October). Likewise, the reformist International Socialist Organization argues that "Puerto Rico's debt must be forgiven – and the austerity that crippled the island over the past several decades must be reversed" (*Socialist Worker*, 18 October). This is the same idea put forward by Democratic Party "socialist" Bernie Sanders, although he talks more vaguely of "restructuring" the debt to the vulture capitalists to provide "substantial relief" to Puerto Ricans (*El Nuevo Día*, 28 November). Since when are Wall Street and the U.S. Congress into "forgiving" the debt and lifting the capitalist austerity that impoverish working people? The only way that will be accomplished is through international socialist revolution.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have from the beginning called for the ***independence of Puerto Rico, and of all colonies***. We call for ***driving out all imperialist troops and bases***. In doing so we are upholding the policy of the Third (Communist) International under Lenin and Trotsky, of Trotsky's Fourth International and of the Spartacist tendency when it was the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism. There can be no just or democratic solution to



national and social oppression when an imperialist power rules over a dependent territory, which has been true of Puerto Rico since 1898. It is doubly true today when the Junta appointed by Washington controls the island's fate despite the charade of local self-government. But even formal independence will not break the stranglehold of imperialism over semi-colonies, which is how the U.S. dominates much of Latin America.

In fact, the deep poverty of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica and other Caribbean capitalist countries is one of the main arguments used against Puerto Rican independence. When the Spartacist League and its International Communist League (SL/ICL) announced in 1998 that it no longer advocated independence for the world's largest remaining colony, the IG denounced this betrayal of communist principle, stressing that the key was Trotsky's theory and program of *permanent revolution*, which holds that it is vital "to join together the struggle for emancipation of the subject peoples from imperialism with the fight for proletarian revolution, both in the colony and in the imperialist metropolis" (see "ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence," *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998).

This lesson has been driven home by the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and María and the criminally negligent "relief" efforts of the capitalist-imperialist rulers that have left millions of Puerto Ricans living in the dark for months. Yet today the ex-Trotskyist SL not only refuses to call unambiguously for Puerto Rican independence, it says it would "support" statehood – that is, annexation by the U.S. which would lead to the destruction of the Puerto Rican nation. Meanwhile, it joins the social democrats in calling to "cancel Puerto Rico's debt" without explaining that this will require overthrowing capitalism, and without presenting a concrete transitional program of revolutionary struggle pointing to that goal.

While Donald Trump pats himself on the back for the responses to the hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, recovery efforts have been utterly insufficient, as they generally

will be under capitalism. Working-class and poor people, who often barely have the means to survive during fair weather, many living in precarious locations, are always far more vulnerable to natural disasters. This is so independent of national borders. In recent months, a September earthquake in Mexico left a death toll of over two hundred people, while an intermittent eruption of Mount Agung in Bali, Indonesia in September and November drove tens of thousands from their homes, recalling the massive earthquake and tsunami of December 2004.<sup>2</sup>

The bourgeois state is organized to defend the interests of the bourgeoisie, leaving working people on their own in the face of life-threatening crises beyond their control. Under the relative anarchy of capitalist society, individuals fend for themselves to try to escape "natural" disasters, whose causes and consequences are the result of the action and inaction of the ruling classes. In desperately poor Haiti hundreds of thousands died in 2010, and in Puerto Rico likely over a thousand perished due to this year's hurricanes. It doesn't have to be like this. Next door in Cuba, in a (bureaucratically deformed) workers state with a planned economy, an elaborate system of collective evacuation and shelter preparations means that the hurricanes that annually tear through the Caribbean cause very few deaths.

As the example of Cuba shows, it is not sufficient to demand national independence under the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie. To carry out the program of permanent revolution, it is necessary to build a genuinely Trotskyist, revolutionary internationalist workers party in Puerto Rico, part of a reformed Fourth International that can lead the fight for socialist revolution the world over. ■

<sup>2</sup> See "Capitalist Tidal Wave of Death" and other articles in the special issue on the "Asian Tsunami Disaster," *The Internationalist* No. 20, January-February 2005. See also "Haiti Earthquake: Capitalism, Occupation and Revolution" and related articles in *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010.

## SL/ICL on Puerto Rico: Annexationist "Socialists"

When the Communist International was founded after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, one of its first acts was to require, in its famous "21 conditions" for membership, that any party joining the Comintern would have to come out unconditionally, in word and deed, for independence of the colonies. From the start, the Trotskyist movement in the United States called for independence for Puerto Rico. This was the position of the Spartacist League (SL) when it was the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism. But in 1998 the SL suddenly "corrected" itself, declaring, "We do not currently advocate independence for Puerto Rico." Its argument was that "the vast majority of the population there is not in favor of it at this time" (*Workers Vanguard*, 11 September 1998). This was a huge betrayal of communist principle.

Now the SL has gone a step farther, declaring it would support statehood – that is, the colonialist annexation of Puerto Rico.

The SL's 1998 "correction" was to an article on the general strike against the privatization of the Puerto Rican phone company, a strike that the Internationalist Group actively supported.

The IG leaflet, distributed on the picket lines in San Juan, included a headline, "Yankee Imperialism Out – For Puerto Rico's Right to Independence! For a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean!" (see *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998). The leaflet declared that the IG and the League for the Fourth International "advocate independence for Puerto Rico, in order to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism and because only by breaking out of the national subjugation of colonial rule can the international class struggle come to the fore." A key event in the strike was a march on Fort Buchanan in San Juan demanding that the U.S. get out of Puerto Rico.

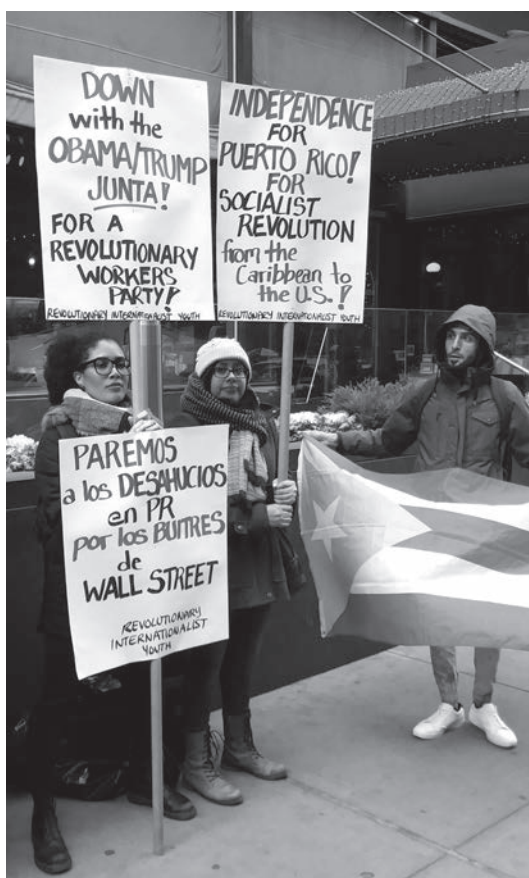
The IG exposed the SL's shameful revision of revolutionary Marxism on colonies, noting that these ex-Trotskyists would never have been accepted in Lenin and Trotsky's Comintern (see "ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence," in *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998). In response, WV (8 January 1999) declared that "we favor the independence of Puerto Rico," but do not "advocate" it and only "champion" the *right* to independence and self-determination.

Some “champions”! Ever since, the SL has been dancing around the question, sometimes saying it “favored” independence and sometimes that it “would favor,” but never “advocating” it. In fact, every U.S. president from Jimmy Carter on (including both Bushes) has claimed to support Puerto Rico’s right to self-determination and independence!

Then in late August a new issue of *Spartacist* appeared, the first in three years, reprinting the edited document of the conference of the SL’s International Communist League (ICL), titled “The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra.” This is one strange document. It asserts that many ICL leaders have been characterized by Anglo chauvinism (true enough), but also that the SL/ICL’s former Leninist position on the national question going back to 1975 was “chauvinist,” and combines this with a purge of a whole layer of longtime cadres from the top leadership. In fact, the “Hydra” document embraces bourgeois nationalism, and repeatedly tries to “extend” Lenin by claiming he said the opposite of what he wrote. On Puerto Rico, we now read, lo and behold, that SL/ICL chairman (consultative) Jim Robertson argued back in 1998 that “we strongly advocate independence” for Puerto Rico, even though *WV* repeatedly wrote the opposite.

Has the SL/ICL finally seen the light? Hardly. The “Hydra” document did admit to the SL’s shilly-shallying on Puerto Rican independence. But then it throws in the zinger that, “even though the sentiment for statehood is the result of economic blackmail by the U.S.,” it now defends “the right of Puerto Ricans to choose statehood” as a supposed expression of self-determination! And just as in the past it cynically claimed that calling for independence meant *forcing* it on the Puerto Rican people, the SL now pretends that opposing calls for statehood equals *preventing* Puerto Ricans from choosing it. Moreover, the SL now declares that it would *support statehood*, saying “should Puerto Ricans decide they want statehood, we would support the will of the population” (*Workers Vanguard*, 1 December). But how would that collective will be determined? In another rigged colonial referendum?

In reality, becoming a state would be a *colonial annexation*. It would inevitably mean the destruction of the Puerto Rican nation, which is what advocates of statehood, namely the far right wing of Puerto Rican bourgeois politicians, intend. In 2012 the pro-statehood PNP (New Progressive Party) governor



**Unlike the ex-Trotskyist SL/ICL, which gives “left” cover to colonialism and now to annexation, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have consistently called for independence for Puerto Rico and international socialist revolution.**

Luis Fortuño called for instruction in the public schools on all subjects to switch over to English by 2022. This is on an island where 94% of the population speaks Spanish at home! As recently as two years ago, the SL could still see what was at stake, correctly stating that “statehood, or direct annexation” would “accelerate the tendency of English to replace Spanish on this island, ultimately threatening the national identity of the Puerto Rican people” (*Workers Vanguard*, 2 October 2015). That is no less true today, but now they’re for it.

So the ex-Trotskyist *anti*-Leninists of the Spartacist League/ICL are explicitly supporting colonial annexation.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, they still refuse to call unambiguously for independence for colonies (and not just on Puerto Rico, also for the U.S. Virgin Islands and the French colonies of Martinique and Guadeloupe). This is a direct continuation of their vociferous support for the 2010 U.S. invasion of Haiti (in the guise of earthquake relief), which they later had to admit was a *social-imperialist betrayal*. Their new annexationist line on Puerto Rico is another pro-imperialist betrayal. And the attempt to somehow marry this to their claim that in the abstract they “advocate,” “favor” or “would favor”

independence reeks of a rotten compromise. The SL/ICL is spin-

<sup>1</sup> In Section XI of the “Hydra” document, they come out for “the right of Puerto Ricans to freely decide on annexation.” What an abomination, this “right to annexation”! How “free” would such a decision be when, as even the ICL admits, “sentiment for statehood is the result of economic blackmail by the U.S.”? This Orwellian doublespeak is nothing but liberal “democratist” claptrap straight out of the playbook of U.S. imperialism and its propaganda about “free elections.” Washington repeatedly called such “demonstration elections,” from Vietnam to the Dominican Republic to El Salvador, to supposedly demonstrate that the population “freely decided” to support whoever was their local puppet.

In contrast, Lenin emphatically demanded independence for colonies and devoted three whole sections of his article “The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up” (October 1916) to explaining “Why Are Social-Democrats Against Annexations?” He sums up: “We say: In order that we may have the strength to accomplish the socialist revolution and overthrow the bourgeoisie, the workers must unite more closely and this close union is promoted by the struggle for self-determination, i.e., the struggle against annexations. We are consistent.” As for the SL/ICL, their zigzagging arguments are the opposite of consistent, and they are certainly not consistent with Lenin’s position on the national question. But they are quite consistent in capitulating over and over again to “their own” imperialist bourgeoisie.



Viktor Bulla



**Today's ICL would never have been accepted into the Communist International. Above: Delegates to the Second Congress of the Comintern, including, behind Lenin, M. Gorky, Grigorii Zinoviev (hands behind back), M.N. Roy (coat and tie) and Maria Ulyanova. Congress voted the "21 conditions" for joining the Comintern, including demanding expulsion of imperialists from the colonies.**

ning like a top on the national question.

In 1998, the SL/ICL gave a left cover to colonialism, abandoning the call for independence for Puerto Rico. In 2010, they gave a left cover to Yankee imperialist occupation of Haiti, buying the story of the Democratic Obama administration that this was humanitarian aid. Now in 2017, in supporting statehood for Puerto Rico they put a "left" gloss on a step that they earlier admitted would obliterate the Puerto Rican nation. Amid a blowout over imperialist chauvinism, the SL/ICL's annexationist position is the quintessence of that. Recall how an earlier pro-statehood "socialist," Santiago Yglesias, supported repression of *independentistas* in the 1930s. And don't forget how President Ulysses Grant sought to annex the Dominican Republic after the U.S. Civil War, or how the slavocracy sought to annex Cuba after the 1848 war that stole half of Mexico.

Back in 1998 when the SL announced it did not "advocate" Puerto Rican independence, it argued that most Puerto Ricans are "loath to relinquish the benefits of U.S. citizenship." Let's see. Would those "benefits" include the fact that Puerto Ricans on the U.S. mainland have an 80% higher poverty rate than the overall population, a 60% higher unemployment rate and a 28% lower median family income?<sup>2</sup> At this moment, the fact that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens means that they can escape the hellish conditions on the island by purchasing an airline ticket to Florida (if they can get a seat). But that desperation measure is hardly a

<sup>2</sup> See Pew Research Center, "Hispanics of Puerto Rican Origin in the United States, 2010" (June 2012).

yardstick of support for annexation. The PNP government trumpets that 97% voted for statehood in the phony referendum it staged in June, yet less than a quarter of the voters participated.

In any case, this is a bogus argument. If Puerto Rico becomes independent, that doesn't mean Puerto Ricans automatically lose U.S. citizenship: witness the large numbers of U.S./Israeli dual citizens. At present it is extremely difficult to strip someone born in the U.S. of their citizenship, although the racists may certainly try. Virulent immigrant-bashers are demanding an overturn of the 14th Amendment, won on the battlefields of the Civil War, which declared that everyone born on the territory of the U.S. is a citizen, including former slaves and children of immigrants, documented or undocumented alike. This underscores the fact that the struggle against the colonial subjugation of Puerto Rico is a battle against racist reaction across the board, and that fight can

only be definitively won through socialist revolution.

The latter-day Spartacist League grotesquely claims (in "Hydra") that "for the IG, imperialist white Americans can decide the fate of Puerto Ricans without any concern for their national will." This race-baiting slander, which is particularly stupid coming from them and directed against us, is a total invention by admitted imperialist chauvinists. It is contradicted by everything the IG has written on Puerto Rico. The IG leaflet on the 1998 general strike stressed the *right to independence*, as "an overwhelming majority of the Puerto Rican population does not presently favor independence" and "the working class has no interest in forcing independence against the will of the Puerto Rican population." Yet, as the IG insisted, in calling for independence, "Our program is not governed by what is currently popular but by what is necessary for proletarian revolution and the liberation of the oppressed" ("ICL Renounces Puerto Rican Independence").

Today's SL/ICL is turning its back on the three decades when as revolutionary Trotskyists they stood foursquare for independence for Puerto Rico. Now they "champion" bourgeois nationalism from Quebec to Catalonia, and call to break up multinational imperialist states such as Belgium even when the population does not favor that. Simultaneously these annexationist "socialists" *refuse to call for asylum for refugees* fleeing imperialist-instigated war and terror. As defenders of Lenin and Trotsky and the early Communist International, the League for the Fourth International *calls for independence for all colonies* even as we fight for *workers revolution from the Caribbean to the imperialist heartland*. ■

## War Drums...

*continued from page 5*

rake in billions in government contracts and subsidies. Democrats and Republicans agree that a North Korea with nuclear weapons that can be delivered via ICBM is “unacceptable” whereas the U.S. imperialists having thousands of nukes is just dandy. They repeat in unison the refrain that if Kim Jong Un gets his hands on nuclear weapons (which he clearly has), the North Korean leader would surely incinerate major U.S. cities in a fit of psychotic rage. It’s all to whip up war hysteria.

There is deep bipartisan *agreement* by the partner parties of U.S. imperialism, as well as their NATO imperialist allies, that North Korea is an “outlaw regime” and “rogue state” that must be “dealt with” militarily at some point in the immediate or near future. Last month, the Pentagon put out a report to lawmakers that the only way to seize North Korea’s nuclear arsenal “with complete certainty” is a full-on ground invasion (*Washington Post*, 4 November). Some liberal Democratic Congressmen interpreted this as a cautionary warning, but House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi said in response that she could *support* such an invasion, declaring: “North Korea’s behavior has to be stopped, reversed – they cannot have a nuclear weapon.” As for self-described “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders, while later decrying Trump’s “fire and fury” rhetoric as reckless, back in April he said that Trump was “doing the right thing” on North Korea, arguing: “North Korea is a real danger to this world, and we have got to do everything we can to ... prevent a nuclear war and to get them to stop their nuclear program.”

The bottom line – and all the top U.S. and NATO politicians and military planners know it – is that *North Korea will never agree to give up its nuclear deterrent*, its means of survival against the imperialist onslaught. The neocons of *The National Interest* (29 November) are declaring: “North Korea: Why War Is the Only Option Now,” with chilling calculations that it would lead to at most “1.4 million” U.S./South Korean/Japanese deaths! The possibility of war is so high that recently a group of 58 retired generals and admirals wrote an open letter to Trump, urging him to “exhaust every possible diplomatic solution” because “military action by the United States and its allies prompting an immediate, retaliatory barrage on Seoul would result in hundreds of thousands of casualties” (*Washington Post*, 13 December). A week later the commandant of the Marine Corps and member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Robert Neller, told troops stationed in Norway that “I hope I’m wrong, but there’s a war coming” (*Military.com*, 20 December). The sergeant major of the Marines said the real focus was on Russia, and that the number of U.S. troops in Norway “could go from 300 to 3,000 overnight.”

Quite a few liberals are concerned that Donald Trump is a crazed psychopath (true enough), and that irrational behavior of both Kim and Trump could set off a nuclear war.

Theirs is a tale of two reckless nuclear-armed madmen who could go off on each other. But the North Korean leader is utterly rational in seeking a nuclear deterrent, and the central danger of U.S. military action is not from some impetuous 3 a.m. Trump tweet but from deliberate Pentagon planning. A related liberal theme is that, “The war of words between North Korea and the United States could be pushing the region closer to the brink of an accidental conflict” (CNN, 25 September), which could easily escalate into a global military conflict. The example cited is how the Balkan Wars morphed into World War I after the assassination of Austrian archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo in June 1914. Yet WWI was hardly accidental; it was the result of deliberate policy of the major belligerent imperialist powers, all of which had been preparing for it for years. Imperialist wars are not the result of miscalculation but of fundamental economic and geostrategic forces.

Decaying capitalism is pushing toward world war as inter-imperialist tensions mount, with looming trade wars between the U.S. and a host of countries, while an economically weakened U.S. imperialism relies on military prowess to prop up its waning world domination. The U.S. may undertake military action on the Korean Peninsula in order to demonstrate its “resolve” to potential rivals, like Russia and China (both cited as competitors in the Trump administration’s “America First” National Security Strategy). More to the point than comparisons to the outbreak of World War I is how the U.S. and its imperialist allies pushed Japan to enter World War II with economic sanctions. In 1940, Washington embargoed exports of scrap iron and steel, copper and various grades of oil to Japan, which were vital to the resource-poor island power. A year later the Roosevelt administration froze all Japanese assets in the U.S. With war inevitable, the Japanese looked to occupy British, French and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia for supplies of oil, tin and rubber, and prepared to attack Pearl Harbor and Singapore.

The escalating imperialist sanctions against North Korea – with the complicity of the leaders of the Chinese deformed workers state and of Russia, a regional capitalist power – are not just “muscular diplomacy” but economic warfare leading to provocative military action. Such actions could include a naval blockade and/or mining of North Korean harbors, decreeing a Libya-style “no-fly zone,” or other options. In early December, the U.S. carried out a joint four-day military exercise with South Korea, codenamed “Vigilant Ace,” the third annual aerial drill simulating the bombing of strategic North Korean targets. Over 12,000 U.S. troops and 230 military aircraft took part in the exercise, including F-22 and F-35 stealth fighter jets. Simultaneously, South Korea announced a military “decapitation unit” tasked with murdering North Korea’s leadership and seizing its nuclear facilities. And a few days later, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson “let slip” that the U.S. had “had conversations with the Chinese” about U.S. plans to “secure” North Korean nuclear weapons.





**Tens of thousands demonstrate in North Korean capital of Pyongyang chanting “Defend!” The march took place on June 25, “the day of struggle against U.S. imperialism,” marking the start of the 1950-53 Korean War that devastated their country.**

Meanwhile, the annual “Fool Eagle/Key Resolve” U.S.-South Korea joint military exercise is coming up in early March, which includes massive troop mobilizations, a major military rehearsal for war on North Korea. Last year’s exercise involved over 17,000 U.S. and 300,000 South Korean troops. And as early as January 16, there will be a meeting of the imperialist consortium on North Korea co-hosted by the U.S. and Canada. The so-called Vancouver Group includes all of the original members of the United Nations command that waged the last Korean War, plus Japan, India and Sweden. According to Tillerson, the summit’s aim will be to advance “diplomatic efforts” toward a “nuclear-free future on the Korean Peninsula.” But making North Korea “nuclear-free” means launching war. Tillerson’s offer of U.S.-North Korea talks “without precondition” was immediately contradicted by the White House, and Tillerson recanted days later. They all know that *the DPRK won’t give up its nukes without a fight* – nor should it.

While criminally going along with imperialist sanctions, just two days after Trump threatened to “totally destroy North Korea” in his September address to the U.N., China and Russia conducted an eight-day joint military exercise in the Seas of Japan and Okhotsk. This was part of their Joint-Sea 2017 program, the first phase of which took place in the Baltic Sea in July, greatly annoying NATO. Chinese Lt.-Gen. Wang Hongguang warned at a conference on national security in Beijing on December 16 that “the war on the Korean peninsula might break out anytime between now and March next year” and that “China should be psychologically prepared for a potential Korean war, and the northeast China regions should be mobilized for that.” That same day, China and Russia started five-day joint air-defense exercises aimed at defending against missiles. Meanwhile

a document appeared on a Chinese website about preparations to set up five new refugee camps along the North Korean border.

But the Pentagon war planners may badly miscalculate. Despite the propaganda about a potential regime collapse, believable reports from the DPRK say that after years of privation, the standard of living of the mass of the population has noticeably improved lately, and that there is real determination to fight. In the South there is huge opposition to unleashing war on the Korean Peninsula, as

shown in the demonstrations against the THAAD anti-missile system and the mass outpouring to protest Trump’s visit to Seoul this past November. In South Korea, the possibility of mobilizing the power of labor against imperialist war moves can be seen in the historically militant workers movement that for decades has fought the giant *chaebols* (industrial conglomerates like Hyundai and Samsung) who run South Korea like a fiefdom, and the military-based governments that fostered these capitalist monopolies. In Japan and Europe as well, and around the world, revolutionaries must call for a proletarian fight against imperialist war.

A war on North Korea would cause carnage on a monstrous scale. There should be no doubt that U.S. rulers are prepared to unleash such a horrific slaughter against a weaker nuclear power. The blog of the National Security Archive at George Washington University reported on the basis of declassified documents that at the time of the 1961 Berlin crisis, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff drew up a Single Integrated Operation Plan (SIOP-62) that included a target list of 983 installations and foresaw between 80 million and 108 million killed in the Soviet Union, and 104 million Chinese dead (Unredacted.com, 8 November 2011). As the media goes into high gear regurgitating war propaganda and manipulating fears of nuclear annihilation, revolutionary Marxists (Trotskyists) must wage a class fight against the would-be masters of the world in Washington and Wall Street, who are the fundamental enemies of working people everywhere. The struggle against imperialist war can only be successful if it leads to international socialist revolution to overthrow the rule of these rapacious and bloodthirsty exploiters.

***Defend North Korea against U.S. war moves, defeat U.S. imperialism! ■***

## “Socialists” who capitulate...

*continued from page 7*

Trotsky’s Left Opposition – predecessor of the Fourth International he founded in 1938 – insisted on the need to continue to defend the USSR against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution.

The centrality of this position was shown in the all-out political struggle waged by Trotsky in 1939-40 – summed up in his book *In Defense of Marxism* – against the “petty-bourgeois opposition” led by Max Shachtman, which renounced defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state and proclaimed a mythical “Third Camp” hovering between the workers state and its imperialist enemies. Unlike the present-day WWP – which to its credit at least takes a stand defending North Korea against imperialism – Trotsky emphasized that military defense did not equal political support to the Stalinist regime. To the contrary, he emphasized the need for a proletarian political revolution to reestablish the proletarian democracy of workers soviets and extend revolution internationally.

When anti-capitalist revolutions established deformed workers states on the pattern of the USSR after WWII, the Trotskyist movement militarily defended them against the onslaught of imperialism. This reached a bloody height in the Korean War. When Soviet-armed Chinese and North Korean troops threw back the U.S. imperialists south of the 38th Parallel, the imperialists’ social-democratic sidekicks denounced this as “Soviet imperialism.” The U.S. war against Korea was “a struggle to preserve civilization,” proclaimed Norman Thomas, head of the Socialist Party – cited (accurately) as a forerunner of their organization by today’s Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

Joining the anti-Soviet crusade was Shachtman, whose “Third Camp” anti-Sovietism led him to work with Thomas directly in the Korean War, writing propaganda leaflets that the imperialists quite literally dropped on the Koreans. Soon, the Shachtmanites (including future DSA founder Michael Harrington) became central leaders of Thomas’s “State Department Socialist” Party.<sup>1</sup> In Britain, the “Third Camp” grouping led by Tony Cliff broke with the Fourth International, coming out against the defense of North Korea, China and the USSR. While echoing the Shachtmanites’ motto “Neither Washington nor Moscow,” Cliff gave it his own spin by calling the USSR “state capitalist” (whereas Shachtman thought “bureaucratic collectivism” sounded a bit less implausible for purposes of “theoretical” cover).

Rocketed to liberal/“progressive” media fame with its embrace of the Bernie Sanders campaign and rapid growth since Trump’s election, today’s DSA tries to give its social-democratic politics a more youthful look. So where does it stand on Korea? Unsurprisingly, its organizers sneer at the very idea of *defending* the DPRK against imperialism. Its hero Sanders praised Trump as “doing the right thing” over Korea

back in April, but the DSA knows that fear and loathing of the bully in the White House have helped put the wind in its sails – so it outsources the dirty work.

If you look for articles on Korea on the DSA website, what you find is an article titled “Should Limiting North Korea’s Nuclear Ambitions Be the Responsibility of the U.S. Government?” (29 November). The problem with “threatening North Korea with destruction,” states author Laurence Wittner of the State University of New York at Albany, is that “it has been remarkably unproductive.” From “the standpoint of heading off nuclear weapons advances by the North Korean regime, [the] belligerent approach by the U.S. government has shown no signs of success.” Instead, the *United Nations* should take charge of the “dispute.” After all, the U.N. “is already involved in efforts to limit North Korea’s nuclear weapons program,” it has “condemned” the DPRK “on numerous occasions,” and “imposed stiff economic sanctions.” The article sermonizes that “the strengthening of international law and law enforcement” is what “the nations of the world” wanted when they established the U.N. in 1945. Like hell it was! In reality, the U.N. was the vehicle that the U.S. used as sponsor for its bloody Korean War five years later.

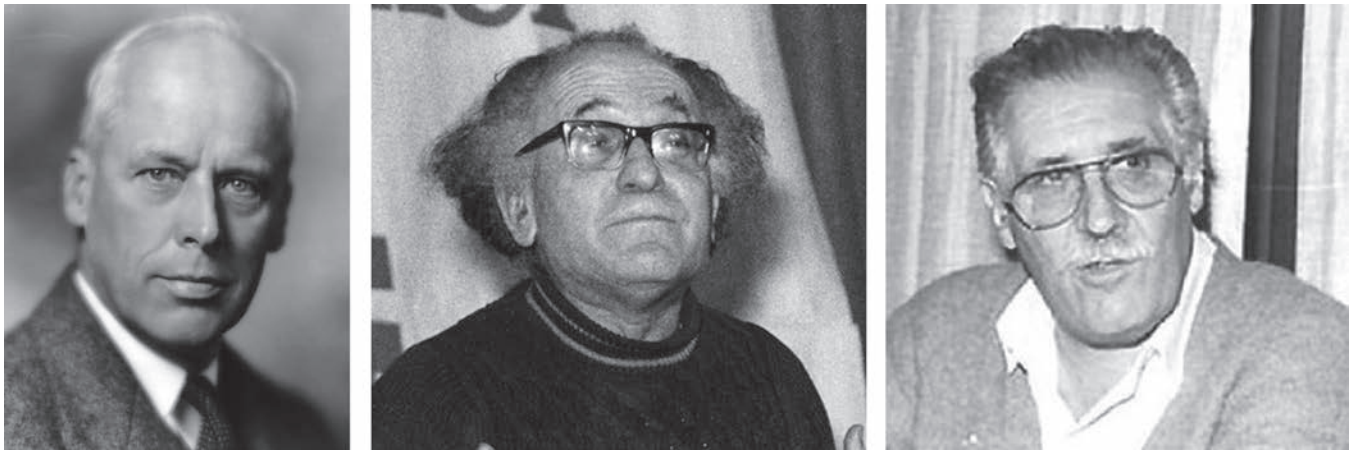
Staking out a niche a bit to the left of the DSA has required a balancing act for the Cliffite International Socialist Organization. Lauding the Sanders campaign for putting “Socialism In the Air,” they judged it imprudent to openly endorse him unless he presented a “third-party alternative.” Waxing jubilant over the DSA’s growth, the ISO urges it to be more “independent.” On North Korea, it channels Cliff, calling the brittle Stalinist caste headed by Kim Jong Un the “ruling class” of a “state capitalist” society which has “ramped up the situation by greatly increasing the frequency of its missile tests and making clear progress in its pursuit of a viable nuclear option” (“Trump’s game of chicken with North Korea,” *Socialist Worker*, 19 December).

To be sure, *Socialist Worker* details the U.S. nuclear threat and notes that for the DPRK leader, nuclear arms development is not “crazy” or irrational, but a matter of survival. Yet it claims that since “the costs would be unacceptable to both sides,” a war on the Korean peninsula is “unthinkable.” Tell it to the millions around the world who think each day might be the one Trump pushes the nuclear button! While observing that a key part of U.S. strategy is “targeting China,” it calls for the *nuclear disarmament* of China (as well as the U.S. and Russia) – which would mean China’s conquest by the U.S. imperialists. Needless to say, it does *not* call to defend North Korea against the imperialists.

A relative newcomer to the field is Left Voice, an amorphous group which is part of the international media “network” of the “Fracción Trotskista” (see box). At the time of publication, the Left Voice website has four articles that address the North Korea question. While criticizing the U.S. government and cogitating about which regime is worse, Left Voice pointedly does not take a stand *for* the elementary duty, most especially of leftists in the U.S. itself,

<sup>1</sup> This and related topics are discussed in depth in the forthcoming Internationalist pamphlet on the DSA.





From left: Hakkerup Studio/U.S. Library of Congress; The Charnel House; Izquierda Diario

**Anti-Soviet mentors of today's "left" social democrats. (From left) Socialist Party USA leader Norman Thomas, who worked with the CIA. Tony Cliff, who refused to defend North Korea, the Soviet Union and China in the Korean War. Nahuel Moreno, who hailed the CIA's anti-Soviet "holy warriors" in Afghanistan.**

to defend North Korea and its right to nuclear weapons, against U.S. imperialism. This is only logical for the FT, a tendency that got its start capitulating to "democratic" counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc and the capitalist reunification of Germany.

Its main article, "The U.S. and North Korea: A War of Nerves, For Now" (*Left Voice*, 7 September), might as well have been channeling vintage Shachtman on the so-called "Third Camp." While much of it runs strikingly parallel to the ISO's coverage, the *Left Voice* piece is if anything even further to the right. Like the ISO, it downplays the imperialist threat, stating, "The U.S. and its allies want to avoid a military conflict that would have huge costs...." Rather than a deformed workers state, the article calls the DPRK a "detestable dictatorial regime." It says it's "an exercise in intellectual laziness" to label Kim "crazy," but hastens to add that "[t]his does not justify Kim Jong Un's actions." Again in classic Third Camp style, it states that the DPRK's "newest missile launch signals a clear escalation of the threat of violent military confrontation." It ends: "The U.S. and North Korea are now toeing the line with a war that it seems that no one really wants." In light of Trump's escalating threats, this bizarre statement amounts to propagating willful blindness in the face of the deadly threat posed by U.S. imperialism.

Two weeks later, *Left Voice* ran a long piece analyzing Trump's speech to the U.N. ("Trump's America First Imperialism," 21 September). Observing that the U.S. president's "strongest words were reserved for North Korea, with whom tensions have been escalating over the past months," it continues: "while Kim Jong-Un has threatened the U.S. territory of Guam, tested a hydrogen bomb and sent two missiles flying over the territory of U.S. ally Japan, Trump for his part has promised to bring 'fire and fury' n North Korea – a threat that thus far has not materialized." Trump "stunned onlookers with his threat not just against the North Korean dictator, but against all the North Korean people,"

the article says. For now, it's "primarily a war of words" and "it seems that neither side wants an open war for now." Yet in light of the history of U.S. aggression, it avers: "Trump's rhetoric should be taken seriously." So what does that mean concretely? Upholding North Korea's right to defend itself? Not a word on that.

In his speech to the U.N., as Trump wound up to his chilling threat to "totally destroy North Korea," near the top of his bill of particulars was this: "We were all witness to the regime's deadly abuse when an innocent American college student, Otto Warmbier, was returned to America only to die a few days later." So it was particularly striking to see the *Left Voice* (23 June) article titled "Death of Otto Warmbier – That Could Have Been Me!" Based (like a previous piece from 2015) on a tourist trip that Fracción Trotskista spokesman Wladek Flakin made to North Korea, this ostentatiously echoes the imperialist war propaganda against the DPRK. Sure, Flakin tries to cover himself by claiming that on his visit he "opposed imperialism far more than Pyongyang's weak Stalinist regime," and averring that one "shouldn't forget that Trump commands the world's second largest arsenal," nor that the U.S. actually used atomic bombs in 1945. But, he says, "we worry about the DPRK developing ever more sophisticated nuclear weapons." On the contrary, *Trotskyists defend North Korea's right to develop a nuclear deterrent against the deadly imperialist threat.*

Over North Korea, the *anti-Trotskyist* "Fraction" links arms with the latter-day Cliffites of the ISO and the left-over Shachtmanites of the DSA. And as Shachtman's trajectory shows, the mythical "Third Camp" is just a stepping stone to outright support for imperialism. Genuine Trotskyists base their politics on *classes* not "camps." Thus a quarter century ago, we fought for defense of the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states, whereas these assorted social democrats all sided with the imperialist-led counter-revolution in the name of (supposedly classless but actually bourgeois) "democracy." What's happening over North Korea today is a replay. ■



Internationalist photo

# The League for the Fourth International Holds First International Conference

The League for the Fourth International held its First International Conference over a three-day period this past November. This marks an important step forward in the struggle to reforge the Trotskyist world party of socialist revolution. The date of the conference was chosen to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the 1917 Russian October Revolution led by the Bolshevik party of Lenin and Trotsky. The gathering brought together delegates from the five national sections of the LFI – Brazil, Germany, Italy, Mexico and the United States – as well as guests and visitors.

An important feature of the Conference was that the proceedings were transmitted internationally by videoconferencing. This was crucial, as several delegates were unable to attend in person, particularly because of racist U.S. laws. It also made it possible for LFI comrades and members of fraternally allied transitional organizations to follow the discussions. After a couple of anxious hours, the team of cadres responsible for the technical arrangements was able to work out glitches and the transmission functioned well throughout the conference.

The meeting was held in a union hall, with meals and refreshments prepared by comrades. The proceedings were bilingual in Spanish and English, with additional translation to and from Portuguese. The necessity for all documents and internal bulletins, as well as motions and amendments, to be in both languages required a considerable effort for our small international. During the conference all reports were translated and consecutive translation of interventions on the discussion rounds was done by a team of comrades who did a very professional job. The experience underlined the importance for internationalist communists of learning additional languages in order to effectively communicate our Leninist and Trotskyist politics.

The International Conference is the highest body of the LFI. Thus at the beginning of the proceedings, the outgoing Executive Committee was dissolved and a presiding body was elected by the delegates to organize the functioning of the conference. After two and a half days of reports and discussion,

two dozen amendments (and amendments to amendments) to the Conference Document were voted on, an exhaustive process at the end of which the document was approved unanimously and comrades sang *The Internationale* in multiple languages. Then in a closed session limited to delegates and fraternal delegates, a new international Executive Committee was elected by secret ballot, with the addition of several new EC members, reflecting the recent growth of the LFI. (The Conference Document is printed here starting on page 25.)

At the start of the second day, a slide show commemorating the Bolshevik Revolution prepared by *Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas* (Class Struggle International Workers) in New York was presented.

The Conference provided the opportunity to report on and evaluate the activity of the League for the Fourth International, to debate disputed issues and lay out perspectives to guide our future work. The main point of contention in the months leading up to the international meeting was over Catalonia, where the LFI calls for the right of self-determination but has not advocated and does not presently call for independence from the Spanish state. Members of the Tijuana local of the Mexican section, the *Grupo Internacionalista*, disagreed with the LFI's position and wished to call instead for immediate independence for Catalonia, as well as for all oppressed nations. In pre-conference discussion supporters of the majority position explained that we unconditionally call for independence for all colonies, but that in multinational states the position of the revolutionary party depends on a concrete evaluation of the situation, as Lenin insisted.

Prior to the conference, documents on the Catalonia question were circulated in English and Spanish. While declaring an "Internationalist Workers Faction" shortly before the conference, the members of the Tijuana local short-circuited the possibility of a real debate by announcing they were boycotting the international conference and intended to put out their own independent journal. Earlier they had objected to the circulation of one of their documents to the international, and initially refused to distribute a leaflet with the LFI articles on Catalonia,



then said Tijuana workers were not interested in the issue. When following the conference they announced on Facebook the publication of their newspaper, the Executive Committee of the Grupo Internacionalista noted that this flagrant violation of democratic centralism ostentatiously placed them outside the organization and thus voted to expel the members of this anti-Leninist, nationalist clique.

In the conference, a report was given by a leading comrade who had traveled to Catalonia in the lead-up to the October 1 referendum. He stressed that, while not calling for independence, we defended the right to hold the referendum, and called for workers to mobilize – not just in Catalonia but throughout Spain – against the repression by the neo-Francoist Madrid government. He noted that Catalan is the first language of only a minority of the population of Catalonia, that only a minority support the call for independence, that the working class was overwhelmingly Spanish- (i.e., Castilian) speaking, and that workers in the industrial area he visited complained of discrimination by Catalan nationalist officials. In Barcelona, the capital, barely 40% are for independence and in the surrounding workers districts less than one third back separation.

A second reporter noted that a main argument by leftists supporting the right-wing bourgeois-led Catalan independence movement is the supposed absence of militant class struggle by the Spanish proletariat. This is simply a lie. In fact, the point at which the main Catalan capitalist party went over to supporting independence was after a general strike against austerity in March 2012 when the offices of the regional government, which backed every austerity measure, were surrounded by workers. Shortly thereafter, miners marched from Asturias to Madrid fighting the Guardia Civil and National Police with home-made bazookas. More generally, the reporter noted, the rise in nationalist sentiment in Europe is a distorted response to the continuing economic crisis given the lack of revolutionary leadership.

The discussion on the conference document noted the significant growth of the LFI in the last two years, particularly following the founding of an Italian section (the Nucleo Internacionalista d'Italia) and fusion with the Better-Late-Than-Never Faction expelled by the Spartacist League/U.S., both in 2016. This played an important part in the founding of a German section (the Internationalistische Gruppe) this past summer. Both sections have now published newspapers, *L'internazionalista* and *Permanente Revolution* respectively. This year a major development has been the formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth as the youth section of the Internationalist Group/U.S. This reflects the recruitment and development of a number of young comrades who are rapidly becoming cadres and assuming tasks in the IG.

A particular focus of the conference was on the situation of the Mexican section, which in addition to the factional situation in Tijuana has had a number of problems, notably the infrequent publication of its newspaper, *Revolución Permanente*, and an organizational overload on the central leadership. The Grupo Internacionalista's intense work in the militant 2016

teachers strike was a model of Trotskyist intervention into a very sharp class struggle. But over the last year the organizational shortcomings intensified. Already in the course of pre-conference discussion, the section undertook important steps aimed at relieving the overload, appointing a new editor, adding a young comrade to the editorial board and naming a separate organizer for the Mexico City local. These decisions should aid greatly in resolving the problems, but fundamentally these are the result of the glaring contradiction between our numerous tasks in building the nucleus of a revolutionary Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party and our limited forces, a situation facing every section of the LFI.

The Conference participants reaffirmed the commitment to building a genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International, in which our words match our deeds, a hallmark of the LFI which differentiates it from a host of "internationals" that exist mainly on the Internet or in universities. The extension of our core of worker cadres is key to future perspectives of revolutionary regroupment. Overall, the priorities decided upon stress ensuring the regularity of our high-quality Leninist press, building up a party apparatus and above all cadre development. Also, with the ominous growth of rightist and racist action squads in recent months, the Internationalist Group in the U.S. is seeking to lay the basis for workers defense guards following the historic June 4 labor mobilization against the fascists in Portland, Oregon. The possibility of increased repression was underscored, particularly in connection with imperialist war threats (notably against Korea) and the growth of paramilitary police forces outfitted for preventive domestic war.

Our comrades expressed great satisfaction and pride over the conference, which for many made real the meaning of belonging to a single international party that brings together revolutionaries from many countries in the common goal of fighting for new Bolshevik Revolutions. The First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International is an important milestone in the struggle to build anew a Fourth International that Trotsky would have recognized as his own. ■

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# Call for the First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International

*The following is excerpted from the Call for the First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International.*

The First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International is being held 100 years after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution that established a republic of soviets – the first workers state in history. At the outset of the 1990s, the demise of the Soviet Union – undermined and betrayed by the Stalinist bureaucracy and ultimately destroyed by imperialist-led counterrevolution – led the triumphant bourgeoisie to trumpet the “death of communism.” But genuine Trotskyists, who had stood at their posts defending the bureaucratically degenerated workers state against counterrevolution from within and without, fought the wave of defeatism that engulfed the left. Meanwhile, the U.S.-dominated “New World Order” failed to establish an era of stability and prosperity. Instead, it has led to a quarter-century of imperialist war without end, rampant nationalist and communal slaughter, and the onset of a new worldwide capitalist economic depression that continues today. Today that “order” is coming apart at the seams.

Following the U.S.’ humiliating defeat in Vietnam in 1975 and the ensuing sharp economic crisis, the capitalist rulers launched a broad class offensive aimed at obliterating the gains of the working class, from the unions to the Soviet Union. Upon achieving victory by sweeping away the bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states of the USSR and East Europe, the bourgeoisie intensified its onslaught, driving down wages, destroying industrial jobs, ripping up social programs and privatizing vital services. The financial crisis of 2007-08 shook the ruling classes to the core, but their response was to intensify the “free market/free trade” economic policies that triggered the crisis, seeking to save their skins by further impoverishing the working masses. So far, the bosses have been winning this “one-sided class war.”

Nevertheless, this inevitably provoked resistance on the part of the workers and oppressed: repeated struggles in France in the 2000s over economic “reforms” gutting labor rights; general strikes in Greece beginning in 2010 against anti-worker “austerity” policies dictated by Frankfurt bankers and Brussels bureaucrats; then in 2011 there was the “Arab Spring” sparked by unemployed youth in North Africa, a near-general strike in Wisconsin (U.S.A.) against union-busting legislation, the taking of city squares by outraged petty-bourgeois youth (the *indignados*) in Southern Europe, and the Occupy Wall Street movement that swept across the United States. In 2014 there was the explosion of outrage over racist police murder in the U.S. that became known as the Black Lives Matter movement. Yet all these movements ended in defeat.

In Latin America, a “pink wave” of populist and reformist left parties came to power in the early 2000s by heading off explosive struggles of workers and the oppressed (metal workers in Brazil, miners in Bolivia, Indians in Ecuador). Buoyed by a

surge of raw materials prices they were able to enact welfare programs and stay in office for a decade and a half, but are now being driven out as commodity prices fall. In Brazil, the Workers Party (PT) in office sank in the mire of pervasive political corruption, eventually being run out by ultra-corrupt hard-line capitalist reactionaries determined to ram through anti-labor measures that PT governments were only able to implement half-way. In Mexico, resistance to privatizing “reforms” reached a high point with struggles led by combative CNTE teachers unions in 2006, 2013 and 2016, threatening to break the corporatist straitjacket that has held Mexican workers in thrall for decades. But insurgent union leaders failed to mobilize the millions-strong industrial proletariat nationally.

Over four decades, from the 1970s to today, the key reason the rapacious imperialists have been able to wage their devastating offensive has been the *absence of a revolutionary leadership of the working class*, the only social force with the power to defeat the capitalist exploiters. In the 1980s, pro-capitalist Labour leaders in Britain sacrificed striking coal miners to union-buster Thatcher, and then adopted her “neo-liberal” policies. Stalinist bureaucrats from Moscow to Berlin vainly sought “peaceful coexistence” with the Cold Warriors in Washington and Bonn who were hell-bent on fostering counter-revolution. Today, reformist union leaders in Europe forlornly try to resuscitate a capitalist “welfare state” that is dead and gone forever. In the U.S., fighters against racist repression and attacks on immigrants’ and women’s rights are sucked back into the Democratic Party in the guise of “resistance” to the racist, women-hating, immigrant-bashing president Donald Trump.

As Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International: “The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership.” We underlined the continued validity of this fundamental tenet of Trotskyism in the founding statement of the Internationalist Group/U.S. (1996) and the Declaration of the League for the Fourth International (1998). It is repeatedly confirmed as potentially revolutionary crises have broken out the world over but have gone nowhere, precisely because there has been no recognized leadership with the program and determination to lead the struggle to socialist revolution. Yet this thesis, which was the very reason for proclaiming the FI and for building Trotskyist parties, is rejected by a myriad of pseudo-Trotskyists – from the Morenoites, Mandelites, Lambertistes and Grantites to the latter-day Spartacist tendency.

Today, after a decade of continuing economic crisis, the consequences are being felt in full-blown political crises from Europe to the U.S. Following the paralysis and defeat of often explosive but relatively short-lived struggles of the oppressed, there has been an upsurge of bourgeois populist electoral movements (Tsipras’ SYRIZA in Greece, Democrat Bernie Sanders in the U.S.) and the reformist social-democrat Jeremy Corbyn in British Labour,



as the ruling class seeks to channel discontent into the dead-end of parliamentary politics. In the U.S. this has led to a dramatic growth of the Democratic Socialists of America, which is channeling youth back to the imperialist Democratic Party. These movements have not set back the capitalist anti-working-class onslaught one iota. Instead, “business as usual” politics have been disrupted by the surge of ultra-rightist racist and outright fascist forces feeding off the failure of the left to stem the deepening impoverishment of the working class and middle-class sectors.

The British vote to leave the European Union (“Brexit”) in June 2016 sent shock waves through the imperialist “establishment,” followed by the electoral shock of the unexpected election of Donald Trump as U.S. president in November. These protest votes included significant sectors of white workers and lower-middle class hurting from falling wages and mass unemployment. Yet while the Democrats’ stranglehold on labor dating back to the 1930s has been cracked, in the name of “resistance” to Trump the opportunist left would lead workers back to that party of war, poverty and racism. “Mainstream” bourgeois politicians breathed a collective sigh of relief when Dutch far-right immigrant-basher Geert Wilders and the French fascist National Front were defeated at the polls in the spring of 2017, failing to match their scores in opinion polls. But the racist ultra-right continues to have significant support, and the explosion of fascist provocation and murder in the United States poses acute dangers for the workers and oppressed in the imperialist centers.

As Trotsky emphasized in his writings in the 1930s, the capitalists resort to use of fascists when they feel that the normal workings of the bourgeois “democratic” parliamentary system are inadequate to maintaining their class rule. Fascism can take different forms in different places, but the focal point is their extra-parliamentary action to smash opposition. In the U.S., where the fascists have long been a marginal phenomenon, there is no radicalized working class contending for power. However, the fascists are increasingly acting as auxiliaries for the police in putting down opposition to racist repression. As the U.S. has been at war constantly for 25 years, this has produced a layer of professional (and even pathological) killers eager to put their skills to use. But the central threat to workers and the oppressed remains the state power, not fascist gangs, and that state power has been immensely bolstered by the Democrats during the Obama years.

The expansion of paramilitary policing aimed at putting down internal unrest was highlighted by the huge military arsenal deployed against protests of African Americans over racist police murder in Ferguson, Missouri (2014) and Baltimore, Maryland (2015), and of Sioux Indians in Standing Rock, North Dakota (2016). This phenomenon of preparation for “preventive” internal war is not limited to the United States, as shown by the massive repression against protests of the G20 Summit in early July (2017) in Hamburg, Germany. As we wrote about this exercise in urban counterinsurgency, while hard-fisted bankers from London and Frankfurt to Wall Street can bring wayward populist politicians to heel and can use the state apparatus to keep mavericks like Trump in line, the imperialist rulers feel the

need “to have the police/military apparatus at the ready to crush internal unrest, which they know is coming” (*The Internationalist*, July 2017; see page 57 of this issue).

At bottom, the crisis of bourgeois politics extending from the U.S. to Europe reflects the coming apart of the U.S.-dominated “post-Soviet” imperialist world order, or more accurately disorder. While American capitalism sought to ratchet up the profit rate by sending industry off-shore, notably through “free trade” pacts, this has diminished its economic clout vis-à-vis rival powers. Instead, Washington requires unquestioned military domination to enforce its imperialist ascendancy. This is behind the obsession with Russia on the part of the Democratic Party and the military/intelligence agencies. Weakened economically, they cannot tolerate any challenge to U.S. military domination, and Russia has dared to resist the imperialists in Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere. At the same time, official Washington (under Obama and Trump) has militarily provoked China and is now threatening “preventive war” against North Korea, as the generals and imperialist politicians target the remaining deformed workers states.

An important consequence of the post-Soviet imperialist-sponsored wars without end – from the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa to Central America – has been a burgeoning refugee crisis. The number of refugees and asylum-seekers is at an all-time high: 22.5 million overall, with almost 3.5 million new refugees in the last year alone. This has fueled increasing anti-immigrant hysteria and crackdowns in the imperialist countries, epitomized by Donald Trump’s call to build a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border and to exclude Muslim refugees and immigrants. While rejecting utopian liberal calls for “open borders,” the LFI opposes all racist immigration laws and policies and demands that those fleeing war, rampant violence and persecution by the imperialists and their puppet regimes, from Syrian refugees to Central American moms and kids, be allowed to enter. We fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, not only in the imperialist countries but also in countries like Mexico and Brazil.

As the imperialist rulers aggressively crack down on dissent, curtailing civil liberties and fostering the growth of far-right and fascist forces, the response of the misleaders of labor and the bulk of the reformist pseudo-socialist left has been to seek to return to the *status quo ante*, to go back to the “welfare state” capitalism of yesteryear. They seek to make popular-front political blocs with “progressive” capitalist forces calling for “fair trade” instead of “free trade.” They build “anti-war” alliances with “dovish” bourgeois politicians, as if the imperialist predators could somehow turn into peaceful lambs. But these are not economic and military policies to be adopted or discarded at will – they are the necessary expression of a putrefying system. The issue is not “neo-liberalism” but capitalism. It’s not “globalization” but imperialism. And the answer is not yearning for a new era of impossible national reformism, it is to fight for socialist revolution. And that requires above all forging a revolutionary, Leninist-Trotskyist party to lead that fight.

Starting out with a handful of cadres expelled from the degenerating International Communist League, the League for the Fourth International has upheld the revolutionary banner of

authentic Trotskyism, going against the stream in the heyday of bourgeois triumphalism. We have withstood the pressures of an ascendant popular front in Brazil, and actively intervened in militant union and student struggles in Mexico. We have uniquely cohered a solid core of immigrant worker cadres in the U.S. and intervened in immigrants' rights and labor struggles, building transitional organizations including Class Struggle Education Workers, Class Struggle Workers – Portland and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas. Fusing Marxist study with intervention in the class struggle, we have won a layer of youth, leading to the recent formation of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth. And we have regrouped with comrades breaking from left social democracy and the now-moribund, anti-Trotskyist ICL.

Over the years, the intervention of the sections of the LFI in the class struggle has gained some important victories, including sparking workers strikes for the freedom of class war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, in Brazil and the U.S. in 1999 and the formation of worker-student defense guards during the strike at the National University of Mexico in 1999-2000, as well as playing an important role in the strike by U.S. workers against a U.S. imperialist war, shutting down all U.S. West Coast ports on May Day 2008.<sup>1</sup> We have contributed to victories in unionizing immigrant workers in New York. In the face of the anti-immigrant offensive in Europe and the U.S., both under Obama (with his record-breaking 5+ million deportations) and now intensified under Trump, we have uniquely fought for workers actions to stop attacks on immigrants and deportations. Our West Coast comrades sparked labor actions against racist police terror in 2015, for gay rights in 2016 and the important Portland Labor Against the Fascists mobilization of workers from 14 unions this past June, the first significant workers action against the race-haters and immigrant-bashers in the U.S. in decades.

We have also carried out coordinated international campaigns involving the sections of the LFI, including a tri-national (Brazil, Mexico and U.S.) day of action in support of striking Mexican teachers in August 2016, and demonstrations in the same three countries in November 2016 opposing the exclusion of Haitians from the U.S. At the same time, these campaigns and the significant but limited victories we have achieved have placed tremendous pressures on our small forces, so that on a number of occasions we have been working close to the limits of our capabilities. In building fighting propaganda groups, we face the challenge of developing newly recruited young militants into seasoned Trotskyist cadres. We are pushing to regularize the frequency of our party presses, which are key to expanding beyond our base and winning potential cadres on a broader scale. As we intervene in struggles for immigrants', women's, labor and black rights, we will face situations requiring intransigent defense of the Bolshevik program and effective tactical responses based on that program in often difficult circumstances.

The overall rightward movement of the left following the demise of the Soviet Union has meant that there has been a relative dearth of centrist opponents in recent years, and even reformists have been stymied. This may change as the continuing economic crisis and sharp political crises around the capitalist world foster

resistance. One important opponent, both in Latin America and Europe and to a lesser extent in the United States, is the Argentina-based Fracción Trotskista. The FT poses as having broken with the politics of its progenitor, the late Nahuel Moreno, but in fact continues the "democratist" program of latter-day Morenoism, particularly with its ubiquitous calls for "constituent assemblies" rather than fighting for socialist revolution. The real policies of the right-centrist FT do not go beyond social-democratic, Stalinophobic reformism. A key task for the LFI will be producing substantial material tracing the trajectory of and exposing the anti-revolutionary politics of these neo-Morenoites.

As our conference approaches, a dramatic new development is the sharp crisis that has engulfed the International Communist League (the Spartacist tendency) from which the founding cadres of the League for the Fourth International were expelled in 1996-98. After denouncing the LFI for characterizing the ICL's recent policies on immigrants and refugees as social-chauvinist, the latter has now declared that its politics on the national question for the last four decades have been chauvinist. This is the culmination of years of step-by-step abandonment of key Trotskyist positions. The criticism of many of their leading cadres for U.S. chauvinism is true enough. But the political program they denounce is Bolshevik-Leninist proletarian internationalism, which the ICL has now abandoned in embracing bourgeois nationalism. This accompanies a purge of a whole layer of long-time leaders, whom they vilify in print, in favor of a bunch of careerists with little grounding in Marxism. While the ICL document was reportedly adopted unanimously, and the purged cadres have been corrupted by two decades of bureaucratic purges, rejection of Trotskyist politics and outright betrayals (the ICL's support for the U.S. invasion of Haiti), this startling turn may shake loose some elements in and around this tendency which once was the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism.

As Trotsky noted in his Transitional Program, the Fourth International arose out of the greatest defeats in history. The League for the Fourth International was founded to uphold revolutionary Trotskyism in the face of the defeatism that swept through the ostensibly socialist left in the wake of a world historic defeat, the fall of the Soviet Union. Like all revisionism, that defeatism was based on a loss of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat. Over this period, the workers and oppressed have given ample proof of their will and capacity to struggle. What they urgently require, and what the most conscious elements demand, is revolutionary leadership. Responding to that demand is the central challenge the LFI faces.

As we undertake the First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International, we are guided by the rules of Trotsky's Fourth International: "To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives."

Executive Committee,  
League for the Fourth International  
17 September 2017

<sup>1</sup> See correction on page 71 and in the conference document (page 29).



## Document of the First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International

*The following document was adopted by the International Conference of the League for the Fourth International held in November 2017. It has been edited for publication.*

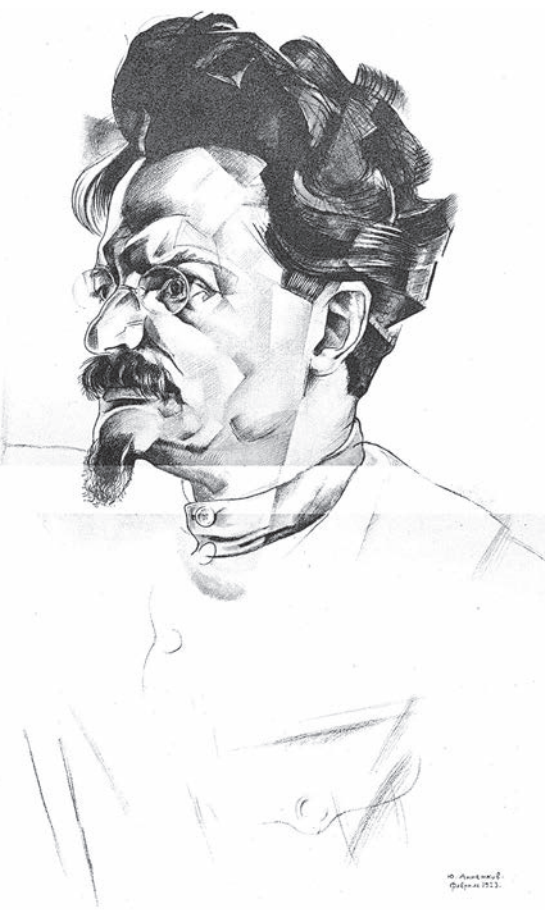
# The Struggle to Reforge a Genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International

Permanent Revolution Faction that had just been expelled by the French section of the ICL, that “*Communism Lives, In the Struggles of the Workers and Oppressed and in the Trotskyist*

Program – Reforge the Fourth International!”<sup>1</sup>

The First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International is being held in this centenary year of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. In our recent international celebrations of this world-historic event, we stressed that while all manner of left groups are having events where they hail the “relevance” or “example” of the Russian Revolution, the LFI uniquely is fighting for the Bolshevik program of international socialist revolution of Lenin and Trotsky. We uphold the *programmatic* continuity of the first four Congresses of the Third (Communist) International and Trotsky’s Fourth International, while the grab bag of pseudo-Trotskyists have distorted and betrayed that program in myriad ways. When we call to reforge the Fourth International, we stress that it must be on the solid basis of that revolutionary program, not just rearranging the flotsam and jetsam thrown off by past splits.

We began as a handful of cadres who had been expelled from the International Communist League (ICL), or – in the case of the Brazilian comrades – were abandoned by it. In the wake of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR and of the East European deformed workers states the ICL drew defeatist conclusions from that historic defeat, turning its back on the Trotskyist program on a series of key points centering on the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, as well as the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy. In so doing, the ICL joined the bulk of the ostensibly socialist left which bought into the bourgeois lie of the supposed “death of communism.” In contrast, the 1998 Declaration of the LFI proclaimed, in the words of the



Portrait of Trotsky by Yuri Annenkov.

It will also mean strengthening our original sections (Brazil, Mexico and the United States) by further concerted efforts of *cadre development*, through systematic study and intervention in the class struggle, of new militants won in recent years and those now joining; and by *building a solid proletarian core*, notably including the worker Trotskyists who have been key to the development of the LFI in Brazil

<sup>1</sup> See “Declaration of the League for the Fourth International: Reforge the Fourth International!” in *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998.

and the U.S. In the late 1960s and early '70s, it was possible to recruit significant numbers of already-radicalized militants who had experience with Stalinist-led movements of different varieties (Maoism, Castroism). In recent years we have fused with and won cadres from several leftist currents, but for the most part we are recruiting young people and workers with no background in left politics. Thus the process of becoming experienced Leninist and Trotskyist cadres will take some time and a conscious effort amid the pressures of the class struggle.

In the process, we must *build up a party apparatus* which will enable us to regularize the production of the press of the LFI and its national sections, along with the various other tasks involved in building a Leninist party of professional revolutionaries. Simultaneously we must be alert to possibilities for *intervention with burgeoning mass movements* whose initial politics may be quite distant, and for *regroupment with militants breaking from opportunist tendencies*. At the beginning of the 1960s, the activists of the New Left in the United States were quite moderate and reformist. But the impact of struggles for black liberation and against the Vietnam War polarized society so that by the end of the '60s by some estimates there were as many as 100,000 people who saw themselves as revolutionaries and, in the case of many of them, communists. But again, winning revolutionary-minded militants to genuine Leninism and Trotskyism will require waging hard political battles.

This draft document builds on and incorporates by reference the "International Perspectives of the League for the Fourth International" (April 2015),<sup>2</sup> which summed up the political positions and development of the LFI to that point; and on the "Call for the First International Conference of the LFI" (9 September 2017), which includes an overview of the present world conjuncture and the position of the LFI in it.

### **Trotskyism vs. Populism, Fascism and the Drive toward World War**

In the aftermath of World War II, the dominant imperialist power, the United States, and its European allies were able to peddle the seductive vision of a future of peace and prosperity by blurring the awareness that this was based on the vast destruction of the world's productive forces in that second global imperialist conflagration. The "American Dream" and the supposed long postwar boom (referred to in France as "*les trente glorieuses*," or the 30 glorious years from 1945 to 1975) were always an illusion. In fact, the "boom" ended with a sharp recession in 1954 following the end of the fighting in the Korean War, leading to the deportation of one million Mexican workers from the U.S. For African Americans, the "dream" was an "American nightmare," in the words of Malcolm X, as black people were beset by Jim Crow segregation in the South and brutal ghettoization in the North.

Since the mid-1970s there has been a steady fall of real wages (adjusted for inflation) in almost all the imperialist countries and in many semi-colonial countries as well. In Mexico the minimum wage is now below the level of 1940. One need

only see the film of Luis Buñuel, *Los olvidados* (1950) to see that the living standards of the urban poor in Mexico three-quarters of a century ago were higher than they are today in the vast slums surrounding the capital city, filled with former peasants who have been thrown off their land because of imperialist "free trade." In the United States and other imperialist countries, living standards have barely been maintained due to a massive influx of women into the workforce to augment family incomes. While the incorporation of women into social labor is an advance, it also means that they often work a triple shift (housework, taking care of children and paid work).

By the 1980s, the postwar illusions of prosperity wore off and the workers movement in the U.S. and Britain suffered defeats under Reagan and Thatcher. In the post-Soviet 1990s, "welfare state" social programs were cut back, and in many cases eliminated entirely. Bowing to the bourgeois offensive, large sections of the union bureaucracy, labor aristocracy and social democracy embraced the Reaganite/Thatcherite "neoliberal" doctrine of "free market" capitalism under the watchword of TINA ("there is no alternative"). But as the dot.com bubble and then the housing bubble burst, trillions in household income went up in smoke while millions of working-class (and, in the U.S., particularly black) homeowners lost their homes and savings. People began to question not only the free-marketeers but capitalism itself. Karl Marx appeared on the front page of *Time* magazine and there was a renewed interest in Marxism on the campuses.

The sharp economic crisis of 2007-08 was not a cyclical event but the beginning of a long-lasting downturn that is now in its eleventh year. It wasn't the "Great Recession" that bourgeois economists refer to but a new depression. While profits are up, wages are stagnant and the wave of mass unemployment has not receded, despite phony government statistics which simply eliminate millions of long-term unemployed from the workforce. The working class has not seen the fabled "recovery" that the capitalist media and politicians crow about. Moreover, from Europe to Latin America, working people have seen their living standards further degraded through counter-"reforms" to pensions, health care and labor rights. Sectors of the ruling class have sought to fuel hostility along ethnic lines between native-born and immigrant workers, whipping up nationalist/protectionist sentiment in the former while subjecting the latter to police terror. Meanwhile, thousands of refugees and immigrants drown in the Mediterranean Sea due to the racist immigration policies of Fortress Europe, or are subject to brutal exploitation and seclusion in concentration camps.

On both sides of the Atlantic, using the "war on terror" as an excuse, imperialist rulers are intensifying repression of poor, oppressed and working people with militarized police forces outfitted for preventive internal war. In the U.S., paramilitary forces using equipment from the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan patrol black, Latino and immigrant communities, putting down urban upheavals over racist police murder and the biggest mobilization of indigenous people since the late 1800s. Racist murders by fascists multiply while fascistic militias act as auxiliaries to the police. In Germany, an army

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015.





Internationalist photo

**Scores of trade unionists joined Labor Against Racist Police Murder contingent in Portland, Oregon May Day 2015. Class Struggle Workers – Portland initiated the contingent, in conjunction with ILWU Local 10, which shut down the port of Oakland, California that day to protest cop terror.**

of police squelched protests against the imperialist rulers at the G20 summit in Hamburg this summer, attacking residents and demonstrators alike. In Spain, the central government in Madrid has moved to suppress a drive for independence for Catalonia with judicial and police repression.

The ongoing capitalist economic crisis and endless imperialist war in the Middle East have brought various political responses, including the growth of right-wing populist groupings such as the Tea Party in the U.S. and left-populists such as the *Indignados* (Outraged) in Southern Europe and Occupy Wall Street in the U.S., as well as the Greens and Bernie Sanders, who poses as a “democratic socialist” while running for the Democratic nomination for president. Sinister fascist forces have grown, from Golden Dawn in Greece, the Freedom Party in Austria and the National Front in France to the various “Alt-Right” fascistic and fascist groups that have surfaced in the U.S. under the Trump presidency.

The intense murderous repression by the police in the United States, both under Trump and the Democratic Obama administration, and under Democratic mayors across the country, is rooted in the racist oppression that is in the bedrock of American capitalism. Over 1,100 people are killed every year by the police in the United States, over a third of them African Americans. It has been calculated that a black person is killed by the cops every 28 hours. This is part of the continuing heritage of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, even though they have been formally abolished. From the frame-up of the Scottsboro youth to that of Mumia Abu-Jamal, to the murders of Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Philando Castile and so many others, this reality continues to spark convulsive protests.

The explosive struggle against black oppression can ignite powerful class and social struggles. This was shown again recently as Trump, the white supremacist in the White House, unleashed a racist diatribe against the black players of the National Football League (NFL) who refused to stand for the national anthem, and of the National Basketball Association

(NBA) who supported them by making other statements against Trump or police violence. Their daring gesture punctured the veneer of forced loyalty to U.S. patriotism and had a deep impact on the consciousness of African Americans, serving as a reminder that the protests against racist repression will not go away. But lacking a revolutionary leadership, fighters against racist oppression continue to suffer the fate of the Black Panther Party, shot down in the streets or co-opted, as has happened most recently with Black Lives Matter, a number of whose leaders have been recruited by the Democratic Party.

What has *not* happened is an explosion of sharp class struggle as occurred in the Great Depression in the 1930s, with plant occupations and formation of industrial unions under the CIO in the U.S., general strikes in France, and civil war in Spain. *The relative dearth of militant class struggle is above all due to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.* The big reformist parties have moved sharply to the right, or disappeared altogether, as with the PCI in Italy. The opportunist left, in turn, has focused on chasing after the populists, and the resurgence of reformist Labourism in Britain. In the United States, the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the LFI, has *uniquely* fought in the unions to break the stranglehold of the capitalist parties, not to form a bourgeois “third party” or reformist-electoralist labor party but to build a workers party on a program of class struggle. In Oregon on the U.S. West Coast, at the height of the 2016 presidential election Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP), fraternally allied with the IG, won the support of the Painters Union (IUPAT Local 10) for a motion calling to break with the Democrats, “or any bosses’ parties,” and “build a class-struggle workers party.”

This was the result of several years of building labor solidarity in the Portland area, notably against union-busting and police attacks. In the 2015 May Day march, the CSWP had initiated a Labor Against Racist Police Murder contingent of dozens of unionists. In early 2016, it called a “Labor: Defend Abortion Rights” mobilization, and later that year it sparked a



Internationalist photo

**ILWU dock workers shut down all U.S. West Coast ports on May Day 2008 to demand end of war on Iraq and Afghanistan and to support immigrant rights. Internationalist Group played important role in building for first U.S. workers strike against U.S. imperialist war since 1919.**

“Hard Hats for Gay Rights” contingent. To blame the absence of big class battles on the backwardness of the working class (as the ICL and various other pseudo-Trotskyists do) is to confuse cause and effect. Clearly there is a dialectical interaction between the leadership and the proletarian base, but the active element in recent years has not been a growing backwardness among the ranks but rather the abandonment of any vestige of communist, socialist or simply leftist – or even militant trade-unionist – heritage by the pro-capitalist misleaders of labor and the absence of a challenge to that by the not-so-far left.

Today the long-term effects of the capitalist depression and endless imperialist war are coming together, pushing in an ominous direction. In Europe, central bankers continue to push a hard-line policy of anti-worker austerity, bankrupting Greece and impoverishing its working people. In the U.S. there is a political paralysis in Washington, even with all the branches of federal power under Republican and right-wing control, while fascist violence escalates. In Latin America, a decade of populist and popular-front governments is coming to an end as the high commodity prices that sustained them have fallen, and imperialist-run reactionaries are emboldened.

Meanwhile a new global economic crisis could break out at any time, as stock prices continue to rise out of all proportion to real economic growth and the U.S. Federal Reserve abandons policies that have kept interest rates near zero. In the late 1930s, this took the form of the 1937 “depression within the depression” as the Roosevelt New Deal lost steam and unemployment soared. A result was a sharp growth of fascist forces. Simultaneously, interimperialist economic rivalries increased with sanctions on Italy, Germany and Japan, ultimately leading to world war. This scenario could repeat itself as the all-sided reactionary (misogynist, racist, xenophobic,

red-baiting) and erratic president Trump pushes for trade war with Canada, China, Europe and Mexico while threatening to wipe out North Korea. Meanwhile, the Democrats and the Pentagon are itching for a showdown with Russia, in Syria or Ukraine, and to militarily strike at China.

The stage is being set for a major crisis in which the present regional wars and looming trade wars can escalate into a world war. A trigger could be a U.S.-sanctioned, Saudi-backed Israeli strike against Hezbollah in Lebanon. As before, the League for the Fourth International will continue to call for the defeat of U.S. imperialism in Afghanistan, Iraq and now Syria, and to drive the imperialists out of the Middle East and Africa. The LFI will unconditionally defend the bureaucratically deformed North Korean workers state against imperialist aggression, including if it is forced to counterattack with untold consequences. We likewise defend the Chinese and Cuban deformed workers states – and the remaining revolutionary gains which are under attack – against counterrevolution from within and without. In all these cases, we Trotskyists fight for proletarian political revolution to replace the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy with revolutionary-internationalist soviet democracy.

In this situation of mounting crisis, revolutionary Trotskyists could be subject to repression, as our forebears of the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party of James P. Cannon and the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters were at the outbreak of WWII, their leaders sentenced to jail on charges of sedition under the anti-communist Smith Act for their revolutionary opposition to the imperialist war. We have already had a taste of witch-hunting by red-baiting reformist leftists and feminists intent on provoking retaliation for our principled defense of gay and lesbian rights and our opposition to anti-gay repression



of unpopular groups such as NAMBLA. Our calls for workers defense guards to crush the fascist threat, and for worker/immigrant action to stop deportations and racist attacks, could lead to reprisals amid the escalating attacks on immigrants, to which we will respond redoubling our efforts for mass action.

### The LFI Faces New Challenges

In the first years of the League for the Fourth International, in the political climate dominated by “death of communism” triumphalism of the bourgeoisie and its absorption by most of the left, our struggles focused on issues accompanying or growing out of our expulsion from the ICL: upholding Trotsky’s analysis of the dual character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and Lenin’s insistence on the need for the proletariat to stand for the defeat of its “own” imperialist rulers in imperialist war. As the ICL joined the pseudo-Trotskyists in falsely claiming that the bureaucracy *led* the counterrevolution, the LFI stood on the ICL’s historic intervention fighting the imperialist-led restoration of capitalist rule in East Germany (the DDR) and the USSR. Following the U.S. 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, the ICL grotesquely denounced our call for the defeat of U.S. imperialism, smearing us as “Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism” and tailing after “‘Third World’ nationalists for whom the ‘only good American is a dead American’.”<sup>3</sup> This monstrous lie was a set-up for repression.

In the U.S., the Internationalist Group mobilized students to drive military recruiters off campus, which was successful for several months in 2005 at Bronx Community College in New York, and fought for workers strikes against the war. After a number of years of raising this call, we played a significant role in and aided the effort that led to the May Day 2008 strike by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) that shut down every port on the U.S. West Coast demanding an end to the war on Iraq and Afghanistan and defending immigrants’ rights. It was the first-ever strike action by U.S. workers against a U.S.-imperialist war since the longshore boycotts on the West Coast in 1919 of weapons to the White counterrevolutionaries and U.S. expeditionary forces fighting the Red Army in Soviet Russia.<sup>4</sup> Earlier, in April 1999, the Brazilian section of the LFI, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, sparked a statewide work stoppage by Rio de Janeiro teachers demanding freedom for U.S. revolutionary and class-war prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, which was followed the next day by (and organized in conjunction with) a West Coast port shutdown by the ILWU.<sup>5</sup> When the LFI calls for something, we mean it, and fight to implement it.

In recent years, with the acceleration of capitalist decay in the new depression following the 2007-08 financial meltdown, we have faced new challenges. The rise of populist movements and parties of the left and right as well as the surfacing of danger-

<sup>3</sup> See “ICL Refuses to Call for Defeat of U.S. Imperialism, ‘Anti-American’ Baites the Internationalist Group,” in *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001.

<sup>4</sup> See “May Day Strike Against the War Shuts Down All U.S. West Coast Ports,” in *The Internationalist* No. 27, May-June 2008.

<sup>5</sup> See “Brazil Education Workers Stop Work Demanding: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!” *The Internationalist*, May 1999.

ous fascist forces have posed issues that required Marxist study and analysis to draw revolutionary programmatic conclusions.

In *Mexico*, the LFI’s analysis of the *corporatist nature of government-controlled pseudo-unions* continued the policy of the ICL when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism, of fighting for genuine workers unions free of all control by the capitalist state. The now ex-Trotskyist ICL joined the rest of the opportunist left in white-washing these strikebreaking “labor” bodies which organize death squads to murder opposition unionists.<sup>6</sup> Our Trotskyist program enabled the Grupo Internacionalista to intervene heavily in the explosive upheavals by the dissident CNTE teachers union movement in 2006, 2013 and 2016 while most of the left was either absent (like the ICL section) or marginal.<sup>7</sup>

On *Syria*, the LFI’s position of *opposition to all sides in the sectarian/communist civil war while calling to drive out and defeat the U.S. imperialists*, and to mobilize the militant working class next door in Turkey, uniquely represented a proletarian revolutionary program. Most of the left lined up either with the imperialist-backed Islamist opposition gangs, with the authoritarian Assad government, or with the U.S.-allied Kurdish forces. While the LFI declared that any blows against the imperialist invaders, including by reactionary Islamists, were in the interests of the world working class, the ICL essentially portrayed the Islamic State as an anti-imperialist force, obscuring the fact that its blows were mainly directed at Shiite, Christian, Kurdish and other “apostates” and “infidels.” (See the section on Syria in “International Perspectives of the League for the Fourth International” in *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015).

On the crisis in *Ukraine in 2014*, the LFI early on pointed to the fascists’ role in leading the imperialist-backed nationalist protests in Kiev. We also undertook an *analysis of whether post-Soviet Russia is imperialist*, a vital issue that almost the entire left skated around. Our article (“The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism’” [May 2014], reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015) conclusively demonstrated that Russia today is an intermediate or regional capitalist power with imperialist ambitions. We also noted that many of those screaming against “Russian imperialism” in Ukraine earlier denounced “Soviet imperialism” while Trotskyists defended the USSR against capitalist imperialism.

In *Greece in 2015*, the rise of SYRIZA posed the question of its class nature. The LFI explained how that Coalition of the Radical Left had become a bourgeois party. We also *exposed SYRIZA prime minister Alexis Tsipras’ phony referendum* on the Eurobankers’ austerity demands. While the bulk of the left (including the ICL) fell for Tsipras’ call for a “no” vote, which a week later led to the imposition of an even more drastic austerity package, the LFI put forward a program for sharp class struggle, including occupation of the ports. (See “Greece: The Naked Rule of Finance Capital,” and “The ICL on Greece:

<sup>6</sup> See “SL on Corporatism in Mexico: Games Centrists Play,” *The Internationalist*, July 2013.

<sup>7</sup> See “Mexican Teachers Strike Bravely Murders Repression,” in *The Internationalist* No. 43, May-June 2016.

Goodbye Trotsky, Hello Minimum Program,” in *The Internationalist* No. 41, September-October 2015.)

In *Brazil in 2016*, the right-wing drive to impeach Dilma Rousseff of the Workers Party (PT) and her popular-front government split the left. The LFI called for “No to Impeachment! For Workers Mobilization Against the Rightist Bourgeois Offensive – No Political Support to the Bourgeois Popular-Front Government,” while the ICL declared its indifference to the sinister rightist power grab aimed at pushing through the anti-working-class “reforms.” These have now been enacted, legalizing slave labor in rural areas and overriding legal protections on working hours and safety conditions. Our article “Stumbling in the Dark With ‘Blown-Out Lanterns’” (*The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016) pointed to the parallels between the ICL’s position and the German CP’s attacks on Trotsky over the “Red Referendum” of 1931.

Most recently on *Spain*, the LFI has called for *defense of Catalonia’s right to self-determination and independence*, including holding a binding referendum, but not advocating at this point separation from the Spanish state. While calling on the workers movement throughout the Spanish state to defend the elected Catalan government against neo-Francoist repression, we politically combat the bourgeois nationalists in Barcelona. We also noted the intersection of national and class division, with the Spanish-speaking industrial working class in the region largely opposed to secession. The call by most of the left for support to Catalan independence under the current circumstances reflects its ingrained tailism, while the ICL embraces bourgeois Catalan nationalism at the same time as it refuses to call for independence for colonies such as Puerto Rico.<sup>8</sup>

We also analyzed the *struggles of indigenous peoples in South America*, uniquely calling for *worker-peasant-indigenous governments* in the Andean region (Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia),<sup>9</sup> and defended the struggle of Standing Rock Sioux against a pipeline threatening their lands, which led to the largest mobilization of indigenous peoples in the U.S. since



Comitê de Luta Classista

**Students and teachers in statewide work stoppage in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 23 April 1999, demanding freedom for Mumia Abu Jamal. The action, sparked by the CLC (Class Struggle Committee) and the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil was the first-ever labor strike for Mumia’s freedom. It was carried out in conjunction with the ILWU, which the next day shut down all U.S. West Coast ports for the same demand. Rio teachers union SEPE headlined (on facing page): “Rio Schools and U.S. Dock Workers Stop Work and Demand Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal.”**

the late 1800s.<sup>10</sup> On *South Africa*, we have called for a revolutionary workers party to *break with the tripartite popular-front government* presiding over the neo-apartheid system that resorts to murderous violence to keep black workers in thrall to the capitalist rulers.<sup>11</sup> In all these cases, the League for the Fourth International has put forward a Marxist analysis of the contending class forces and a program for workers action leading toward international socialist revolution – what the formerly Trotskyist ICL has ceased to do as it thrashes about in a downward spiral of centrist confusion.

### The Demise of the Post-Soviet Spartacist Tendency

Recently, the ICL published the document of its seventh international conference under the title “The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra” (*Spartacist*, Summer 2017). This was not just another in the endless series of ICL line changes, this time on the national question, but a wholesale renunciation of Marxism and denunciation of the Spartacist tendency’s own historic program and tradition on a central issue. In pretending to fight against chauvinism, it actually promotes more chauvinism and blatantly embraces bourgeois nationalism, while announcing a generational purge of a whole layer of long-time leaders. Akin to Jack Barnes’ 1983 speech, “Their Trotsky and Ours,” which denounced permanent revolution and renounced Trotskyism while bestowing the mantle of “continuity” on an

<sup>8</sup> See “Defend the Right to Self-Determination and Independence for Catalonia,” in *The Internationalist* No. 49, September-October 2017.

<sup>9</sup> See “Marxism and the Indian Question in Ecuador,” *The Internationalist* No. 17 (October-November 2003).

<sup>10</sup> See “Standing Rock and the Revolutionary Fight for Native American Rights,” *The Internationalist* No. 46 (January-February 2017).

<sup>11</sup> See “South Africa: Workers Slam ANC Neo-Apartheid Regime,” in *The Internationalist* No. 36, January-February 2014.





individual rather than the program and ousting the SWP old guard, in some respects this is even more grotesque, publicly smearing and even slandering a number of the ICL's leading spokesmen, sometimes by name.

The "Chauvinist Hydra" document is a kind of suicide note and auto-obituary officially pronouncing the demise of the ICL as a once-revolutionary tendency. There is much to be said about this dramatic turn, and we have had

a preliminary discussion in the LFI's Executive Committee as well as several documents written, which we quote from here. A list of "Ten Questions for the ICL" began with: "According to them, their position on the national question over the last 40 years has been chauvinist. If that is so, has the ICL been a revolutionary organization, yes or no?" (SLers responded "yes," positing a new political category, "chauvinist revolutionaries.") Also: "Do they mention their betrayal on Haiti?" (They do not.) Another document noted the ICL's new position that statehood for Puerto Rico would be self-determination, whereas in reality it would be an annexation subjugating the Puerto Rican people.

In a draft article on "The ICL: An Obituary," a comrade wrote:

"After 20 years of centrist degeneration, the International Communist League (ICL) has now gone completely off the rails in a spectacular train wreck. Its latest issue of *Spartacist* (Summer 2017, No. 65) presents the aspirations of a 'new axis' of leadership to liquidate what was once a revolutionary organization into yet another 'Leninist' cheerleading squad for bourgeois nationalism. Claiming to have waged a successful 'Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra,' the ICL in fact did no more than slander its revolutionary past as 'chauvinist' and reaffirm its current chauvinism as 'revolutionary.' While the ICL pompously depicts this latest development as 'Hercules fighting the Hydra of Lerna,' the more fitting

analogy from Greek mythology would be the *ouroboros* – a serpent eating its own tail....

"The ICL was founded to fight for proletarian internationalism, and that's what it did until the mid-1990s. While the bourgeoisie succeeded in fooling much of the left into accepting colonialism with 'democratic' tricks like colonial referendums (i.e., 'proof' that colonial slaves 'want' to remain enslaved), the ICL refused to drop the call for independence. On Puerto Rico, Martinique, Guadalupe and all other colonies, the ICL upheld the famous 21 conditions of the Communist International, including that 'Every party that wishes to belong to the Communist International has the obligation of exposing the dodges of its "own" imperialists in the colonies, of supporting every liberation movement in the colonies not only in words but in deeds, of demanding that their imperialist compatriots should be thrown out of the colonies.' ...

"Today, the ICL is quite the opposite of what it once was. Since 1998, the ICL has given their stamp of approval to the continued colonial enslavement of Puerto Ricans, as long as imperialist-controlled referendums show that 'they want it.' In 2010, the ICL vociferously supported the U.S. imperialist invasion of Haiti in the name of 'humanitarian aid' for three months, then admitted that this was a 'social-imperialist' betrayal 'akin to August 1914,' when the social democrats proved themselves to be on the wrong side of the class line by voting for war credits. While in 1914, Lenin responded to this betrayal by declaring the Second International dead as a party for revolution and building the Third International, the ICL maintained the same leadership and slandered any members who wanted a thoroughgoing correction, demoralizing many of them to the point of quitting."

Another comrade wrote that the ICL's new-found support for the language laws in Quebec and Catalonia – on the claim that "they constitute defensive measures essential to the very existence of the oppressed nation" – deforms and directly contradicts Lenin's position that "The national programme of working-class democracy is: absolutely no privileges for any one nation or any one language...." In short, "no privilege for any one language 'means' privilege for one language, according to the ICL today," which cynically calls this "French only" and "Catalan only" policy "an extension of Lenin's struggle for the equality of languages." The comrade noted:

"[T]he ICL's new line is not just bourgeois nationalism. It is the specific kind of 'nation-building' bourgeois nationalism pursued by petty-bourgeois and bourgeois sectors who are preparing to become part of a ruling class. National, linguistic and cultural issues are wielded in support and defense of class dominance.... The new national ruling class must establish the terrain for commodity production and exchange; the laws; the sovereignty; promote national culture; standardize language; promote the national language; and crack down on linguistic, cultural, national and other minorities that impede this process.... After independence, the Algerian FLN pursued the Arabization of the Berbers of Kabylia. *Sinhala only!* decreed Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka 'Freedom' Party in 1956."

A third comrade wrote that: "According to the ICL's

current views, the national struggle is everything and the class struggle is nothing (and thus this is de facto a stageist conception of revolution). Contrary to their rhetoric, there is nothing anti-imperialist at all about their positions, which of course continue to be anti-refugee and anti-immigrant.” And in the discussion of the LFI exec, a leading comrade of the Mexican section noted that the ICL had embraced the politics of “possibilism,” the anti-Marxist current of French social democracy that in the wake of the defeat of the 1871 Paris Commune wrote off the struggle for workers revolution and instead limited itself to the “minimum program” of reforms under capitalism.

Once the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism, the ICL today has abandoned the historic Spartacist line for a single binational workers state in Palestine. Soon it may renounce its distinctive position, upheld by the LFI, that in cases of interpenetrated peoples, where two nations dispute the same territory (as in historic Palestine), an equitable and democratic resolution of the national question is not possible on the basis of bourgeois rule but can only be achieved through socialist revolution. And rather than fighting today for a united socialist republic of Kurdistan, as it did for decades (and the LFI does today), the ICL now calls for a united Kurdistan, and later for socialism – i.e., a classic formula for two-stage revolution.

Meanwhile, the “Hydra” document resorts to falsifications, distortions and fabrications about the Internationalist Group and the LFI (which it never mentions). The section titled “True Chauvinist Continuity” starts off with a remarkable paragraph in which every word about the IG and every position they attribute to us is false. But that is par for the course from a group that from the start lied that our Brazilian section, the LQB, had sued the unions when the fact is not only that our comrades *never* sued the union but the exact opposite is the case, they were the union leadership removed by the bourgeois “justice system” for their unprecedented fight to expel cops from the municipal workers union; that they were abandoned by the ICL just as bourgeois repression came down on them; that our comrades were sued in the bosses’ courts by pro-police elements whose lies the ICL has repeated ever since, going so far as to sabotage their defense campaign.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, as a comrade noted, one should not “over-dignify” the latest ICL turn: “at least half of the ‘Hydra Purge’ document is a very crude and vulgar smear job against their own comrades, in which fragments of topics and concepts are bunched together, covered in invective and hurled at the clique opponents of the day. For central elements involved in this sordid affair, ideas are almost purely instrumental; they are clubs to pick up and batter the internal enemy with, so they don’t have to make much sense.”

It is worth noting here that for anyone outside the ICL, the often bizarre “Hydra” document will make clear that the latter-day Spartacist tendency is anything but a stable

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed account of the repression by cops and courts and answers to this vicious slander campaign against black worker Trotskyists, see our dossiers *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (February 1997) and *Responses to ICL Smear Campaign Against Brazilian Trotskyists* (May 2010).

pole of revolutionary leadership and instead a vipers nest of poisonous cliquism which ousts its leadership as often as it changes its political line (which is about every two-three years since 1996), renouncing key Trotskyist programmatic positions one after another. It continues to be important to polemicize against the International Communist League, as the LFI exposure of the ICL’s accelerated centrist degeneration is a defense of the programmatic heritage of revolutionary Trotskyism on key issues for revolutionary workers and youth worldwide.

### The Fracción Trotskista: Reformist Politics Masquerading as Centrism

By and large in the period since the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers states, there have been few centrist would-be socialist groups that at least make a pretense of revolutionary politics even as their actual policies are reformist. But as social contradictions sharpen in the coming period, new centrist groups may appear. One outfit which has lately been more prominent is the Fracción Trotskista (“Trotskyist Fraction”), led by the Argentine PTS (Party of Workers for Socialism), which comes out of the tradition of the late Nahuel Moreno. Lately, the FT has picked up some support in Europe and the United States, based on its name and ultra-opportunist practice, making exposure of its pseudo-Trotskyist posturing all the more important.

In reality, the FT has nothing to do with genuine Trotskyism and plenty to do with Morenoism. In his final phase in the 1980s, the quick-change artist Moreno settled in as a vulgar social democrat after discarding his earlier persona as a pretend Sandinista guerrilla and before that a would-be Iranian “Islamic revolution”-ist, a champion of “black nationalism” in Angola, a Guevarist guerrillaist (until some in his Argentine group tried to start a guerrilla foco), a fan of the Maoist Red Guards and a left Peronist. But throughout, Moreno was anti-Soviet, hailing the imperialist-backed *mujahedin* as they used their U.S.-supplied weapons to battle the Soviet-backed reform regime in Afghanistan in the 1980s (and to shoot communist teachers). Genuine Trotskyists, in contrast, proclaimed “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” and called to extend the social gains in Soviet Central Asia which were won through the Russian Revolution.

In his latter phase, Moreno broke openly with Trotskyism, opposing Trotsky’s insistence on proletarian leadership that is at the core of his program of permanent revolution, while calling to “update” the Transitional Program by turning it into a laundry list of capitalist reforms. He summed up his social-democratic perspective with the call for a “democratic revolution” and to carry out new bourgeois “February Revolutions” around the world, while Trotskyists call for new October Revolutions. The founders of the Fracción Trotskista split away from the main Morenoite current in 1988 not long after their former mentor’s death the year before. While formally upholding Trotsky against Moreno and rejecting the slogan of a “democratic revolution,” the FT campaigns everywhere on a “democratist” program, summed



up in its call for (bourgeois) constituent assemblies just about everywhere on the globe. This tendency is further characterized by its all-sided, inveterate tailism. In the United States it has lately been fawning over the growth of the DSA as the latter runs on the Democratic Party ticket and the “Sanders Socialist” Socialist Alternative group as it runs on a tepid municipal-socialist platform.

The FT has also inherited from Moreno a policy of constant maneuverism, forming electoral coalitions, sponsoring front groups on a (democratic) minimum program and the like. It flaunts its participation in the FIT (Left and Workers Front) in Argentina, a propaganda bloc with other left groups (Partido Obrero and a Morenoite offshoot) whose platform consists of a standard-issue reformist minimum program (plus a couple words tacked on about a socialist Latin America) that could be raised by a Jeremy Corbyn in Britain or any number of left-talking “socialist” populists. Their formal position that police are not “workers in uniform” notwithstanding, the PTS/FT had no problem continuing the FIT coalition after their bloc partners hailed a cop “strike” in Argentina. Seeking “millennial” appeal, it has launched a digital Internet daily consisting mainly of vaguely “progressive” commentary. Not having a formal political line (or membership), the website can appear as all things to all people. But, of course, it does have a program and that is a “left voice” of social democracy, in particular rejecting in practice the Trotskyist defense of the deformed workers states against imperialism and counterrevolution.

As the counterrevolutionary wave swept across East Europe in 1989-90, the FT’s earliest incarnation called for a “constituent assembly” in East and West Germany and for withdrawal of Warsaw Pact troops (i.e., the Soviet Army) from the DDR. This was the call for “Russians out” that George H.W. Bush and West German imperialist chief Helmut Kohl were screaming for, so that the troops and banks of imperialism could move in. That meant capitalist restoration in the guise of promoting classless “democracy.” The FT mislabels China capitalist and recently the Fracción Trotskista published an article (*Left Voice*, 7 September) by an FT leader on Trump’s threats against North Korea that oh-so “even-handedly” reports tit-for-tat threats while labeling the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) a “detestable dictatorial regime,” with not one word of defending the deformed workers state against imperialism. An earlier article (*Left Voice*, 23 June) by a prominent writer of the FT’s German section remarks that “we worry about the DPRK developing ever more sophisticated nuclear weapons,” whereas Trotskyists defend North Korea’s acquisition of nuclear weapons as vital to its survival.

Thus in practice, while posing as a Trotskyist tendency, in practice the FT pursues the same kind of anti-Trotskyist policies as its erstwhile mentor Nahuel Moreno and other anti-Soviet renegades from Trotskyism such as Max Shachtman and Tony Cliff. Nevertheless, we confront these imposters in various places, and the LFI should publish early on articles exposing their public relations image by detailing the actual reformist policies of these (very) right- centrists.

## Tasks and Perspectives of the LFI

In this First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International we seek to take stock of the activity of the LFI, as outlined above and in our 2015 “International Perspectives” document, and to lay out the tasks and perspectives of our work in the coming period. As noted at the beginning of this document, these include:

- 1) ***Regularization of the press of the LFI*** in the five languages and five countries where we have national sections, as well as in French. This also requires developing young comrades as writers and to take over the production of the press. Advances have been made in this respect over the last year in the United States, with *The Internationalist* appearing according to its published frequency and the layout increasingly being done by a young comrade. In Europe, the writing and production of *L’internazionalista* (Italy) and *Permanente Revolution* (Germany) are largely by experienced cadres there. In Mexico, despite a decision at the second national conference of the Grupo Internacionalista (2016) to increase the frequency of *Revolución Permanente* and integrate new writers, this did not happen in the year that followed; however, before this conference some important steps were already taken to immediately solve the problem. It is a key priority for the entire international that the problems preventing this be overcome, as Spanish-language publications are key to the growth of the LFI, both in Latin America and in Europe. In Brazil, it will take a major effort to publish *Vanguarda Operária* on a once-yearly basis – this is linked to the task of recruiting new members. We also seek to accelerate the updating of articles on the website in all languages, and to increase the production of audiovisual propaganda and internal educational material.
- 2) ***Production of high-quality analyses and polemical articles on key questions*** is vital to revolutionary regroupment. In the U.S. we have drafts for a pamphlet on the history of the U.S. social democracy and Shachtmanism, of particular relevance given the growth of the DSA, that must be published as soon as possible. Drafts for *Marxism and Education* as the continuation of the CSEW Newsletter are also waiting and should likewise be published early on. We plan to have an international seminar as preparation for publishing a special issue of *The Internationalist* and *El Internacionalista* on China. This is a key priority as China is a major point of dispute with almost all the ostensibly Trotskyist tendencies in the world today. The need for a major piece on the Fracción Trotskista has been mentioned, which should go together with the second installment of the *Moreno Truth Kit* analyzing his final social-democratic phase. We are also seeking to prepare important articles on anti-fascist workers mobilizations by the Minneapolis Trotskyist Teamsters and the history of “antifa” activity in Germany in the 1920s and ’30s.
- 3) ***Cadre development is a vital priority*** for young comrades, particularly in the framework of ***building the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth*** in the United States. This

includes developing young writers for the RIY newspaper *Revolution*, so that it can appear twice a year, something that is already underway. Also important is preparation for polemical interventions and study of Marxist and Trotskyist literature. Thus the basic Marxist texts that are the focus of the weekly study groups in New York, Portland and Los Angeles are supplemented by additional reading programs for the RIY members. In Mexico, we have held study groups by teleconference at the national level, in which comrades from different locals have participated.

- 4) ***Continuing and accelerating the development of a professional organizational apparatus*** is vital for the training of young comrades but also to further relieve the burden on long-time cadres who have had to carry out a number of practical tasks involved in building a communist organization. This will aid the LFI as it frees those comrades up for writing texts that we are uniquely in a position to contribute to world Marxism.
- 5) ***Expanding the fraternally allied transitional organizations*** should be a major priority. The existence and work of Class Struggle Education Workers, Class Struggle Workers – Portland and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas is a distinctive feature of the LFI and we must seek to substantially expand their work. This involves recruiting members to the party, intervening in sharp struggles on a class axis and helping comrades to grow politically through regular study sessions, such as the Spanish-language study group of the TIC in New York and political education in the CSWP in Portland. In schools and hospitals where immigrant students, their families and patients are targeted by the deportation machine, the CSEW has taken the initiative to form immigrant defense committees to block I.C.E. raids and put an end to the crime of “medical deportations.”

In Brazil, the Comitê de Luta Classista is celebrating 20 years of existence. The CLC has gained new members over the last two years as a result of successful intervention in the SEPE teachers union in the state of Rio de Janeiro. It is important to expand the CLC as a result of the intervention in the recent struggle by steel workers at the CSN plant in Volta Redonda in defense of the six-hour workday which was won and has been defended by our comrades over the years, and to seek to win young workers from the new automotive plants that have made the region a second major pole of the metal industry in Brazil. In Mexico, we should redouble efforts to win teachers from the CNTE to build a Comitê de Lucha Proletaria in this key sector.



Revolución Permanente

**Teachers of Section 22 and supporters of the Grupo Internacionalista shut down state education department in Oaxaca, 17 August 2016, as part of tri-national Day of Action in Solidarity with Mexican and Brazilian Teachers.**

#### National Perspectives

- 6) In **Brazil**, we need to expand beyond our base in the steel city of Volta Redonda and recruit younger militants in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. This is a longstanding priority, and for many years it was hindered by the popular front led by the PT. But the prospect of a 2018 election campaign by Lula in alliance with some of those the PT denounced as “coup-plotters” has thrown the popular-frontist left into crisis.
- 7) In **Mexico**, the intensive and exemplary involvement of the GI in the three-month-long teachers strike in 2016, particularly in Oaxaca and Mexico City, marked a major advance for the LFI as a whole. Holding daily political film showings and weekly Trotskyist study groups at strike headquarters, as well as systematic intervention in the strike *plantón* (encampment) in Mexico City, including sharp debates with supporters of the populist MORENA, made us very well known among this most militant sector of the labor movement. The work of the comrades in aiding victims of the massacre in Nochixtlán was courageous and admirable. However, follow-up has had only limited success and we must pursue leads, including in outlying states. The abiding weakness of the Mexican section has been the infrequency of the press. The EC of the GI resolved to appoint a new editor and to add a young comrade to the editorial board. The LFI leadership, the GI leadership and younger members must work out a concrete plan to carry out the decision of the GI’s Second Conference to publish three times a year. It is also key to back up the Oaxaca local whose leaders have faced official repression in reprisal for their solidarity work. It is essential to professionalize our Frecuencia Obrera Internacionalista program [on the teachers’ Radio Plantón] with workshops which could be given by our comrades from the Mexico City local.

A worrisome situation has existed for some time in the



Tijuana local of the GI, as manifested fairly dramatically at last year's Second Conference of the GI. At the programmatic level, the local's members have now expressed opposition to our line on Catalonia, counterposing a call for independence to the LFI's position of defending the right to self-determination and independence while not calling for secession at this time. This issue was debated at the conference, and it would have been in the interest of the LFI as a whole that the members of the Tijuana local exercise their right to argue their position. At the same time, internal political debate must, as always, be predicated on strict adherence to the norms of democratic centralism requiring all members to publicly defend the line of the organization.<sup>13</sup>

- 8) In the **United States** we must build on the work of the Portland branch of the IG in fighting in the unions to break from the Democratic Party and build a class-struggle workers party. In addition, despite setbacks in the union work in the Portland area, we must put a priority on preparing the basis for a workers defense guard. This means systematic work building a base of union militants around the core of the CSWP in order to defeat right-wing elements and to develop that core politically into real worker Trotskyist cadres. The existence of such a core was what made the Minneapolis Teamster strikes of 1934 possible, and it will require sustained work to achieve this. In the Los Angeles area, with our small forces we need to pick and choose where to focus our activity depending on where real opportunities exist, while always being aware that this is a majority Latino and immigrant area with the potential for explosive struggles against the bipartisan deportation machine. In New York, the RIY needs to expand beyond our base at one of the city colleges. The TIC must continue to seek to intervene among immigrant workers where there are significant opportunities, including among non-Spanish-speaking immigrants, with particular emphasis on winning women, who experience double oppression. Our systematic sales in Haitian areas may offer a means to do so.
- 9) In **Germany** the Internationalistische Gruppe, founded this past August, has held sessions of a study group and intervened at demonstrations in Berlin against fascists and in defense of Catalonia's right to self-determination. Most recently, the IG undertook a modest effort to mobilize student solidarity for Siemens workers protesting threatened layoffs of some 7,000 employees. A separate document outlining perspectives in Germany has been written, concluding:

"The Internationalistische Gruppe begins with very tiny

<sup>13</sup> [Editorial note: This situation subsequently escalated. On the eve of the International Conference, the members of the Tijuana local decided to form an "Internationalist Workers Faction" with no explicit program other than organizational complaints, and at the same time announced they would boycott the conference, refusing to defend their positions there and to attempt to win over comrades from their section and their international. Then on December 6, they announced on a Facebook page the issuing of their own independent publication, violating the express decision of the Executive Committee of the Grupo Internacionalista. This flagrant violation of Leninist democratic centralism, incompatible with party membership, led to their prompt expulsion from the organization.]

forces, but has already attracted a number of supporters and well-wishers, some of whom may prove invaluable in sparking some form of exemplary action which can demonstrate the power of the working class even on a limited, defensive terrain. We have already shown our appetites in this direction by taking up the defense of a lecturer at the Free University of Berlin, and seeking to get trade-union support for her case. We hope to crystallize contacts from successful sales at this campus. The prospect of wage struggles by student employees at this university early next year will provide yet another arena. "Above and beyond the absolutely indispensable organizational reinforcement of the Group, other tasks posed are to further investigate and effectively polemicize against the pseudo-Trotskyist German groups as well as to seek to capitalize on the accumulated expertise on the history of German communism available in the international."

- 10) In **Italy** the comrades of the Nucleo Internacionalista d'Italia have been actively doing public work with their first paper since September 2016 and are becoming more known among a large part of the left. According to their report:

"We have probably sold over 200 papers to the 'Trotskyist' left and several hundred other papers. Our first paper concentrates on the question of immigration and explaining who we are as opposed to the ICL. The second paper mostly concentrates on the woman question and also the Russian question. Our third paper will have an article going into the rotten history of Italian Trotskyism (Pabloist liquidationism). "With the exception of two Stalinist groups, we directly immediately confront all of the left's state capitalist position, particularly on China, and the 'Russian question' in general (both old and current), all the time. This is the most central question to confront in order to be able to recruit... We have sold all over most of Italy to demonstrations and important meetings: in Naples and Rome many times, in Florence, Bologna and Rimini several times and also sometimes in Turin, Genoa and other places.

"We need to keep an eye on what is happening in France and other parts of Europe. Our joint intervention with our new section in Germany at the Lutte Ouvrière Fête in Paris should just be the beginning."

The League for the Fourth International in our first two decades of existence successfully withstood the pressures of a temporarily triumphant bourgeoisie, holding fast to the Marxist program in an adverse (but contradictory) period. With our limited forces, we have established sections and are publishing a high-quality Trotskyist press in five countries and five languages. We have a layer of worker and immigrant cadres that is unique on the left, have achieved some important victories and waged international campaigns. Now we are facing new challenges, both of growth and in confronting the political consequences of the advanced state of putrefaction of the capitalist-imperialist system. And with the recent dramatic abandonment of Leninism on the national question and embrace of bourgeois nationalism by the ICL, along with an extensive purge of its leading cadre, *the unique position of the LFI as the political continuity of Trotsky's Fourth International is thrown into sharp relief.* ■

## Revolutionary Marxism vs. Sanders “Socialism” for Democrats

# The ABCs of the DSA

*This article was first produced as a supplement to The Internationalist, of which over 180 copies were sold at the national convention of the DSA in Chicago on August 4-6.*

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) is proclaiming that it has surpassed 25,000 members on the eve of its national convention in Chicago at the beginning of August. This is almost quadruple the number it claimed only 15 months ago, and would make it the largest self-styled socialist organization in the United States since the late 1940s. DSA leaders are ecstatic. Vice-chair Joseph Schwartz and prominent DSA leftist Bhaskar Sunkara (the founder of *Jacobin* magazine) declare, “This is the most promising moment for the socialist left in decades” (“What Should Socialists Do?” *Jacobin*, 1 August).

So why have thousands of new members, many of them young people, suddenly decided to join a group describing itself as “democratic socialist”? Why, in particular, have “millennials” been drawn into this staid social-democratic organization that is so embedded in the two-party capitalist political system of the United States that it has long been known as the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America?

Above all, the sudden expansion of the DSA reflects the campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination by Vermont senator Bernie Sanders, who calls himself an “independent” and “democratic socialist” while being a long-time member of the Democratic Party caucus in Congress. Clearly, the DSA has picked up a significant number of disappointed Bernieites, who despaired when he lost the nomination to Hillary Clinton and even more when Donald Trump was elected president. According to DSA national director Maria Svart, membership went from 6,500 in May 2016 to 14,000 on election day in November, and nearly doubled again since then.

More generally, this is a reflection of the continuing worldwide economic crisis that opened with the financial crash of 2007-08. That exposed the bankruptcy of capitalism and led to increased interest in socialism and communism, but also to the growth of bourgeois populist currents of the left (Sanders, SYRIZA in Greece) and right (Trump), as well as violent racist and fascist political currents. But many populist movements arose quickly and then disappeared, including the “Arab Spring,” the “Indignados” in southern Europe and “Occupy Wall Street” in the U.S. The outpouring of Black Lives Matter protests rose and subsided, while racist police murder continues unabated.

Already in 2008, millions of liberal youth were attracted by Barack Obama’s message of “hope” and “change” and voted for the Democrats. So did African American, Latino and white working people and immigrants. Their hopes were dashed as Obama shoveled trillions of dollars to bail out the bankers and

**BERNIE NEEDS YOU  
TO BUILD A  
SOCIALIST MOVEMENT!**



### Social-patriotism (& Democratic Party), anyone?

became reporter-in-chief. In 2016, Bernie Sanders won the millennial vote. When he lost to Clinton, many abstained, some went to Green Party candidate Jill Stein, a minority voted for Hillary while holding their noses at the stench of Wall Street cash, and sectors of white workers who had voted for Obama now voted for Trump to protest the Democrats’ job-killing policies.

Ever since the 1930s New Deal, the Democratic Party has held struggles of labor, immigrants, black and poor people in check, chaining them to a wing of the ruling class. This domination by one of the main capitalist parties has been the single greatest obstacle to militant class struggle in the United States. Yet at this crucial moment when the Democrats’ stranglehold has been greatly weakened, the vast majority of the U.S. left seeks to channel the massive discontent back into bourgeois politics, whether pressuring the Democratic Party from within



## DSA Called the Cops on Trotskyists

The article “The ABCs of the DSA” printed here was evidently considered sufficiently dangerous by the Democratic Socialists of America that they repeatedly called the cops against our comrades for distributing it outside their convention, held August 4-6 at the University of Illinois Chicago campus. When Internationalist Group supporters asked DSA door-minders if there was an area where we could set up a literature table, they immediately called campus security, which forbade our comrades from distributing literature anywhere on campus.

The IG sales team was ordered to an area on the public sidewalk and then ordered to move behind a line on the sidewalk “one square further away.” But this was evidently considered too lenient by the DSA, as after each of several interactions at our literature table the notorious Chicago Police Department and Cook County Sheriffs showed up, on two occasions with a van.

For the social democrats, it really is second nature to use the cops and other repressive forces to try to silence communists. After a New York DSAer posted a photo on Facebook showing our literature outside the meeting, DSA Deputy Director David Duhalde boasted “I am a social demo-



**Internationalist Group literature table outside DSA convention at University of Illinois Chicago campus, August 5. Social democrats called campus security, Chicago police and Cook County sheriffs on the Trotskyists.**

cratic enforcer extraordinaire.” Another DSAer wrote, “We’ll get our Marshalls all over this.” In a self-conscious stab at irony, another wrote, referring to an IG salesperson in the photo, “I’m pretty sure it’s basically Karl Liebknecht. Please don’t murder him.”

Over the next days, on multiple occasions groups of DSAers marched past our table chanting “We killed Rosa!” (Together with Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg was murdered in 1919 on the orders of the German Social Democratic government of Friedrich Ebert and his “bloodhound” war minister, Gustav Noske.) This menacing filth is something that only wannabe Noskes would find funny.

Our article clearly struck a nerve: one DSAer spat on it, another tore it out of a comrade’s hand and threw it in the trash. Minders led new members away from our table by the hand to stop them talking with us. This vile display revolted some

of the DSA’s new members, who thought that discussing radical ideas might be something you’d do at a “socialist” conference, and wanted to hear what the Trotskyists had to say.

It’s all business as usual for these oh-so “democratic socialists,” but it can scarcely shield them, or the capitalist order they so loyally help “enforce,” from revolutionary criticism. ■

by supporting Sanders or touting homes for homeless Democrats like the Greens.

The Democratic Socialists of America is perhaps the most successful of various opportunist leftist groups seeking to cash in on the crisis of the mainstream bourgeois parties. But the DSA’s explosive growth, while indicating that “socialism” is no longer the drop-dead epithet of the past, does *not* signify a break from bourgeois liberalism, or even from the Democratic Party. Even less is it support for socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist system of racism, poverty and war. In fact, with their talk of “democratic socialism,” the leaders of the DSA (including its “left” wing) are building a virulently anti-communist, social-democratic *obstacle to revolution*.

In contrast, the Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International, fights for a sharp *class break with capitalist politics* and to forge a party to lead a revolutionary struggle for workers rule. This call has been raised in the unions by militants of Class Struggle Education Workers in New York and Class Struggle Workers – Portland (Oregon), and taken up

by Painters Local 10 in Portland which called in August 2016, at the height of last year’s election campaign, to break with all the bosses’ parties and build a class-struggle workers party.

### Social Democrats Bail Out Crisis-Wracked Democrats

Anyone paying attention to politics knows the Democratic Party is in big trouble. Economic devastation, skyrocketing inequality, racist police terror, unabated attacks on workers’ rights and jobs, endless war, mass deportations – this was the balance sheet of the demagogic promises of the Obama administration. Despite his efforts, not even “socialist” Sanders could remedy the tarnished reputation of the Democrats. Assuming Wall Street warmonger Hillary Clinton was a shoo-in to the White House, they were blind-sided when many hard-hit working-class Obama voters out of desperation voted for Donald Trump hoping the maverick would shake things up.

Immediately following the election, reflecting the Republican candidate’s campaign themes, racist attacks escalated across the

country. On entering office in January, Trump launched his vile campaign to ban Muslims from entering the U.S. This set off an explosion of outrage among liberal and leftist young people, who rushed to the airports in the thousands to protest. The musty Democrats have tried to capitalize on that anger, casting themselves in the improbable role as “The Resistance” – a band of beret-bedecked underground fighters (as if). They have been aided by the reformist left which hails Democratic rallies and marches that pretend to champion women’s and immigrants’ rights.

To the Democratic politicians, their defeat was inexplicable. Since November they have been desperately seeking a new “message” to sell their brand. Their main pitch is labeling Trump as a puppet of the Russians. Sounding like 1980s-era Reaganite Republicans, they denounce him as a “traitor” for selling out to Moscow. Bernie Sanders, after declaring that “the political revolution continues” in his concession speech last year, is still trying to rev up the disaffected and rope them back into the Democratic fold to ring doorbells and stuff envelopes. His latest vehicle, “Our Revolution,” co-sponsored a “People’s Summit” in Chicago in June.

Channeling activist energy into traditional bourgeois politics is as old as the illusions in reforming and “realigning” this party of imperialism, racism and war, for decades the be-all and end-all for the DSA. In an earlier generation, Democratic “doves” sought to contain the radicalization of antiwar protesters with liberal “peace” candidates like Minnesota senator Eugene McCarthy (1968) and South Dakota senator George McGovern (1972). By hyping Sanders’ “socialist” credentials, opportunist leftists with the DSA in the forefront helped him pull off his social-control operation for Clinton and the Democrats.

Social democracy is a prop for capitalism, seeking to save the crisis-wracked system with promises to administer capitalism more “justly” plus anti-communism gift-wrapped in “socialist” rhetoric. Many of those joining Democratic Socialists of America are unfamiliar with what the organization really stands for and its history. Certainly most are attracted by the bourgeois liberal reform politics it packages under the label “democratic socialism.” But some may sincerely want to fight for socialism, though unclear and unsure about what that entails. The DSA’s right-wing leadership makes no bones about their organic ties to the Democrats. It is the DSA “left” that is key to the whole maneuver.

In its position paper, “Who We Are, Where We Stand” (August 2014), the DSA Left Caucus called for a “coalition strategy to prioritize working with radical leftist groups” and to “orient DSA’s electoral strategy towards supporting candidates that openly run as explicit socialists.” But along comes “independent” senator Sanders posing as a socialist while running for the presidential nomination of the arch-capitalist Democratic Party and what does the DSA left do? They “fervently supported” the “socialist” Democrat running for the nomination of this pillar of American capitalism *rather than calling for a clean break with the “people’s party” of U.S. imperialism.*

The DSA helps the Democrats use youth revolted by the status quo to yet again shore up that status quo by putting their liberal illusions in “democracy” in the service of the political system of imperialist rule. The DSA “left” does its bit with

double-talk, fostering confusion and drowning any question of class principle in a soup of “flexible tactics,” with *Jacobin* adding a dollop of sophistication to the social-democratic broth. And behind them jogs a crowd of pseudo-socialists hoping to catch up with the DSA after losing out in the contest to see who could best tail after “Bernie” and his “political revolution” for Democratic renewal. By pushing the Sanders “revolution,” they all helped the U.S. political system fulfill one of its central functions in a period of turmoil.

In contrast, as Leon Trotsky proclaimed in the Transitional Program, our duty was to “call things by their right names” and to “speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be” (see our article, “No, Bernie Sanders Is *Not* a Socialist,” *Revolution* No. 12, March 2016). For Marxists, polemicizing against phony leftists for their maneuvering and “coalition building” with “progressive” bourgeois forces is crucial to clarifying the vital issues to aid the workers and oppressed to throw off the capitalist chains and fight for their own revolutionary class interests. Rather than hoodwinking people with illusions of advancing the cause of socialism within the Democratic Party, what’s required is to frontally oppose all forms of class collaboration while openly fighting for the communism of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky.

### **“Democratic Socialism” = Counterrevolutionary Social Democracy**

By riding the wave of the Bernie Sanders campaign, the DSA helped funnel discontented voters safely back into the Democratic Party. For this it was hailed in the bourgeois press. Gushing articles have been published in Reuters, the *Huffington Post*, *Rolling Stone*, *Al Jazeera*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and an honorable mention in *Vogue* (10 February), which prescribed knit DSA hats for those who wanted to “dress for resistance.” This notoriety has enabled Bhaskar Sunkara, editor of *Jacobin* and a vice-chair of DSA, to make it to the Op-Ed section of the *New York Times* (26 June). Yet for all the media attention this supposedly new political trend has attracted, its politics are deeply rooted in the old tradition of social-democratic opportunism.

While the DSA says it “draws on Marxism” (as well as “religious and ethical socialism, feminism and other theories that critique human domination”), its talk of “democratic socialism” is diametrically opposed to Marx. “Democracy,” after all, is a form of state organization, as is monarchy. Yet Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels defined socialism as a classless, stateless society, the first stage of communism. This is no mere semantic question. To achieve socialism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels emphasized, requires smashing the existing, capitalist state and establishing the rule of the working class – the *dictatorship of the proletariat* rather than the *dictatorship of capital* – to expropriate the means of production from the exploiting class.

For the DSA, in contrast, “democratic socialism” means a whole lot of “democracy” while *opposing* the conquest of state power by the working class leading all the oppressed. It *rejects* expropriation to the capitalist class and a centrally planned economy. In its “What is Democratic Socialism? Q & A,” the



## Hands Off Rosa Luxemburg!



**The communist Rosa Luxemburg was no reformist social democrat. The political wall of the capitalist state, she wrote, is “strengthened and consolidated by the development of social reforms and the course of democracy. Only the hammer blow of revolution, that is to say, the conquest of political power by the proletariat, can break down this wall.”**

DSA says that “many structures of our [*sic*] government and economy must be radically transformed through greater economic and social democracy, so that ordinary Americans can participate in the many decisions that affect our lives.” What this means is that the decisions of “worker-owned cooperatives” and “publicly owned enterprises managed by workers and consumer representatives” *will be determined by the capitalist market*.

The founders of modern socialism, Marx and Engels, called themselves communists, as did Lenin and Trotsky from the outset of the Russian Revolution of 1917, in order to distinguish themselves from reformist “socialists” aligned with the capitalist rulers. It is this latter, reformist tradition that the “democratic socialists,” or more accurately social democrats, invoke. Rather than revolutionary *workers* democracy, it means worship of *bourgeois* “democracy,” under which, as Marx put it, “the oppressed are allowed every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them.” In place of working-class internationalism, it preaches patriotism, tying the workers to “their own” national rulers.

In Europe, social democrats have led mass reformist parties of the working class. In the U.S., however, the D in DSA was deliberately chosen to express its founders’ strategy of “realigning” the Democratic Party. Bernie Sanders calls

himself a democratic socialist, although he has caucused with the Democrats since being elected to the Senate and ran in the primaries on a platform of “revitalizing” the Democratic Party. When Sanders first launched his candidacy, DSA vice-chair Joseph Schwarz called it “a gift from the socialist gods” and national director Maria Svart told the *Wall Street Journal* (11 December 2015), “We definitely share the same immediate political program that Bernie is pushing.”

So what was that program? It included proposals to tinker with taxes, campaign spending, trade policy and so forth, and supporting U.S. imperialism while advising it to sometimes use more flexible tactics. Sanders, for example, backs the “war on terror” including U.S. military forces and “targeted killings” (assassinations) by drones in Syria, Afghanistan and Yemen, as well as U.S. saber-rattling against Russia, Iran and North Korea.<sup>1</sup> In 2012, these “democratic socialists” endorsed deporter-in-chief Obama, whose administration in its last year in office dropped three bombs every hour on average, 24 hours a day.<sup>2</sup> In short, in backing Obama and Sanders, the DSA supports predatory U.S. imperialism, tactical quibbles aside.

### Social Chauvinism and Social-Reformist Lemonade

The DSA is the main U.S. affiliate of the Second (Socialist) International. Although the S.I. had long proclaimed its opposition to militarism, the imperialist World War I showed the emptiness of its words. In August 1914, the majority of sections of the Second International pledged their allegiance to the capitalist classes of their respective countries, voted for the war budget and rallied the workers to slaughter their class brothers and sisters in the name of the capitalist fatherland. Many social-democratic leaders used their services enrolling cannon fodder to obtain seats in bourgeois cabinets. WWI unraveled the ambiguities of the reformist program, decisively showing the loyalty of its followers to capitalist oppressors “at home.”

The Socialist International of today is the direct continuation of that historic betrayal of socialism, what Lenin described as “social-imperialism,” “social-patriotism” and “social-chauvinism” – socialism in words, national chauvinism, patriotism and imperialist militarism in deeds. Today its website boasts that “49 member parties of the International are in government.” The Left Caucus has called for the DSA to leave the Socialist International. Yet that would be a cosmetic maneuver that does nothing to alter the class collaborationism that underpins the DSA’s political program and outlook. Throughout its entire history, the DSA has supported the imperialist Democratic Party and the capitalist political system.

Against the wave of social-patriotism of the Second Interna-

<sup>1</sup> See “Democrat Sanders Aboard the ‘War on Terror’ Bandwagon” (*The Internationalist* No. 42, January-February 2016); “Bernie, War & The Empire’s Pie,” *Counterpunch*, 13 November 2015, and “Greatest threat to US? Sanders says ‘paranoid’ N. Korea, Clinton picks ‘belligerent’ Russia,” *rt.com*, 5 February 2016.

<sup>2</sup> “America dropped 26,171 bombs in 2016. What a bloody end to Obama’s reign,” *Guardian*, 9 January 2017.

tional, revolutionary Marxists Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg fought to “turn the guns the other way” while V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky agitated for the working class to turn the imperialist war into civil war (class war) leading to a socialist revolution. It was on this basis that the Bolsheviks led the Russian Revolution, establishing the first workers state in history. Luxemburg and Liebknecht founded the Communist Party of Germany, opposing the Social Democratic Party (SPD) which had taken over the job of running the government for the bourgeoisie. In 1919, Lenin and Trotsky founded the Communist (“Third”) International.

That same year, the SPD leaders had Liebknecht and Luxemburg murdered by the Freikorps, the nationalist paramilitary bands that served as breeding ground for the Nazis. The differences between genuine Marxists (communists) and reformist socialists (whether they call themselves democratic socialists or social democrats) were indelibly marked in blood. There is further irony in the DSA left trying to claim the legacy of the Rosa Luxemburg as spiritual godmother to today’s social democrats. “Red Rosa” made her name in the revolutionary movement as a fierce enemy of reformism and class collaboration of every kind. In her classic polemic (1899) *Reform or Revolution*, she observed that capitalism set the stage for the production relations of socialist society:

“But on the other hand, its political and juridical relations established between capitalist society and socialist society a steadily rising wall. This wall is not overthrown, but is on the contrary strengthened and consolidated by the development of social reforms and the course of democracy. Only the hammer blow of revolution, that is to say, *the conquest of political power by the proletariat, can break down this wall.*”

The position of Luxemburg, that is, of Marxism, is diametrically opposed to the utterly false notion that the DSA presents in its June 2016 document on “Socialist Strategy in the Age of Political Revolution”: that some kind of socialism can be brought about “through reforms that fundamentally undermine the power of the capitalist system.”<sup>3</sup> And in their recent article “What Should Socialists Do?” DSA leaders Schwartz and Sunkara advocate a strategy of “non-reformist reforms,” citing French left social democrat André Gorz. As opposed to the call of the Third (Communist) International and Trotsky’s Fourth International for *workers control*, Gorz called for “self-management,” amounting to worker participation in administering *capitalist* enterprises.

Schwartz and Sunkara call “single-payer healthcare” an example of a “non-reformist reform” – i.e., national health insurance such as exists in Canada and most West European countries. Nothing “anti-capitalist” in that. In the same article the DSA leaders call to “be the glue that brings together disparate social movement[s] that share an interest in democratizing corporate power,” and to build “a potential, progressive anti-corporate majority” by “taking on neoliberal Democrats.” Just to make sure it’s all clear, they add: “Of course, progressive and socialist candidates who openly reject the neoliberal mainstream Democratic agenda may choose for pragmatic reasons to use the Democratic Party ballot line in partisan races.”

<sup>3</sup> “Resistance Rising: Socialist Strategy in the Age of Political Revolution” (June 2016) at dsausa.org.

It’s all there: the social-democratic chimera, which Luxemburg described as “turning the sea of capitalist bitterness into a sea of socialist sweetness, by progressively pouring into it bottles of social reformist lemonade.” The DSA leaders even criticize the Socialist Party of the 1930s for rejecting Democrat Roosevelt’s New Deal as “a restoration of capitalism.” They prefer the Stalinized Communist Party’s “popular front” policy of being the “left wing” of the “New Deal coalition” (noting the CP’s growth from 20,000 to 100,000 members). In fact, they can agree on “people’s fronts” with capitalist “coalition partners” because both Stalinists and social democrats are reformists who promote class collaboration rather than waging revolutionary class struggle.

### Jacobin Gironde

The bloody history of social-democratic betrayal doesn’t stop *Jacobin* editor Sunkara from calling for a “return to social democracy...that of the early days of the Second International.”<sup>4</sup> But his attempts to revive what Luxemburg called the “stinking corpse” of social democracy can only recycle the class collaboration of his political predecessors. The hip social democracy of the petty-bourgeois *Jacobin* milieu is animated by deep-going anti-communism. Condemning the fight for independent *working-class* politics as “sectarian,” they are hostile to the political *purpose* of Marxism: socialist revolution. Thus, Sunkara opines:

“The Communists’ noble gambit to stop the war and blaze a humane path to modernity in backward Russia ended up seemingly affirming the Burkean notion that any attempt to upturn an unjust order would end up only creating another. “Most socialists have been chastened by the lessons of 20th-century Communism. Today, many who would have cheered on the October Revolution have less confidence about the prospects for radically transforming the world in a single generation. They put an emphasis instead on political pluralism, dissent and diversity.”

This is the age-old canard that Stalinism – which was the nationalist antithesis of Bolshevik internationalism – was the price paid for making the October Revolution in the first place. A basic principle of working-class politics, “revolutionary defeatism” against “one’s own” imperialist rulers, is presented as a noble but quaintly outmoded sentiment for today’s democratic socialists. This is convenient if your “socialism” consists of supporting Bernie Sanders, who has voted the funds for one U.S. imperialist war after another, as the social democrats voted for war credits in 1914. For all its pretensions of 21st-century “democratic socialism,” *Jacobin* is dishing out warmed-over 18th-century liberalism.

It is ironic that the editor of *Jacobin* would invoke Edmund Burke, the English conservative *par excellence* who was a staunch opponent of the great French Revolution of 1791, and especially of its most radical wing, the Jacobins. (In an interview one editor remarked that the magazine’s name was chosen because it “conveyed militancy without tying us down.”) It seems the “left” social democrats of *Jacobin*, admirers of bourgeois democracy, have far more in common with the “moderate” Gi-

<sup>4</sup> Bhaskar Sunkara. “Socialism’s Future May Be Its Past,” *New York Times*. 26 June 2017.





**CUNY Internationalist Clubs speak-out against racist police terror, 30 August 2016.**

ronde of the French revolution than with the Jacobin radicals. Indeed, they sound like the Thermidorian “party of order” that, seeking bourgeois stability, reviled the “unruly rabble” of Paris and put an end to the French Revolution’s heroic phase.

There is a political logic at work here. Reformists seek to conserve, and serve, the existing, bourgeois state, as Rosa Luxemburg explained in *Reform or Revolution*. They buy the myth that it is not fundamentally an apparatus of class repression, but the expression of “democracy” and the vehicle for incremental progress. Marxists support genuine democratic reforms (like the right of gay marriage). But those who peddle the illusion that piecemeal reforms can pave the way to a socialist society are reinforcing the political chains that bind the working class to capitalism. Breaking from *all* capitalist parties – Democrats, Republicans, Greens, etc. – and building a revolutionary workers party is key to defending the interests of the workers and oppressed.

The state is not some impartial entity looking out for the interests of all its subjects. The function of these “special bodies of armed men” (Engels) – the police, army, courts, etc. – remains the same whichever political parties take office: they are a machine to defend the rule and property of the exploiting class against the masses of people it exploits. When capitalism crashes the economy, the state bails the bankers out. When capitalists need resources or markets, to “defend” their domination against rivals, or to crush revolutions or rebellions that threaten their power, the imperialist state sends its armed forces to slaughter for them. What social democrats want is a share in administering that power. When they get it, they use it to suppress the genuine socialists and communists.

Sunkara, in his op-ed in the *New York Times*, accuses the Bol-

sheviks of naively basing the October Revolution on “prospects for radically transforming the world in a single generation.”<sup>5</sup> This is a complete mischaracterization of revolutionary politics. Lenin and Trotsky did not have illusions of bringing about socialism instantaneously. Under the Bolshevik slogan “All Power to the Soviets” (workers councils), the workers of Russia overturned the Provisional Government, a coalition of capitalist and “democratic socialist” ministers that kept Russia in the imperialist war. They then set about forging a new state dedicated to the interests of the toiling people and the socialist reconstruction of society, which required the revolution’s spread internationally.

Key to that internationalist revolutionary perspective was highly industrialized Germany with its powerful workers movement. It was to prevent this above all that the SPD government of Friedrich Ebert and his war minister Gustav Noske (who famously declared, “I hate revolution like sin”) put down the workers uprising of January 1919 and had Luxemburg and Liebknecht killed. The bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet workers state under Joseph “Socialism in One Country” Stalin – which Sunkara et al. blame on the revolution itself – resulted most fundamentally from its encirclement and isolation, which the social democrats did all in their power to enforce.

### “Practical” Politics: The Lessons of the Democratic Party Socialists

In Europe, social democrats can aspire to government office. In the U.S., they look back to when DSA founder Michael Harrington had power lunches with top aides to Lyndon Johnson, helping design the “war on poverty” while LBJ’s bombs rained down on Vietnam. The fantasy the DSA sells – that some day in the future reforms will “radically transform” the capitalist system and bring about socialism – translates in the here and now into supporting the Democratic Party in order to be, in Harrington’s phrase, the “left wing of the possible.” Long before its support for Obama and Sanders, the DSA backed one Democratic Party candidate after another, from Jesse Jackson and his “Rainbow Coalition” to pro-war millionaire John Kerry.<sup>6</sup>

In an article on “Socialism at the People’s Summit” – the 2016 Sanders love-fest of the DSA, Progressive Democrats, Socialist Alternative and others – DSA deputy director David Duhalde described decades-long efforts by the DSA and its predecessors devoted to “remaking the Democrats into a social democratic/labor party like those in Europe and Canada.”<sup>7</sup> Going back to the Realignment Caucus of Harrington and Max Shachtman in Norman Thomas’ Socialist Party, this strategy of “realignment” has shaped the outlook and trajectory of the DSA. Today, some elements in the DSA, including its Left Caucus, criticize this strategy without opposing it on the basis of independent *class* politics.

While claiming to be a resistance to capitalism, the DSA’s political activity bolsters it. Its justification can be found in

<sup>5</sup> Bhaskar Sunkara. “Socialism’s Future May Be its Past,” *New York Times*. 26 June 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Schwartz and Sunkara call on socialists to “to broaden out the post-Sanders, anti-corporate trend in US politics into a working-class ‘rainbow coalition’.”

<sup>7</sup> “Socialism at the People’s Summit,” 12 May 2016, [dsausa.org](http://dsausa.org).

the “Where We Stand” statement on its website, which states: “Much of progressive, independent political action will continue to occur in Democratic Party primaries in support of candidates who represent a broad progressive coalition.”<sup>8</sup> Independent? This isn’t even organizational independence from the Democrats, let alone working-class political independence from all bourgeois parties and politicians. Boasting of tactical diversity, DSAers are free to pursue local variations of the social-democratic recipe, but anyone moving toward revolutionary politics is likely to get the Harrington treatment – locked out in a jiffy, as was the fate of the early Students for a Democratic Society when they committed the cardinal sin, in then-Socialist Party leader Harrington’s view, of allowing a Communist youth group member into a meeting.

Pushing Bernie Sanders’ “political revolution” to “revitalize” the Democratic Party is the same thing as the Harrington/Shachtman “realignment” strategy.<sup>9</sup> DSA National Director Maria Svart says: “It’s just that the Democratic Party is where many progressive people do politics.”<sup>10</sup> DSA leftist and New York City co-chair Rahel Biru, on the other hand, told the *Wall Street Journal* that, “The Democratic Party is where social movements go to die.” True enough, but does that mean the DSA left is expressing a fundamental difference? Hardly. The DSA right and “left” can “flexibly” agree that it’s not a principle to be in the Democratic Party everywhere or always, or vote for each and every one of its candidates – and they also agree on opposing the Marxist principle against support to capitalist parties and politicians, which they call “sectarian.”

In an article “Should Democratic Socialists Be Democrats?” in the social-democratic *In These Times*, DSAer Jessie Mannisto writes: “Should we work within the Democratic Party? I’d say yes. Is it *enough* to work within the Democratic Party? Definitely not.” She adds: “I hope we don’t exit the Democratic Party; I hope we infiltrate it.” Left Caucus member Chris Maisano counters that “Reformism doesn’t reform, and it has not succeeded in fighting the Right, either. At the same time, an oppositional approach to electoral politics seems like a recipe for marginalization.” So the left can build “progressive social movements” formally outside the Democratic Party, while at election time their votes are funneled to Democratic candidates.

The DSA’s official position, though couched in nebulous-sounding verbiage, is simply the most recent “realignment” remix: “In the medium-to-long-term we will work to build the organizational capacity necessary to run candidates of our own ... to forge larger socialist electoral coalitions both within and outside of the Democratic Party and ultimately to create a majoritarian electoral coalition in support of socialist political

and economic reforms.”<sup>11</sup>

The DSA has been so deeply embedded in the Democratic Party for decades that it doesn’t even describe itself as a distinct political party. Consequently it was hardly a factor at all in left politics. The DSA program amounts to nothing more than putting pressure on the Democrats, seeking to nudge them to the left, its calls never overstepping the boundaries of the capitalist order. And that is true of both the right and “left” of this reformist, pro-capitalist organization.

### Reformist Appeals Undercut Struggles for Black and Immigrant Rights

After the cop murder of Philando Castile, the DSA released a statement on “The Need for a Democratic Transformation of the Criminal Justice and Police System” – the title encapsulates social-democratic reformism – entreating the armed fist of the bourgeois state to “promote peace and justice,” with “the use of firearms as an absolute last resort.” Along with “greater community control of policing” and “stronger gun control policies,” this would supposedly amount to a “restructuring of the role of police in our society.”<sup>12</sup> So the DSA *supports* the apparatus of state repression that protects and serves the racist capitalist system against black people and the entire working class, but prettifies its role with appeals for it to more effectively embody “justice.”

This is supposed to be accomplished through the party founded to uphold chattel slavery, the Democratic Party of mass incarceration and police terror. Today’s “democratic socialists” follow in the footsteps of Bayard Rustin, Michael Harrington & Co., who worked to subjugate black protest to John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson. Marxists instead call for workers mobilization against racist police terror, and underline that racial oppression is in the marrow of American capitalism. As Internationalist contingents chant in the protests against racist police terror: *Only revolution can bring justice!*

As for the record number of mass deportations under Obama, which Trump seeks to escalate even further, the DSA responds with rose-tinted social-patriotism: “We can stem the ‘push’ for mass immigration from the developing world only if these economies are allowed to develop in equitable and internally integrated ways.”<sup>13</sup> Its fellow “democratic socialist” Sanders called for a “path to citizenship” for undocumented immigrants<sup>14</sup> coupled with “secure borders without building a fence.”<sup>15</sup> Much like Ralph Nader, Sanders’ populist message has included complaints about undocumented immigration “pushing down U.S. wages” (echoed in the DSA statement’s warnings about immigration “endanger[ing] union wages and union contracts in many areas”).

In opposition to revolutionary Marxism, which it derides as “unrealistic,” the DSA presents its politics as practical and cool-headed. The reality is that the DSA’s politics are indeed pragmatic – for the bourgeoisie. But they are completely illusory,

<sup>8</sup> “Where We Stand: Building the Next Left,” dsausa.org.

<sup>9</sup> Harrington and Shachtman wanted the Democrats to lop off their Southern segregationist Dixiecrat wing. Ironically, the Dixiecrats eventually went over to the Republicans, but in the aftermath the Democratic Party has moved steadily to the right as the Clintons “triangulated” with Republican policies and Obama sought “consensus.”

<sup>10</sup> Jesse A. Myerson, “An Anti-Trump Electoral Strategy That Isn’t Pro-Clinton,” 9 September 2016.

<sup>11</sup> “Resistance Rising: Socialist Strategy in the Age of Political Revolution,” 25 June 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Statement on dsausa.org 12 July 2016.

<sup>13</sup> “Justice for Immigrant Workers,” dsausa.org, 31 January 2013.

<sup>14</sup> PBS News Hour “2016 Candidate Stands” series, 30 April 2015.

<sup>15</sup> 2016 grassroots campaign website FeelTheBern.org, “Issues.”



impractical, unrealistic – and reactionary – when it comes to any real struggle to put an end to capitalist oppression.

### Left Caucus: Realigning the Realigners

Meanwhile, the DSA's amorphous left wing seeks its own kind of "realignment" – of the DSA itself. Within the DSA, the Left Caucus has called for an adjustment of the organization's terms of its relationship to the Democratic Party. The hope is to nudge the DSA further to the left. "'Progressive activism' is not enough," they say, the "DSA must be an organization of *socialists* organizing for *socialism*." And so, it wants to "orient the DSA's electoral strategy towards supporting candidates that openly run as socialists."<sup>16</sup> A revolutionary party can sometimes present its own candidates in capitalist elections as a platform for the revolutionary program, explaining that only socialist revolution can transform society in the interests of the oppressed. It can occasionally give critical support to workers parties and candidates running independent of and against the bourgeoisie in order to expose their contradictions.

What the DSA left proposes is nothing of the sort. Does it call for a clear, principled break with the Democrats and other capitalist parties? Far from it. In a statement issued on the eve of the 2016 election it opposed campaigning for Clinton and claimed, "We reject the realignment strategy that has guided much of the left's electoral orientation for decades," only to declare:

"We do not, however, call for an immediate and total break from voting for or supporting any Democratic candidate. We all fervently supported Bernie Sanders in the presidential primary, and recognize that he probably would have been a footnote to the campaign if he tried to run as an independent. Voting for Democratic candidates in specific state and local races can be justified in many circumstances."

"Give The People What They Want: DSA Members on 2016 and Beyond," 29 October 2016

In the same document, the DSA leftists observe that the DSA's official line is to "build social movements while voting for Democrats." So how, exactly, do they "reject" the official strategy? Answer: they don't. It's all part of a political maneuver. The DSA rightists say: Vote Democrat! The leftists say: Vote Democrat Sometimes!

One of the signers of the "Give The People What They Want" statement then came out with an appeal: "Want to Elect Socialists? Run Them in Democratic Primaries."<sup>17</sup> Socialist labels on Democratic candidates is about the clearest expression of class collaboration you could ask for. Others in the DSA left prefer a slightly less blatant approach, with more appeals to tactical "flexibility," working with, in and around minor-league bourgeois parties like the Greens that act as pressure groups on the Democrats. Under the Big Tent in the circus of left opportunism, each can peddle their wares in comfort.

In its relation to the DSA as a whole, the "DSA left" plays a role analogous to that of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party. Sanders ropes in disaffected young voters with malarkey

about revitalizing the Democratic Party, hoping no one recalls the history of past candidates who vowed to do the same. The "DSA left" talks of reforming the reformist social democracy, despite the latter's decades of loyal service to the party of JFK, LBJ, the Clintons and Obama. Reviving the same old illusions, the political function of these ploys is to absorb opposition and generate mechanisms for subordinating new generations to the structures of American imperialist politics.

### Sliding Scale of Opportunism

The DSA is the biggest fish in the social-democratic pond, as it wants everyone to know, but it is not the only one. Oohing and aahing over its growth, smaller outfits of the opportunist left are scrambling to outdo each other in their efforts to make nice with the DSA. Like the latter, Bernie's "revolution" warmed their hearts as they "felt the Bern." Yet from the other side of their mouths, each proclaims itself to be the torchbearer of some revitalized socialist movement. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) and Socialist Alternative (SAlt) have held joint events with the DSA, like the "Pre-May Day Socialist Picnic and Sign Making Party" in San Francisco, amiably framing the differences between "democratic socialists" and Marxists as mere tactical questions.

The ISO's criticism of the DSA is akin to its criticism of Bernie Sanders – which boiled down in practice to suggesting, recommending and beseeching that he run as an independent while continuously describing him as a socialist and running red-white-and-blue paeans to how his "political revolution" was putting "socialism in the air." They claim that the DSA is forgoing "independent" politics. But tailing any "movement" in sight, the ISO has built one "independent" bourgeois campaign after another, from immigrant-basher Ralph Nader to Sanders cheerleader Jill Stein of the Green Party, and have themselves run as candidates of this minor-league capitalist party from NYC to the SF Bay Area.

On the sliding scale of opportunism, a smidgeon to the right of the ISO is Socialist Alternative, U.S. affiliate of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) which holds that cops are workers in uniform. They also administered the city of Liverpool for capitalism as the Militant tendency of the British Labour Party. After spending paragraphs congratulating the DSA on its influx of new members in "DSA Grows to 21,000 – Toward a New Socialist Party" (5 July 2017), SAlt slips in one brief sentence about the DSA's origins: "Historically, DSA was an anti-communist, social-democratic trend that was committed to a long-term strategy of transforming the Democratic Party." So what's changed? According to SAlt:

"DSA is an evolving organization. Within it are a wide range of views on a variety of issues. There remains an important section of DSA that still maintains its traditional politics. But it appears that this wing is now a minority and that the new people joining are largely supportive of the more left-wing current around *Jacobin*."

Yet the Left Caucus and *Jacobin* milieu within the DSA do not, as we have seen, represent any significant political break from the DSA's origins. They simply want to loosen a bit their commitments to the Democratic Party. Hailing the "enormous support for Bernie Sanders," "the enormous movement of resistance"

<sup>16</sup> "DSA Left Caucus Position Paper: Who We Are, Where We Stand," August 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Moraff, "Want to Elect Socialists? Run Them in Democratic Primaries," 21 April 2017, dsausa.org.

to Trump, and the “exciting” growth of the DSA, SAlt sums up: “Socialist Alternative urges DSA to take advantage of its rapid growth and dynamism to use this potential to launch a new, broad, democratic Socialist Party....” Enormous indeed is the appetite for opportunist maneuvering.

In a similar vein, a smaller group made up of SAlt’s former comrades in the International Marxist Tendency’s U.S. section hails the “exciting growth” of the DSA, and “agrees with DSA’s support for campaigns to the left of the Democrats,” like a Green Party candidate for New York city council, while proposing that the DSA disaffiliate from the Socialist International to “clear the way for DSA to help build a genuine socialist international,” and so on (*Socialist Revolution*, July-August 2017).

And just to make sure no one thinks they’ve gone “sectarian,” they call, in bold italics for “Bernie Sanders, [the Sanders support group] Our Revolution, and labor leaders” to break with the Democrats and “build a mass socialist party” (led by a bourgeois politician)!

Trailing along, *Left Voice* (25 April) enthused: “The DSA’s upsurge is leading new activists into the workers’ movement – a promising sign for the US left.” The web site masquerades as a neutral media outlet for a variety of leftist politics, but is the outlet of the Trotskyist Faction, led by the Partido de Trabajadores por el Socialismo (Workers Party for Socialism) whose specialty is engineering reformist left election coalitions. While hailing the DSA’s growth, it also voices some “left” suggestions, like following the “example” of the election of SAlt’s Kshama Sawant to the Seattle city council, which *Left Voice* (19 June) says “points to the potential for the left to boldly advance socialist candidacies and politics.” Yet SAlt’s municipal reformism led Sawant to praise the selection of a woman police chief, whose cops have kept on killing black people.

The sliding scale of opportunism in left groups’ orientation to the Democratic Party and DSA reflects what they have in common. For all their talk about “independent politics,” they present themselves as basically being on the same team as the DSA – which is true enough. Their differences are tactical, a series of gradations on a scale of how best to build “coalitions” to pressure the Democrats. They put forward similar menus of reforms while trying to pull liberals to the left with “fight the right” rhetoric. Genuine Marxists, on the other hand, fight on a revolutionary *class* program, calling to break with all the capitalist parties, and in particular with the liberals, “progressives” and those who falsely claim to be “friends” of labor, black people, immigrants, women and other oppressed groups.

As they tail after populist politicians from Nader to Sanders, the assorted social-democratic reformists dismiss the program of breaking with bourgeois politics and building a workers party to fight for socialist revolution as a pipedream.



Internationalist photo

**Painters Union Local 10 at June 4 Portland labor mobilization against fascists calls to break with all the bosses’ parties and for a workers party.**

In reality, they regard it as anathema, loathing revolutionary politics “like sin.”

A real example for the workers movement, however, was shown by Portland Painters Union (IUPAT) Local 10, which in August 2016 passed a motion calling for no support to any bosses’ party and instead to build a class-struggle workers party. Within a week of Trump’s election, the union passed a motion to mobilize labor action to stop racist and fascist provocations, leading to similar motions by other area unions. And this past June 4, they mobilized several hundred unionists from 14 unions against a racist/fascist rally. But instead of a united action that could have shut down the fascists, a reformist/liberal coalition led by the ISO and including the DSA and SAlt deliberately split the protest and called a separate rally coordinating with the mayor and the police explicitly in order to *avoid* any confrontation with the fascists.<sup>18</sup>

Of the thousands of youth attracted to the DSA, those who actually seek to fight for socialism must choose a different path. What’s needed is not an amorphous social-democratic organization in the framework of bourgeois parliamentary politics, but forging a democratic-centralist Leninist party that can actually lead the class struggle against the entire bourgeoisie (and its reformist hangers-on). Such a party must intransigently combat all forms of class collaboration, which leads to defeat for the workers and oppressed. And that begins with clearly and unambiguously drawing the crucial lines of demarcation between Democratic Party “socialism” and the communist program of international socialist revolution. ■

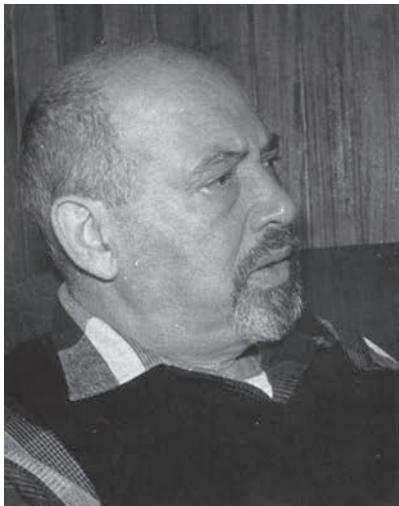
*This and the following article are part of a forthcoming pamphlet on the Democratic Socialists of America. For a copy of the pamphlet, write to Mundial Publications, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008; or send an e-mail to internationalistgroup@msn.com*

<sup>18</sup> See “Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation,” and “How Do You Spell Class Collaboration? ISO,” in *The Internationalist* No. 49, May-June 2017



# Toward a Multiracial Revolutionary Party

## Imperialist Social Democracy vs. Black Liberation



Photos (from left): marxist.com; Warren Leffler/Library of Congress; Barbara Alper/Getty Images

**Rogues' gallery of Shachtmanism: acting on behalf of U.S. imperialism in sabotaging struggle for black liberation. From left, Max Shachtman, Michael Harrington and Bayard Rustin in the 1960s.**

**By R. Tifta**

In the 1950s during the anti-Soviet Cold War – and especially as it was playing out in Africa – Southern racism was becoming an embarrassment to U.S. imperialism. The British empire was threatened by anticolonial movements but also by U.S. imperialism, which was demanding entry into all the markets formerly dominated by Britain and other European powers. The U.S. imperialists preferred, where they could, to rule using local dictatorships, rather than direct occupation. The U.S. “neocolonial” model was the Latin American “banana republic,” as they disparagingly called countries ruled by brutal military dictatorships that gave a free hand to U.S. corporations like the United Fruit Company (“Chiquita”), Kennecott Copper, Standard Oil, and ITT.

The U.S. looked at Africa and saw a giant treasure-trove of gold, diamonds and jewels of all kinds, rare minerals including uranium and cobalt, petroleum, coffee, cocoa, and what have you – potentially commodities worth many billions then (in the trillions today). But African peoples were rising up against the old colonialism, inspired by the war of the FLN (National Liberation Front) against the French in Algeria and the Mau-Mau uprising against the British in Kenya. At the same time, the U.S. imperialists, mouthing slogans of “democracy,” were losing battles for African “hearts and minds” to the Soviet Union.

As the civil rights movement picked up in the U.S. South, images were flashed around the world of Ku Klux Klan night riders and fat cops with fire-hoses and German shepherd dogs loosed on black marchers, many of them children. The ugly reality of U.S. “democracy” was there for all to see, undercutting

Washington’s effort to counterpose itself to British colonialism and what the imperialists saw as the Soviet “Communist threat.” The brutal American segregation system known as Jim Crow was seen by the U.S. imperialists as a public relations problem. The American “social democrats,” dominated by followers of one Max Shachtman, believed they had a plan to solve it. They called it “realignment.”

### Imperialism’s Fake-Socialist Servants: Whose “Southern Strategy”?

Max Shachtman was a renegade from Trotskyism who became a crusading anti-Communist and eventually an ardent defender of U.S. imperialism. The most prominent Shachtmanite leaders were Michael Harrington and Bayard Rustin. They were then running the U.S. Socialist Party, which was still formally headed by aging CIA “asset” Norman Thomas. (Yes, the formal head of the Socialist Party was a State Department propagandist who worked with and took the spy agency’s money.)

Like the young, idealistic black militants of the civil rights movement before them, today’s opponents of America’s racist system of capitalist oppression must learn some hard lessons about how it functions. First of all, the Democratic Party – from Barack Obama and Bill Clinton to Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren – is a bulwark of U.S. imperialism and the most dangerous enemy of all the world’s workers, black, brown, Asian, and white. Second, many who call themselves “socialist” are sworn enemies of socialism: they are or aspire to be duplicitous agents for the Democrats and the capitalist bosses. Latter-day Shachtmanite-like fake socialists include, most prominently, the



Photos: Abbie Rowe, National Park Service, AP

**The Shachtmanites' masters: (Left) President John F. Kennedy with FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover and Attorney General Robert Kennedy. (Right) President Lyndon Johnson and Vice President Hubert Humphrey behind him.**

anti-socialist International Socialist Organization (ISO) and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA).

So back to "realignment." Shachtman devised his plan with a close collaborator, Robert M. Martinson, and attempted to carry it forward with Harrington and Rustin. Shachtman understood that the Democrats were the dominant party of U.S. imperialism but could fall from power without the support of the KKK and the White Citizens' Councils (the chamber-of-commerce bosses of the Klan). If the Southern racists left the Democratic Party, the balance of power in the U.S. would tip to the more isolationist Republican Party. To ensure the "American Century," as the U.S. imperialists called their world domination, Shachtman proposed that the Democrats shift their alliances to line up with the Southern black population and the anti-Communist labor bureaucracy.

Shachtman did not act to put his plan into operation immediately, since political considerations over the election of Lyndon Johnson (LBJ) in 1964 caused the Shachtmanites to continue to support the retention of the Southern racists in the Democratic Party. "Realignment" did occur some years later, but in a rather different way. As black voting became more possible, the Republicans under Nixon courted the Southern racist vote. This caused a split in the Shachtmanites, with Shachtman and his tendency in the Socialist Party supporting Nixon in 1972 and then changing the SP's name to Social Democrats USA (SDUSA), while Harrington founded the "Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee" (DSOC, forerunner of the Democratic Socialists of America) to continue supporting the Democrats.

Today we take it for granted that the white racist vote in the South (and across the U.S.) is mainly or all Republican, while black people who are allowed to vote (millions have been disenfranchised) generally vote Democratic. But this pattern contrasts sharply with the status quo during the civil rights movement. At that time the Democratic Party was the party of the KKK and Jim Crow, as it had been since the days when it organized racist terror in resisting Republican-led Reconstruction after the Civil War. Now, even Klansman David Duke runs in the Republican, not the Democratic primaries. At the same time, since the days of

Roosevelt's "New Deal Coalition," the union bureaucracy became more and more deeply enmeshed in the Democratic Party apparatus. Nixon's role in getting the former "Dixiecrats" – Southern white racist politicians – to switch to the Republican Party is sometimes referred to as the "Southern Strategy."

After Democratic president Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act in 1965, formally upholding voting rights for blacks in the South that had been suppressed since the defeat of Reconstruction in 1876, right-wing Republicans saw the chance to capture millions of racist votes. They would campaign in the South using code words like "states' rights," "traditional values" and "law and order." Even the linguistically challenged KKK and their followers got the idea. The strategy was nearly derailed in 1968, when Alabama's Democratic governor George Wallace (whose slogan was "Segregation Forever") ran as the candidate of a KKK-style third party and gained most of the Southern states' electoral votes. Nixon won the election anyway, running against Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's widely hated vice president, who became the Democratic candidate after LBJ dropped out of the race as it became clear the U.S. was losing the Vietnam War.

Ever since those days, Republican campaigners have upped the racist rhetoric in the South. Reagan began his campaign for president in 1980 proclaiming "I believe in states' rights," in a speech delivered near Philadelphia, Mississippi – where the KKK and police murdered heroic civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner during Freedom Summer in 1964. The message got across.

### **SNCC and the Radical Black Challenge to Jim Crow Racism**

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) emerged in 1960 amid the sit-in movement to integrate lunch counters throughout the South. Comprised mainly of Southern black youth, SNCC was initially tied to Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Beginning in 1955, with Rosa Parks' refusal to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama, the civil rights



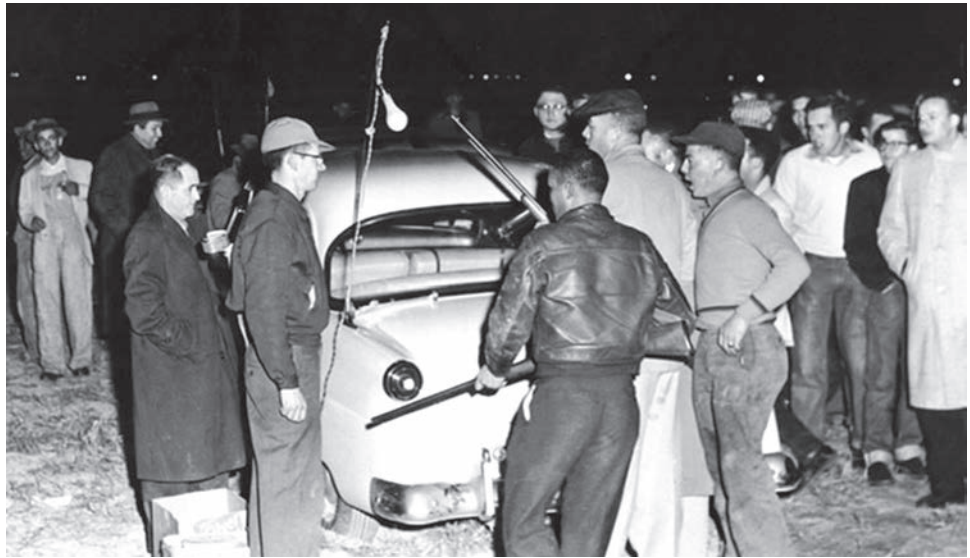
movement posed a high-profile challenge to the violent, reactionary American political regime of the 1950s. Black people took the lead in the most extensive social movement since the 1930s. SNCC became a courageous expression of youthful black defiance of Jim Crow and McCarthyism.

The official civil rights leadership under King wanted to limit the struggle to peaceful protest and moderate reforms, but the racist power structure of U.S. capitalism reacted with extreme violence to the slightest democratic demands. When King's SCLC attempted to impose its conservatizing will on SNCC, the results were mixed. For a time, SNCC was split between a more conservative wing wanting to focus on voter registration and a more radical wing seeking direct action: the integration of public facilities such as swimming pools and lunch counters. In practice, as SNCC leader James Forman argues in his book *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (1985), radicalism could not be avoided, since "the establishment" treated all civil rights activity as a mortal threat to its power.

At the highest levels, U.S. capitalist rulers recognized and feared the revolutionary potential of an organization of black youth fighting for black freedom in the South. While "nonviolent" was part of SNCC's name, many of its militants came to advocate self-defense against racist terror. As a SNCC leader, Forman joined Robert F. Williams in Monroe, North Carolina, in 1961. Williams had been head of the local NAACP when in 1957 he decided to fight back against deadly Klan and police violence. He and wife Mabel Williams organized a black branch of the National Rifle Association. (See "Who Controls the Guns?" *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013.)

This became an armed self-defense guard of black volunteers, mostly army veterans. Their militant and disciplined actions routed Klan night riders, driving these scum out of black neighborhoods. The Native American Lumbee tribe of North Carolina found Williams' example inspiring. In a compelling demonstration of the power of militant leadership in fighting racist terror, the Lumbee smashed a planned Klan attack. Hundreds of Lumbee people, armed and determined, suddenly advanced as the Klan gathered. The Native Americans sent the Klan scum scuttling into the swamps where they belong. This was the "Battle of Hayes Pond" on 18 January 1958.

Forman was present with Williams in Monroe as they tried to defend Freedom Riders from the North who were attempting to integrate interstate bus travel. The white racists rioted and Forman was nearly killed. Robert and Mabel Williams had to flee to Cuba following the revolution there, where they established "Radio Free Dixie," broadcasting music and political commentary from Havana. Forman's experience with Williams



**Armed members of Native American Lumbee tribe (right) drive off KKK night riders in Battle of Hayes Pond, 18 January 1958.**

Fayetteville Observer

raised the level of his militancy. Like many in SNCC he was beginning to understand that revolutionary struggle would be needed to defeat racial oppression in America. However, as black youth put their bodies on the line – as they were arrested, convicted of serious crimes, spied on by the feds, beaten, shot at and lynched – Northern Democrats and labor bureaucrats sought to infiltrate, co-opt and squelch the struggle.

With the election of John F. Kennedy as president in 1960, the SCLC leadership committed itself to working within the Democratic Party, the party of Jim Crow segregation and the KKK. But the Democrats had become concerned about the "threat" of radical black militancy. The U.S. government also sent its operatives to infest SNCC meetings, including future liberal congressman Allard Lowenstein, whose far-ranging work with the CIA has been extensively documented.<sup>1</sup> Robert Kennedy had been a counsel for anti-communist witch-hunting senator Joseph McCarthy in the early 1950s and later chief counsel of the anti-labor McClellan Committee. As U.S. attorney general from 1961 to 1964, RFK promised money and, reportedly, draft deferments if SNCC leaders would desist from direct action and focus on voter registration in designated areas.

### The "Liberal-Labor Syndrome"

Enter the professional anti-communist Shachtmanites and the Socialist Party.

James Forman described the forces arrayed against SNCC as the "liberal-labor syndrome," because they comprised Democratic politicians, government agents and union bureaucrats. He explained:

"[Lowenstein] represented a whole body of influential

<sup>1</sup> Richard Cummings, *The Pied Piper: Allard K. Lowenstein and the Liberal Dream* (Grove Press, 1985), p. 224. On "Lowenstein's lengthy history of involvement" (as the author delicately calls it) "with groups and activities...shown to have CIA connections," also see William H. Chafe, *Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism* (Basic Books, 1993), pp. 104-107, 254-261.

forces seeking to prevent SNCC from becoming too radical and to bring it under control of what I have called the liberal-labor syndrome....

"The liberal-labor syndrome...was typified by its close links with the Kennedy administration and later to liberal Democratic elements in the Johnson administration, by the influence of Walter Reuther of the United Automobile Workers, by its violent Red-baiting, and by its social democratic line – as embodied in Norman Thomas. Individual white members included Joseph Rauh (general counsel for the UAW), author and poverty 'expert' Michael Harrington, and various church leaders."<sup>2</sup>

As the mention of Harrington suggests, the Shachtmanites played a central role in this coordinated bourgeois assault against SNCC. Their dreams of "realignment" notwithstanding, the Shachtmanites' main objective during the Kennedy and Johnson years was to keep the Dixiecrats from leaving the Democratic Party. This was one of the reasons they sought to dampen SNCC militancy and witch-hunt "reds" out of the civil rights movement. They were especially incensed that the National Lawyers Guild was helping SNCC activists when they were arrested and jailed. At every meeting, Forman reports, the Shachtmanites and their allies demanded that SNCC sever ties with the Guild, which they believed represented a dangerous Communist threat to the capitalist system they served.<sup>3</sup>

In fact they were on the lookout for anyone they thought might be a supporter of the Communist Party (CP), or just "soft on Communism." Many brave activists were sympathetic to the CP, including Rosa Parks (who had attended meetings of the CP's International Labor Defense for the Scottsboro Boys), and they were hounded by the FBI as well as the Shachtmanites. Nonetheless, its revolutionary fiber destroyed by Stalinism, the CP had since the mid-1930s become a reformist party, beholden to the Democrats. Having gone underground due to the Cold War witch-hunting, by the late 1950s and 1960s, most supporters of the Stalinized CP were politically indistinguishable from the liberals, who however feared and hated them.

With their witch hunting and fraudulent civil rights activities, the Shachtmanites were serving the Humphrey wing of the Democratic Party. Then a senator from Minnesota, Humphrey led the pro-labor section of the bosses' political apparatus. Humphrey had been the undertaker of the Farmer-Labor Party, a pro-capitalist party in Minnesota that he buried in the Democratic Party in 1944 and then purged the resulting Democratic Farmer-Labor (DFL) party of "reds" during the late 1940s. At the same time he gained national prominence by pushing a civil rights plank at the 1948 Democratic Party convention that led to a walkout by Southern delegations who set up a short-lived Dixiecrat party (the "States Rights Democrats"). By the early 1960s Humphrey was aligned with the red-baiting leadership of the AFL-CIO, and helped run their work as labor agents of U.S. imperialism.

Like U.S. government asset Norman Thomas, Walter Reuther had traveled some distance since the late 1930s.

<sup>2</sup> James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Open Hand, 1985), p. 357.

<sup>3</sup> Forman, *Making of Black Revolutionaries*, pp. 380-381.

Back then, with supporters of the Communist Party playing a central role, Reuther helped organize the U.S. auto sector on an industrial basis, under the auspices of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). He was a member of the Socialist Party, which was temporarily moving leftward at that time amid a rising tide of U.S. labor militancy. During World War II, however, Reuther became a flag-waving patriot and never looked back. During the war he prostrated the UAW to Roosevelt's demand for a no-strike pledge. As the bosses made super-profits on government contracts, workers got nothing but speed-ups and deteriorating work conditions.

The Communist Party had supported Reuther's wartime patriotism (and neglect of the plight of black workers), but this did not save the CP from the post-war red purge. Reuther carried out his purge systematically in the UAW in 1946, driving every known CP supporter out of the union. He became a leading anti-Communist in the labor movement and extended his service of the bosses by acting as a U.S. government agent, helping found witch-hunting outfits like the Americans for Democratic Action and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. In the 1950s, upon becoming president of the CIO he merged it with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), led by the notorious right-wing bureaucrat George Meany, who bragged that he had never walked a picket line and never led a strike. Reuther and Meany were Hubert H. Humphrey's guard dogs, protecting the capitalist system while masquerading as labor leaders.

### Rustin and Harrington: All the Way with LBJ

Walter Reuther then went on to masquerade as a civil rights leader. Helping Humphrey become Johnson's running mate in 1964 was Reuther's real purpose. To get Johnson in the White House and Humphrey on the ticket, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy was called upon to put its boot on the necks of civil rights militants. Humphrey's labor lieutenants were aided by Michael Harrington, who would become the "poverty expert" for the Johnson administration, as well as Rustin and other Shachtmanite social democrats. Every effort was made to ensure that the Dixiecrats would have nothing to fear in voting for LBJ and HHH.

Alongside Reuther, the Shachtmanites were going "all the way with LBJ." They were masters of the double game. Out of their mouths came statements about "realigning" the Democratic Party as an alliance of organized labor and the Southern black population. In practice, they acted to keep civil rights activists subordinated to the Democratic Kennedy and Johnson administrations which rested on support from the Dixiecrats. As soldiers in this reactionary cause Harrington, together with his close associate, the "moderate civil rights leader" Bayard Rustin, targeted SNCC.

As they did in 1962 with another leftward-moving student organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Harrington and company attempted to force SNCC to exclude reds. They sent Rustin to SNCC meetings to demand SNCC adopt an anti-red clause in its organizational statements. It was soundly rejected. As Forman remarks, SNCC's defiance against red-baiting "merely intensified the liberal Establishment's determination to control the organization – or to destroy it, if



control should prove impossible.”<sup>4</sup> Having experienced the effects of the Reuther-Rustin-Harrington game plan, Forman understood it well.

### “The Farce on Washington”

The largest demonstration of the civil rights movement, the “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom,” took place on 28 August 1963. Remembered by many for Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, it was a thoroughly co-opted affair. Malcolm X criticized it as the “Farce on Washington,” caustically describing the Kennedy White House telling the organizers “how to come, where to stop, what signs to carry, what song to sing, what speech they could make, and what speech they couldn’t make.”<sup>5</sup>

The social democrats played a key role in this blunting of black militancy. (The current organization of the heirs of Shachtman and Harrington, “Democratic Socialists of America,” boasts on its website that the initiator of the march and its main organizers, were members of the Socialist Party.) The March on Washington was originally planned by A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, as far back as 1941, as a means to pressure the Roosevelt government to extend civil and labor protections to black people North and South. The Communist Party abandoned its initial support of the march as part of backing the Roosevelt government during the imperialist Second World War. After the war – which the “democratic” U.S. fought with a Jim Crow army – Randolph revived his call for a march, but he was stymied year after year by the self-appointed “friends of the Negro” in the Democratic Party and the union bureaucracy.

In the context of the mass actions of the early 1960s, pressure for the march became irresistible. Then the operatives of the ruling class sprang into action to control it politically. Foremost among these controllers was Harrington’s Socialist Party “comrade,” Bayard Rustin, with Shachtman disciples Tom Kahn and Rachelle Horowitz busily backing him up. Speakers and speeches were strictly vetted by Rustin. Of course, he didn’t touch the conservative speech of anti-Communist NAACP head Roy Wilkins. Wilkins, a toxic FBI fink, had actually opposed the March on Washington; he frequently baited Rustin for being gay and from the podium even slyly red-baited radical black historian (and NAACP founder) W. E. B. Du Bois, who had died in Ghana the day before.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Forman, *Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 220.

<sup>5</sup> Malcolm X, “Message to the Grass Roots,” 10 November 1963, on line at <http://thespeechsite.com/en/famous/MalcolmX-2.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> See Bruce J. Dierenfield, *The Civil Rights Movement*, rev. ed. (Routledge, 2008), p. 87; and excerpt from Wilkins’ speech at <http://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2010/08/excerpt-roy-wilkins-reluctant-tribute-to-web-du-bois.html>.



**SNCC leader John Lewis speaking at March on Washington, 28 August 1963. Shachtmanite leader Bayard Rustin played key role in censoring Lewis’ speech, eliminating references to “revolution” and criticism that the Kennedy civil rights bill was “too little, too late.”**

But Rustin went after SNCC’s speech with a large scissor, cutting out its radical conclusions. Thus it was the Shachtmanites, forebears of today’s DSA, who carried out this notorious censorship, in order to please the Kennedy White House. The gutted text was read by John Lewis, who is today a Democratic congressman. Carefully managed by the Kennedys and their sycophants, the March on Washington came to nothing. The more than 250,000 demonstrators went home with no more than the promise of a watered-down civil rights bill. In May 1964, in order to get some Republican votes to break a filibuster by Southern Democrats, Humphrey et al. put forward a “compromise” bill which relied more on private court suits than on federal enforcement of rights to service in public accommodations (like lunch counters).

### False Friends in Bloody Mississippi

A brazen episode in the campaign to undermine challenges to the racist U.S. political system occurred the following year. The target was the Mississippi Summer Project and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). It was, quite literally, a joint operation of the Shachtmanites, the Democratic Party, CIA “friends and associates” and the United Auto Workers bureaucracy. The most prominent operatives were Allard Lowenstein, Bayard Rustin and UAW lawyer Joseph Rauh.

Since the defeat of Reconstruction in 1876, the great majority of black people had no secure civil rights in the United States. Nowhere was this more evident than Mississippi in 1964, a state with a 50 percent black population, few black voters, and ubiquitous black poverty. SNCC leaders Bob Moses and James Forman developed a plan to lay siege to this bastion of racism. In an alliance with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), they mobilized thousands of black Mississippians and

brought hundreds of volunteers from the North, to register voters, establish black schools and libraries, and integrate public facilities.

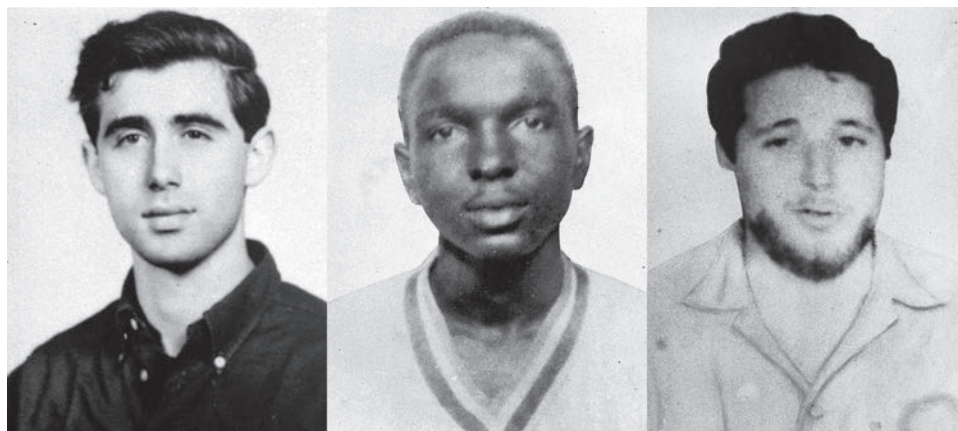
The main intention was to draw back the curtain on the savage repression black people experienced every day throughout the South—especially the nearly 1 million who lived in Mississippi. Many hundreds of civil rights activists were beaten and arrested that summer. On 21 June 1964, James Chaney, a black civil rights worker from Meridian, Mississippi, and Andrew Goodman and James Schwerner, white New York volunteers, were arrested by the police. In a coordinated action, after they were “released” from custody, they were murdered in the woods by the KKK. Partly because two of these heroic militants were white, a massive search was undertaken after they were reported missing. Their bodies were eventually found, but this search *accidentally turned up the bodies of eight other black Mississippians*, including a boy of 14! Their disappearance and murder had not even attracted attention. In fact, the KKK-police regime was on a rampage of terror in Mississippi.

When SNCC’s plan first became known to Lowenstein and Rustin, they set up their own operation to recruit volunteers, vetted by them, under the direction of future Democratic congressman Barney Frank. SNCC fought back and regained some control of recruiting, but plenty of selected volunteers were sent South.

At this same time, the Shachtmanites were also attempting a takeover of CORE. As he recounts in his autobiography, CORE leader James Farmer was able only with difficulty to expel the paid staffers Rustin forced on him: Norman Hill (a close associate of Harrington and Shachtman in Thomas’ Socialist Party), Hill’s wife Velma, her brother, and others. They took a salary from CORE, did no Civil Rights work, witch-hunted reds and schemed under Shachtman’s instructions to replace Farmer with Rustin.<sup>7</sup> When the Socialist Party split after the 1972 elections, Rustin became the leader of Social Democrats, USA, the hard right-wing Cold Warriors (many directly tied to the CIA), a number of whom ended up in the administration of Ronald Reagan.

While Rustin never became the head of CORE, the organization was eventually flooded with Shachtmanites and succumbed to their Cold War machinations. (Farmer was later named an honorary chairman of the DSA.) In the 1970s under Roy Innis, CORE helped recruit CIA-backed mercenaries to fight with the forces of apartheid South Africa against the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) and its Cuban allies in Angola. The Rustin-led Shachtmanite SDUSA was allied with Innis and CORE in supporting the

<sup>7</sup> James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart* (Arbor House, 1985), pp. 260–262.



FBI/AP

**Andrew Goodman, James Chaney and Michael Schwerner, murdered by the Klan in Philadelphia, Mississippi in reign of KKK terror during “Freedom Summer” project of SNCC and CORE to register black voters.**

South African apartheid regime’s bloody war on Angola. Fortunately, the Angolans, with Cuba’s help, smashed these racists and imperialists, in one of the most inspiring moments of Africa’s anti-colonial history.

### **Fannie Lou Hamer and the Freedom Democrats**

In 1963 and 1964, adherents of MLK-style pacifism were increasingly challenged politically by those advocating black self-defense, following the examples of Robert F. Williams, Malcolm X and groups like the Deacons for Defense in Louisiana. Reflecting on harsh experience, many black militants were lending an ear to Malcolm’s repeated warnings against having illusions in reforming the Democratic Party. Coming the year after the March on Washington, the coordinated campaign to undercut the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was one of the key episodes. While the MFDP showed the potential for independent political action, it was from the outset subordinated to the Democratic Party, a pillar of racist American capitalism, as was soon demonstrated.

Literally under the gun of racist terror and hamstrung by government infiltrators and witch-hunters, the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964 was unable to register many black voters in the official racist system. Nevertheless, it did organize unofficial black voting for the MFDP, which was founded that year in an effort to wrest the state’s Democratic Party structure away from the Dixiecrats. Sixty-four SNCC and CORE activists, all black but one, were designated as MFDP delegates and sent to the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Their object was to gain credentials and be seated at the convention as the legitimate Mississippi delegation, on the grounds that the official delegation was a Jim Crow machine, selected through the violent exclusion of half of the state’s population.

The co-chair of the Freedom Democrats was a woman of legendary courage named Fannie Lou Hamer. She was a sharecropper from Sunflower County in the Mississippi Delta. In 1961, like many black women in the American South, she had been sterilized without her knowledge or consent. As she



William J. Smith/AP



**Fannie Lou Hamer: “Sick and tired of being sick and tired.” A sharecropper who started picking cotton at age 6, she was a victim of involuntary sterilization and her family was evicted by plantation owner when she tried to register to vote. Hamer was the spokesperson for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at Democrats’ 1964 Atlantic City convention.**

later testified, “I would say about six out of the ten Negro women that go to the hospital are sterilized with the tubes tied.” The experience drove her to join the civil rights movement and eventually to SNCC. In 1962 she attempted to register to vote. When plantation owner W. D. Marlow heard about this, he forced her off his land and seized all her family’s property. Undeterred by Marlow or by a KKK assassination attempt, Ms. Hamer continued her civil rights work. In 1963 she was arrested in Winona, Mississippi. While a captive, she was beaten at the command of the police: two large male prisoners struck her with blackjacks in turn until they were both exhausted. The beating caused permanent damage to Ms. Hamer’s eyes and kidneys.

At Atlantic City, Ms. Hamer gave riveting testimony before the Credentials Committee, telling of her attempts to register to vote and the horrors perpetrated upon her because of this. She noted the many recent racist murders in Mississippi, including the assassination of NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers, which occurred a few days after she was let out of jail. She concluded:

“All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off of the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?”<sup>8</sup>

Her testimony was being televised nationally, but when Lyndon Johnson found out, he called an emergency press conference to distract the media and cut her off. Johnson and Humphrey then exerted pressure on supporters of the MFDP on the Credentials Committee and they fell into line. The

Democrats would recognize *only* the official white racist delegation. The MFDP was offered two non-voting seats – on condition that neither seat would go to Fannie Lou Hamer. Humphrey explained, “The President has said he will not let that illiterate woman speak on the floor of the Democratic convention.”<sup>9</sup>

The MFDP delegates were defiant and refused to cooperate. Hamer’s answer was simply spoken: “We didn’t come all this way for no two seats.” The black delegates then sat in the unoccupied seats of the white delegation – which bolted the convention to back Barry Goldwater, the Republican candidate. So dependent on the support of the racist Dixiecrats was the party of LBJ, Rustin, and Reuther, however, that they refused to seat the black Mississippians even then, after the racist delegates had left for good.

In a squalid display of their subservience to the racist system, Rustin and Rauh tried to get SNCC and the MFDP to reconsider their refusal and accept the “compromise.” Forman, who was present at the meeting, transcribed Rustin’s haughty lecture to the Mississippians:

“[T]here is a difference between protest and politics. The former is based on morality and the latter is based on reality and compromise. If you are going to engage in politics, you must give up protest.... You must accept the compromise. If you don’t, then you are still protesting.

“We must think of our friends in labor, Walter Reuther and the others, who have gone to bat for us. If we reject this compromise, we would be saying to them that we didn’t want their help.”

One SNCC organizer yelled, “You’re a traitor, Bayard, a traitor!” Veteran activist Ella Baker, who worked closely with SNCC, denounced Rauh as a mouthpiece for the white liberal establishment. At the same meeting, Moses and Forman heard one admonitory lecture after another from LBJ’s backers, including Martin Luther King. Meanwhile, Allard Lowenstein was taking notes of radical statements made by SNCC supporters, scribbling “heckling of Rustin,” “[Stokely] Carmichael’s talk ‘wild’,” as part of a list of those “to be ‘examined’.” This imperialist snitch was actually recording SNCC’s disillusionment with the Democratic Party. As one militant put it, “After Atlantic City our struggle was not for civil rights but for liberation.”<sup>10</sup>

What about DSA founder, Shachtman deputy and leading spokesman for the “realignment” strategy Michael Harrington? He “sided publicly with Rustin” (they were both in the SP) and

<sup>8</sup> *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is* (University Press of Mississippi, 2011), p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in “Fannie Lou Hamer,” *Freedom Summer*, American Experience website, pbs.org.

<sup>10</sup> Forman, *Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 392; Cummings, *Pied Piper*, pp. 269-270; John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 302.

then “urged MFDLP supporters to put aside their bitter feelings.” The entire episode was widely seen by radicalizing youth, both black and white, as “proof of the bankruptcy of liberalism.”<sup>11</sup>

### The Limits of a Movement

SNCC’s homegrown militancy was partly based on an illusion that Northern Democrats would help black people overturn racial oppression. This was not and could not have been true. The Democratic Party was and is a party of the racist status quo. It had been the party of Southern Secession and slavery; it was the party of the KKK and race terror during Reconstruction; it was the party of Jim Crow after Reconstruction’s defeat. When the Democrats made it to the White House again, their ultra-racist president, the reputed liberal Woodrow Wilson, scion of a pro-slavery, slave-owning Virginia family, fired every black civil service employee in Washington, while promoting the Klan propaganda film *Birth of a Nation*.

In the 1950s and 1960s the Democrats presided over a society, North and South, that was nearly completely segregated – de jure (by law) in the South, de facto in the North – in housing, schools, and employment. Today, despite civil rights laws and court decisions that are being steadily eroded, brutal segregation remains the norm and millions of black people are in prison, on parole, or branded as criminals by the system, whether it is ruled over by Obama or Trump. In American ruling-class mythology, Wilson, JFK and LBJ, as well as Clinton and Obama, are held up as enlightened rulers committed to freedom and democracy. They are compared to their great forefather, Thomas Jefferson. This is fitting in its way, since Jefferson was a slaveholder who as a politician worked to starve black Haiti and create a slaveholding empire across North America.

In the civil rights years Kennedy and Johnson yielded as little as they could, but yield they had to. They faced a determined black population that marched directly into ferocious repression, undeterred. From depraved white racists they endured beatings, torture, rape, mutilation, sterilization and uncounted murders, including of innumerable children. But they would not turn back. Living as they did in a modern capitalist state, black people themselves ripped up the maniacal racial laws and claimed their civil rights. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 simply acknowledged the *faits accomplis*, though with a fair amount of treacherous language. For its part, the white power structure in the South clawed back with strategies that characterize the entire country today: racist control of the social and political system, the creation of white “academies” and defunding of public education, the closing of public facilities, escalated policing of black neighborhoods, new laws targeting black people, mass incarceration.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Isserman, *The Other American: The Life of Michael Harrington* (Public Affairs, 2000), pp. 245-246.



**Stokely Carmichael, chairman of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, in Georgia legislature, 1966.**

Bettmann Archives

When Martin Luther King marched in Chicago in 1966 against that Northern city’s brutal system of housing segregation, he was met by a racist mob thousands strong. Marchers were attacked and King himself was struck in the head with a rock. “I have seen many demonstrations in the South,” he said, “but I have never seen anything so hostile and so hateful as I’ve seen here today.” The truth is that the whole American capitalist system is founded on racial oppression, from New Orleans to New York and Los Angeles to Chicago. Reformist protests will never break its grip. Only a revolutionary program can bring black liberation and the liberation of all the oppressed. And this will take integrated revolutionary struggle relying on the social power of the multiracial working class.

### Toward a Revolutionary Perspective

The SNCC militants learned hard lessons the hard way about the role of social democrats and labor bureaucrats in upholding the racist American establishment. They faced a stark choice: to find their way to a revolutionary position against the entire American capitalist ruling class or cave in to the corruption and lies of the likes of Harrington and Rustin, social-democratic servants of U.S. imperialism. Instead, because of the weakness of genuinely revolutionary forces, many turned to the dead end of black nationalism. The Communist Party, which had largely been driven underground in McCarthyite USA, sent many of its supporters into the South, but the CP had long ago debased the red banner of revolution in favor of reformist support to the Democratic Party.

At the time, in the early 1960s in the U.S., the program of revolutionary Marxism could have been represented only by the Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The SWP, however, fatally abdicated its responsibility to the struggle for black liberation – a struggle that is in its very essence connected to the very foundations of oppression and exploitation in the American capitalist system. Instead, on its rapid road toward reformism (and eventual irrelevance), the SWP told



black people that they must go it alone; American Marxists would support them but take no leadership role.

The justification for this unpardonable abstentionism was found in a petty-bourgeois nationalist orientation. The majority in the SWP supported a line worked out by a party theoretician, George Breitman, which held that blacks must struggle and organize independently and not as part of a multi-racial revolutionary party. During the 1930s, the Communist Party had developed its “black belt” theory after Joseph Stalin abruptly decided that African Americans should be considered a nation. Despite the Great Migration that began in WWI (and would relocate six million black people to urban centers outside the South), this theory advocated for a separate black nation in the most rural, least developed parts of the U.S. South.

While the SWP was not necessarily calling for geographical separation in 1963, its line of separate black struggle was consonant with a nationalist trend developing among petty-bourgeois radicals in the black movement. Like Stokely Carmichael, these activists were searching for deeper answers to the psychosis of racist America, and were disillusioned with the liberal integrationism of King, Rustin and others who demanded “moderation.”

Carmichael’s political trajectory offers an interesting view into what might have been. He would eventually call for “black power”: while voicing a desire for militancy and a break from liberal accommodationism, it was an ambiguous slogan, some of whose adherents sought salvation in “black capitalism.” Carmichael himself would later move to Guinea, change his name to Kwame Ture and embrace Pan-Africanism. In 1963, however, the young SNCC activist was actually a member of the Socialist Party’s Young People’s Socialist League (YPSL). At the same time, he was a contact of the SWP’s youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA).

Radicalized after seeing first-hand the treachery of the “liberal-labor syndrome,” he would have good reason to wonder why he was in YPSL. Carmichael was contacted by adherents of a minority grouping within the SWP/YSA, which had a revolutionary Marxist position on the fight for black freedom quite different than the majority leaders’ abstentionism. This grouping, which became the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) and later the Spartacist League that for three decades was the voice of authentic Trotskyism, held that the racial oppression of African Americans cannot accurately be categorized as a national question; the idea of forming a separate nation was illusory; and that black liberation is central to socialist revolution by and for the whole working class. This position of *revolutionary integrationism* is upheld by the Internationalist Group today.

The theory was developed by Richard Fraser, an SWP



**Shirley Stoute, in 1963, when she was co-author with James Robertson of “For Black Trotskyism.”**

cadre in the 1950s, and is based on his years of engaging in class struggles involving black and white workers. He wrote a document called “For the Materialist Conception of the Negro Question” (1955), which answered Breitman’s separatist line with a model history lesson on black struggles against racist exclusion from American society. He spoke of the role of the early Communist Party, following the principles laid down by Lenin and Trotsky, in inspiring interracial struggle against racist oppression. Fraser furthermore detailed the rise of the modern American industrial economy on the backs of millions of black workers. They created that wealth, he pointed out, and it is their birthright to claim it. This can only be accomplished through workers revolution to overthrow capitalism. Such a revolution can only be led by a multiracial revolutionary party.

James Forman, too, was seeking a revolutionary perspective at this time. He was so impressed with a member of the

SWP minority that he asked her to join him for further organizing in the South. She was Shirley Stoute, co-author (with James Robertson) of a revolutionary-integrationist document called “For Black Trotskyism” (1963).<sup>12</sup> She and other comrades of the RT were tragically prevented by the SWP majority from engaging in black recruitment at a time when people of the caliber of Carmichael and Forman were searching for revolutionary answers.

“For Black Trotskyism” begins with a point Leon Trotsky made during a discussion with SWP members in Coyoacán, Mexico a year before an assassin sent by Stalin killed the founder of the Fourth International. Referring to the U.S. black population, he stressed: “If ... we in the SWP are not able to find a road to this stratum, then we are not worthy at all. The permanent revolution and all the rest would be only a lie.” Trotsky was speaking in 1939, yet his message to American communists was the same as 20 years earlier, when both Lenin and Trotsky delivered it. The SWP’s abandonment of that perspective sabotaged the chance that leading militants of the early-1960s civil rights movement might have had to be won over to revolutionary Marxism. The task of winning over and cohering a core of black Trotskyist cadre remains unfinished. It must be carried out because without overthrowing racist U.S. capitalism once and for all, there can be no black liberation in racist America; and there can be no socialist revolution in the United States without a multiracial revolutionary workers party. ■

<sup>12</sup> This document was included in the SL’s *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5, *What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism*, originally published in 1978. This bulletin has been reprinted, along with the document “Black and Red - Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom,” adopted by the SL’s founding conference in 1966, as part of the Internationalist Group’s series of class readings.

# This Is What a Witch Hunt Looks Like

*The following statement was circulated in Portland, Oregon in the fall of 2016 in response to a vicious campaign of slander and incitement directed against militant trade unionists and activists associated with the Internationalist Group. For the better part of a year, an unholy alliance of the ingrown local left, including anarchists, Maoists, “radical feminists” and assorted social democrats, sought to whip up hysteria against the IG over our defense of the democratic rights of the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), a much-vilified and persecuted gay rights group. Diatribes were posted on social media sites illustrated with photographs and names. There was a failed attempt to get Class Struggle Workers – Portland excluded from the 2016 May Day march. Clots of ranting exorcists would dog our supporters, real or suspected, at protests and literature sales, and a clique of dimwitted Cotton Mather imitators launched an inquisition in the local IWW.*

*It should be noted that the witch hunt against us in Portland began after the CSWP-organized labor picket of an anti-abortion conference in the spring of 2016. It seems that whenever we strike a blow for principled revolutionary working-class politics, opportunists “answer” with appeals to reactionary “family values,” and ultimately the bourgeois state that enforces them. The witch-hunters in the Portland IWW – a petty-bourgeois outfit dominated by lifestyle politics rather than an organization of labor militants – eventually managed to pass two motions condemning NAMBLA and calling for an investigation of the Internationalist Group. But they failed utterly in their effort to demonize the IG and CSWP, which with a healthy disdain for bourgeois opinion have continued undeterred to organize workers actions in defense of the oppressed.*

*The smears circulated on the Internet against us have from time to time been picked up by assorted opportunists, including supporters of Democratic Socialists of America, in their opposition to Leninism, which calls on the working class to fight against all manner of social oppression and repression. Since this statement was written, the leading IWW members targeted by the witch hunt have resigned from the IWW, breaking with the historical and political dead end of syndicalism and taking up the banner of Trotskyism. They have continued to play a vital role in the local labor movement, in particular as organizers of the historic June 4 (2017) anti-fascist labor mobilization, as members of Class Struggle Workers – Portland and supporters of the Internationalist Group.*

## Statement by the Internationalist Group

Sixty years ago, in June 1956, leftist playwright Arthur Miller was subpoenaed by the House Un-American Activities Committee to face “questions” about his political associations and beliefs. HUAC targeted him as a “fellow traveler”; they wanted to make him confirm or deny having associated with Communists. Miller was already deemed guilty of defending proscribed opinions: he was the author of *The Crucible*, the 1953 play that used the Salem Witch Trials as a parable for the

McCarthyite red scare. The episode, in which Miller refused to “name names,” entered history as an embodiment of political witch-hunting.

Today, in 2016, a repeated attempt has been made to whip up a witch hunt against left and labor activists here in Portland. The context is revealing – in fact, it says it all. On August 17, the general membership meeting of Portland-area Painters Local 10 unanimously passed a historic resolution calling for no support to “Democrats, Republicans, or any bosses’ parties or politicians,” and for the labor movement to “break from the Democratic Party, and build a class-struggle workers party.” The motion was put forward by supporters of Class Struggle Workers – Portland. Within days, a vile smear and slander campaign was started against the CSWP.

Since McCarthy-style anti-communism is so last century, the thoroughly modern witch hunt involves scare-mongering with allegations of “support” for a host of sex crimes, all in the name of saving the children. No evidence is presented, nor is there any, save political positions (which the accusers grievously distort) of the targets. In this case a motion was presented to the August general membership meeting of the Portland branch of the Industrial Workers of the World, where it was defeated, calling for “investigation” of and “disassociation” from the Internationalist Group for such alleged *crimes of opinion*. This was purportedly because the IWW had co-sponsored a film showing with the IG (gasp!). This is what 21st-century witch-hunting looks like, and it must be vigorously opposed.

That motion cited unnamed “fraternal organizations to IG,” a coy reference to the CSWP, which clearly states that it works fraternally with the Internationalist Group. Along with supporters of the IG, Class Struggle Workers – Portland also includes some of the most prominent and active members of the IWW, who according to the defeated motion would be excluded from the “investigating” committee. So not only would this motion have branded the IG as a dangerous anathema for holding radical views that the witch-hunters grotesquely distort, it was also aimed at smearing and denying the democratic rights of IWW members.

Since that motion was defeated, and its main author quit, there has been an escalation including Facebook postings under fictitious names and publishing photos targeting activists on the Internet. Now we have a pair of motions for the September IWW meeting still trying to whip up a frenzy. The motions cite anonymous supposed accusations and call for “documentation” of political views in particular on “age of consent” laws. This is the modern version of HUAC’s “Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party.” Time to get out your pitchforks and torches, folks, witch-hunting season is open.

Mind you, this is targeting widely-respected union activists, known for their record of struggle on behalf of the workers and oppressed. Supporters of the Internationalist Group are well-known in the Portland area for standing up to frame-ups, including the campaign we built in 2013, gaining the support of five area unions to oppose FBI repression against “anar-





**Class Struggle Workers – Portland played key role in “Hard Hats for Gay Rights” labor contingent in June 2016 PDX gay pride march.**

chists” charged in part for having IWW literature. This record of struggle and solidarity includes the victorious defense of CSWP activist and IUPAT (Painters) Local 10 vice president Wyatt McMinn for protesting a union-busting “right-to-work” outfit, and building mobilizations supporting locked-out long-shore unionists, Mexican workers targeted by police terror in Pasco and striking Sakuma farm workers.

The CSWP played a key role in organizing the Labor Against Racist Police Murder contingent in the 2015 May Day march in which the Portland IWW prominently participated. Since the witch-hunters are so hot to “disassociate” themselves from the IG and fraternal organizations, maybe they would like to repudiate that historic action as well. The CSWP, including IG and IWW supporters, also sparked the “Hard Hats for Gay Rights” contingent in the 2016 Portland Gay Pride demonstration. An IG-IWW “movie night” is only the tip of the iceberg. It’s going to take a whole lot of disassociating to meet the demands of the would-be inquisitors and their Legion of Decency.

The Internationalist Group condemns this campaign to smear, defame and target activists – notably our organization and supporters, and those deemed “guilty by association” with us – for defending the right to hold views that do not fit the constraints of capitalism’s racist, sexist and homophobic “law and order.” We denounce the vile claim that opposing bourgeois ideology and repressive legislation somehow constitutes support for child abuse. This lie comes straight from the arsenal of the ruling class whose system kills millions of children throughout the world and whose racist police murdered 12-year-old Tamir Rice with impunity. This nasty little smear campaign targets the rights of *all* in the left and labor movement. It threatens *your* rights.

**Why is this happening now?** The answer is clear as day: it serves as a diversion from the class struggle. Don’t forget that this whole thing blew up after, and in response to, the Painters union motion opposing Democrats, Republicans and all bosses’ parties and calling for a class-struggle workers party. The whole business stinks to high heaven. Who’s behind it? We don’t

know for sure. What we do know is that it has more than a whiff of COINTELPRO, J. Edgar Hoover’s “counterintelligence program” of disinformation and provocation that specialized in using smears (often of a sexual nature) to set up reds, Black Panthers and antiwar activists for capitalism’s official and unofficial repressive forces.

Very real fights face us all, with the class struggle heating up coast to coast, mass outrage erupting anew against unending racist police terror from Tulsa to Charlotte, amid an election campaign featuring bigotry and war-mongering spewing from the Democratic and Republican parties of capital. Those committed to winning the class struggle will easily detect and militantly reject attempts to divert and divide them with ugly and incendiary falsehoods. This is a disgusting attempt to frame up revolutionaries, and to make any

activist who agrees or associates with them *persona non grata*, or worse. For the Internationalist Group, Class Struggle Workers – Portland and all class-struggle fighters, our watchword is “an injury to one is an injury to all.”

For anyone who may have been unwittingly drawn into this dirty campaign, ask yourself: Do you really want to see mini-HUAC hearings where suspected thought-criminals are asked, “Do you deny defending the right to disagree with the bourgeois state’s repressive ‘age of consent’ laws? Have you ever associated with people who defend the right of other groups to disagree with those laws, or who disagree with such laws themselves?” This is how witch-hunting works: the smear artists throw a lot of mud figuring that some will stick, and in the process everyone gets slimed. Think of where all this can lead. It ain’t pretty.

Ask yourself also, *who would benefit* if such a witch hunt were not rejected and stopped in its tracks? Or worse still, if it got a green light from some activists scared into complicity, or passivity? In the first place, enemies of class-struggle unionism stand to gain, and those dead-set against the fight to win the political independence of the working class. More broadly, who benefits from such witch-hunting is every enemy of labor; every “right-to-work” union-buster; political and social forces intent on ripping up basic democratic rights; and those who seek to brand all kinds of radical dissent as intolerable and immoral, beyond the pale, “dangerous,” a threat to “national security,” to “family values” and the rest of it.

**So what’s the witch hunt really about?** What it’s *really* about is stopping the fight to free labor from the death grip of the bosses’ parties and framing up those leading that fight, as well as anyone associated with them. What this is *supposedly* about is Marxists’ views on “age of consent” laws. It’s an attempt to deny the democratic right to disagree with such laws, and others promulgated by the capitalist ruling class and enforced by its repressive apparatus, and to turn such disagreement into a thought crime. As revolutionary Marxists we understand that the “age of consent” laws are wielded *not* to protect but to persecute and repress young people – *especially*

African American, Latino, gay, lesbian and transgender youth.

“Age of consent” laws are almost never used in cases of actual sexual abuse. Instead, they are used to criminalize teenage sexuality, to terrorize young people and deny their right to decide about their lives. Such laws were set up not to “prevent abuse” but as part of the abuse, humiliation, repression and violence of this system against youth and all the oppressed. They are used in the school-privatization crusade as part of demonizing women teachers in particular. Over and over again “age of consent” laws have been used as a weapon in racist and anti-communist witch hunts, against figures from Communist “fellow traveler” Charlie Chaplin to black rock-and-roll pioneer Chuck Berry, who segregationists hated for his integrated concerts.

In Oregon, the legal “age of consent” (Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter 163.315) is 18. That means that anyone under the age of 18 is by law “incapable of consenting” to having sex. Having sex with a person under the age of 16 is considered third-degree rape and can be punished by up to five years in prison. Now consider the fact that according to the *2008 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey* published by the Oregon State Center for Health Statistics, by the age of 16 (11th grade) 46% of young men and 50% of young women have had sexual intercourse. Does the IWW really want to go on record in favor of jailing half the young people in Oregon? Or to ban association with anyone who opposes such anti-democratic laws?

These reactionary laws have been a staple of gay-bashing crusades for decades. The infamous Anita Bryant launched her vile attempt to purge gay teachers (real and imagined) from the Florida schools with the hypocritical slogan “Save Our Children.” Bryant’s campaign for bigotry helped pave the way for Ronald Reagan’s assaults against the rights of women, black people, gays and lesbians, unions, and everybody else who ran afoul of the “Moral Majority.” Seeking to drive women “back where they belong” in kitchen and church, daycare was targeted, again supposedly to “protect” children. This brought literal witch hunts, like the McMartin Preschool Trial of 1984 in Bakersfield, California, based on totally fabricated claims of “satanic child abuse,” destroying the lives of hundreds of people dragged into the insane reactionary hysteria.

Reagan’s “war on drugs” and a war on sex went hand in hand with his murderous indifference to AIDS. They were part of an effort to regiment the home front of his anti-Soviet war drive, which reached from East Europe to Afghanistan to the massive war crimes of counterinsurgency in Central America. The targets “at home” were African American and Latino communities. The results were an astronomical increase in the numbers of people jailed in the United States.

“So what about NAMBLA?” yell today’s would-be Torquemadas. Some have apparently gotten no further than a lurid over-the-top cartoon show episode pretending to be about the small political advocacy group called the North American Man/Boy Love Association. To them one can only say, if you get your “facts” from *South Park* you’re liable to be misinformed. Others would have us put a hand on a bible and answer: “Do you deny having defended their right to express their views, including disagreement with ‘age of consent’ laws, and

opposing witch hunts against them?” Far from denying such a basic principle, here is what *The Internationalist* stated almost two decades ago when, as part of a campaign of racist hysteria in favor of reestablishing the death penalty in Massachusetts, reactionaries slanderously tried to implicate NAMBLA in the murder of a Cambridge boy. The article stated:

“All defenders of fundamental democratic rights must oppose this crude victimization of NAMBLA, a political advocacy group that supports the rights of gays and youth and calls for the repeal of the state’s reactionary age-of-consent laws. In the over two decades of its existence, NAMBLA has been the target of non-stop bigoted attacks and slanders, as part of the puritanical, homophobic ‘family values’ campaign.... As always, the most unpopular and isolated groups are singled out for victimization as the ‘thin edge of the wedge’ in the all-sided attack by bourgeois reaction.

“From the Clinton White House to the Massachusetts state house, the ‘family values’ crusade targets women, gays, lesbians, youth, anyone considered deviant by a ruling class that wants to use sexual norms to regiment the population amid the rot of decaying capitalism. Thus a Dominican immigrant, Jesús Collado, was jailed for over half a year as the INS tried to deport him for a ‘statutory rape’ conviction from 1974, when as a 19-year-old youth he was tried and found guilty for having consensual sex with his 15-year-old girl friend. As opposed to reactionary ‘age of consent’ laws, which seek to criminalize youth sexuality, we hold that the only legitimate standard in sexual matters is whether there is effective consent. We demand: Government out of the bedrooms! At the November 1 [1998] rally against the death penalty Internationalist Group supporters carried a sign demanding: ‘Down With the State & Media Witchhunt Against NAMBLA!’”

– “Defeat Racist Death Penalty in Massachusetts!” *The Internationalist* No. 4, January-February 1998

Today, our local witch hunters would like to criminalize the mere expression of these views, and to mark with a scarlet letter those who defend them. They would have made perfect witnesses for the prosecution in the trial of Oscar Wilde. Back in 1895, the radical gay Irish playwright was accused of promoting “perverted moral views,” “the love that dare not speak its name,” and the “feeling of [a] man towards a youth” (not to mention “adoring a young man madly” and kissing a 16-year-old “boy”). Pioneering German socialist August Bebel, a friend of Karl Marx, spoke in Wilde’s defense. The bourgeois moralizers who ran with the pack against Wilde – who, imprisoned in a notorious British prison, wrote “The Ballad of Reading Gaol” and died soon after his release – went down in history as the personification of Victorian hypocrisy.

Such Victorian-style moralism is still brandished today, even by supposed leftists, as a weapon to silence radical opponents of capitalist repression. This is one more reason to build the revolutionary workers party needed to lead all the oppressed in overthrowing the criminal capitalist system. Defending the rights of us all means standing together to defeat would-be witch hunters, who snipe from the shadows in the service of that system.

–25 September 2016



# G20 Summit Police State Terror in Hamburg

*The following article was published in a supplement to Permanente Revolution (August 2017), the newspaper of the Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the League for the Fourth International.*

HAMBURG, Germany, July 20 – It was straight out of the film *Apocalypse Now*, right down to the incessant drone of helicopters in the night sky. These included two U.S. Army Chinooks armed with machine guns, grenade launchers and powerful communications jammers – a small taste of imperialist war come to a European metropolis. On July 7 and 8, some 20,000 cops brought in from all over Germany and neighboring countries were unleashed to “protect” the G20 international assembly of potentates. The Germans had their own helicopters, tanks, a fleet of water cannon, plus phalanxes of heavily armed and armored cops. The dozens of water cannon were of course not directed against any “terrorist” threat but against peaceful demonstrators.

For Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and the Christian Democrats (CDU) it was a win-win set-up. Merkel could posture as the leader of the world in terms of empty rhetoric about climate protection (the “mainstream” U.S. press noted with dismay that Donald Trump was isolated at this conference, despite his tête-à-têtes with Russian President Vladimir Putin). In view of the upcoming national elections, if there was violence, they could blame the Social Democrats (SPD) who run the city of Hamburg for failing to maintain “law and order.” But the latter, who wanted to make up for losing out with Hamburg’s bid for the Olympic games, could hardly admit they couldn’t maintain control of one of their urban strongholds.

So, sure enough, they got their “riots.” TV got videos of luxury autos in flames and masked “Black Bloc” protesters throwing stones. The tabloid press got to run screaming headlines (*Hamburger Morgenpost*: “Hamburg’s Most Dangerous Night,” “Showdown in the Schanze,” “Out of Control,” “Battle in the Harbor”). The police got to try out their arsenal for suppressing mass unrest against demos of thousands and entire neighborhoods. Conservative politicians got to agitate their bogeyman of marauding leftists, to distract attention from Nazis and racist hooligans who have been on the warpath against immigrants and Muslims.



**Some of Hamburg’s fleet of dozens of state-of-the-art WaWe 10000 water cannons block the “Welcome to Hell” march of thousands on July 6. Each of the monster machines with a crew of five costs over 1 million euros. Every German state has acquired them. The imperialists are bulking up their military/police apparatus to crush internal unrest.**

Radio Dreyeckland

The big loser was the SPD, but it soon joined the hue and cry demanding a crackdown on autonomous leftists.

The international press bought the story of rioters unexpectedly disturbing the “festival of democracy” and embarrassing a chancellor who pleaded for “peaceful” protests. But the authorities had programmed in violence long before the summit actually started. The police had from the outset demanded a ban on demonstrations. The cost of bringing in *Hundertschaften* (hundred-strong paramilitary squads modeled on the Roman *centuria*), with millions of euros for police overtime, ensured that they would be used. A special jail and court with tiny cells for hundreds of prisoners was set up in containers behind NATO-standard razor wire to mete out rapid-fire sentences. *The whole event was an exercise in urban counter-insurgency.*

These summits – mere occasions for photo-ops and soundbites for the rulers – often bring death in their wake. Thus Carlo Giuliani was killed by police at the G8 in Genoa in 2001 and Ian Tomlinson at the G20 in London in 2009. They are *always* accompanied by massive assaults on democratic rights, as was also the case for the last such summit held in Germany (in Heiligendamm in 2007), and by cop rampages, including the outright torture of police victims as in the case of Genoa. It seems necessary to recall this in view of the cacophony of condemnation of “senseless violence” and destruction of property allegedly committed by some protesters which has been used to drown out any protest against the massive police state terror.

But this was not just business as usual. The “new world order” proclaimed by Washington upon the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe is coming apart. The non-stop wars of the last quarter century unleashed by the U.S./NATO warmongers have not brought “victory.” Instead, the imperialists have gotten bogged down in one quagmire after another – from the Balkans to the Middle East to North Africa and South-Central Asia – and provoked a huge refugee crisis. Meanwhile, since 2007-08, they are mired in a worldwide capitalist economic depression, with tens of millions of unemployed fueling the growth of fascist and racist forces, as well as a surge in left populism.

In this spreading chaos and challenge to “governability,” the hard-fisted bankers in Brussels, Frankfurt, the City of London and Wall Street can bring wayward populist politicians to heel, like Alexis Tsipras in Athens or Bernie Sanders in the U.S., and the same with reformist social democrats like Jeremy Corbyn in Britain. They can handle “peaceful, legal” mass marches and even impotent one-day “general strikes” (work stoppage + parade) against austerity as in Greece. They will call in what the Soviets called the “power ministries” (a/k/a, the “deep state”) to keep mavericks like Trump in line. *But they require the rulers from Washington to Berlin to have the police/military apparatus at the ready to crush internal unrest, which they know is coming.*

That is behind the police state terror in Hamburg, and also the massive police mobilization to protect fascists in Portland, Oregon a month earlier. It is behind the “paramilitarization” of police forces around the capitalist world – on display in the siege of Ferguson, Missouri in 2014 and the occupation of Baltimore, Maryland in 2015. To suppress the Standing Rock Sioux Indians on the plains of North Dakota or protesters in Hamburg harbor, local cops are fitted out with the same armor and heavy weaponry as imperialist forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. The *state of emergency* imposed on this German port city was announced well in advance. It should have been answered with a mobilization of workers power against the terror-summit, which three-quarters of the local population didn’t want in Hamburg at all.

Instead, we are treated to the sorry spectacle of the housebroken social-democratic and social-democratized left parroting the complaints of the gutter press and law-and-order politicians against the “senseless violence” of the anarchoid *Autonomen*. Rather than lamenting “troublemakers” who besmirched the “image” of joyous peaceful demos, panel discussions and dance parties, genuine communists understand the rage provoked by the Summit’s obscene display of imperialist arrogance. We don’t complain that protesters were too “radical,” but explain that throwing some stones and firecrackers won’t stop cops armed for civil war, and the goal of disrupting the smooth functioning of these imperialist conclaves is a very limited and temporary one. To carry out a revolution to rip out capitalism by the roots we must mobilize the millions-strong working class under the leadership of a revolutionary, Leninist-Trotskyist party.

## “Fortress Hamburg”

The police warned of an “unprecedented level of violence” around the summit, and made it a self-fulfilling prophesy. They turned the city into “Fortress Hamburg” with “the biggest deployment in their history” (*Spiegel online*, 19 June). The civilian face of this military operation were SPD mayor Olaf Scholz and interior senator (in charge of the police) Andy Grote. Falko Droßmann (former air force officer, graduate of Hamburg’s military university), the SPD chief of central Hamburg, laid the groundwork by attempting to drive out any and all homeless people. And the *Einsatzleiter* (operations chief) was Hartmut Dudde, Hamburg’s top cop and architect of the “Hamburg Line” of heavy police repression of leftists. In 2015, Dudde let a fascist NPD sound truck plow through a group of anti-fascist demonstrators.

The police trained for months, “anticipating house-to-house fighting” (*Der Spiegel*, 8 April). They began by declaring large swathes of metropolitan Hamburg off-limits to protests, a 38-square-kilometer *Sperrgebiet* (exclusion zone). Next the cops banned out-of-town demonstrators from camping out in a city park. A court approved the camp ground. But on the Sunday before the summit, July 2, cops barred demonstrators from the park and seized their tents. When the court ruled that they could sleep there, on Tuesday the police sent hundreds of riot police to stop the delivery of food to what they labeled a “safe haven for criminals.” (Of course, when courts allow fascist marches, as is routinely the case, the police enforce those orders to the hilt.)

The day before the conference, Thursday, July 6, *Autonomen* organized a mass march under the banner of “Welcome to Hell.” Crowds of thousands came out. For days, police had spread scare stories of “8,000 violence-ready leftists” heading to Hamburg. So the demo had barely gotten underway when it was stopped after a few hundred meters by a wall of police with their “Monster” armored personnel carriers and four huge state-of-the-art WaWe 10000 water cannon. (Water cannons are potentially deadly weapons, as shown in South Korea, Turkey – and in Germany, where they killed Günter Sare in 1985 in Frankfurt/Main.) As police attacked them with pepper spray, panicked demonstrators tried to scale a wall but were pulled down and beaten.

The excuse for this attack at the harbor, which was clearly unprovoked (as could be seen in live broadcasts), was allegedly the presence of some masked demonstrators, the dreaded “Black Bloc.”<sup>1</sup> Wearing a mask at a demonstration has been illegal in Germany since 1985. This ban is enforced by... black-clad, masked policemen, who can thus not be identified by those they beat. Needless to say, it suffices to smuggle a few agents provocateurs into any march to “justify” its dispersal. Hamburg is infamous for the use of undercover cops who have infiltrated leftist milieus, and it is a matter of record that such agents have been ordered to throw stones or bottles

<sup>1</sup> In fact, demonstrators at the head of the demo had reportedly already lowered their masks at the time that the march was attacked from behind by a squad of police from Berlin (*Die Tageszeitung [taz]*, 13 July).





**Paramilitary police in Hamburg outfitted for battle at G20 Summit. Placing the city under a state of emergency and systematically attacking protesters, the authorities provoked the “riots” they wanted from the beginning.**

at the police in order to provoke a cop assault (*Hamburger Abendblatt*, 18 October 2012).

The “clashes” (i.e. police attacks) then continued the next day, Friday, July 7, including harassment and physical assault on first-aid teams as well as on clearly identifiable journalists. This time people were attacked even before arriving at the starting point of the “anti-capitalist” march, “Board the G20 – Sink Capitalism.” While the high and mighty listened to the “Ode to Joy” from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in the elegant Elbphilharmonie concert hall, outside on the street demonstrators were blasted with pepper gas and drenched with water. Many retreated to the Schanze district, a traditional leftist neighborhood, while tossing a few water bottles and firecrackers. The stage was set for the police-engineered “riot” that night.

Barricades in the street were set alight, cars and a bank were torched, a supermarket and a drug store were trashed. Around 11 p.m., squads of robocops brought from the Summit meeting site militarily stormed the Schanze going house by house using special munitions to blast open doors. Later it was claimed that the police had “lost control” of the city. Yet these actions were limited to a few street corners, and the police clearly let them happen.<sup>2</sup> They wanted the photos of flaming barricades (which were set on fire and burned for hours right next to the police and their water cannons). Actions by provocateurs – probably including outright fascists – can certainly not be excluded. The goal was obviously to discredit the protests and whip up hysteria against the “Black Bloc.”

The following day, there was a massive wrap-up demonstration of up to 100,000 people, “Solidarity Without Borders Instead of G20,” with a whole range of liberal, environmental

and leftist groups, including Turkish and Kurdish contingents. The organizers did not take the police bait to denounce “anti-capitalists” and Autonomen. Yet this parade was also harassed by cops, who even hijacked a bus of social-democratic youth to check identities. Not only masked demonstrators but anyone wearing black was targeted. Police attacked people gathered around the Rote Flora (an old occupied theater used as a center by Autonomen) with water cannon and tear gas, finally provoking the stone-throwing which would then retroactively justify it all.

In the course of the paramilitary police mobilization, cops carried out forcible searches of the B5 international center, a cinema next door and several apartments, on the basis of specious information (from the Verfassungsschutz, Germany’s FBI) of “crimes being prepared.” The police organized a detention center in Harburg

– previously used for refugees – with 50 individual cells so small that they would be unfit for holding animals. During the operation 228 detentions were reported and 186 arrests. Over 50 were ordered jailed until trial. Hamburg mayor Schulz is calling for stiff sentences for “criminal offenders.” *Permanente Revolution* says that all those arrested during the summit should be released and all charges dropped.

*The criminals are the cops and their bosses who ordered the police-state repression.*

Meanwhile, the police claimed that 476 officers were injured, blaming this on demonstrators. Later this figure was reduced to 231, not even one-tenth of whom were unavailable the next day (*Die Tageszeitung [taz]*, 14 July). But of the 150 cops from Hessen reported injured, 130 were suffering from their own tear gas (*Allgemeine Zeitung [Mainz]*, 9 July). Of the 132 “injured” police from Berlin, most were affected by smoke grenades and pepper spray – i.e., due to their own repressive measures. And that was the second group of Berlin cops sent to the G20 summit – the first 220 were sent home after engaging in what Hamburg police called a drunken orgy in the containers where they were housed (*Berliner Zeitung*, 28 June).

### The Sequel: Witch Hunt Against Leftists

In the aftermath, there is an immense outcry and demands for a crackdown on the left. Mayor Scholz and his crew claim to have been taken by surprise by the scale and depth of the unrest. Yet they had been trumpeting for weeks about thousands of “violent anarchists” about to descend on the Hanseatic port city, and it was violent attacks by police that over and over provoked the “riots.” Christian Democrats and the tabloids are demanding that Scholz resign, while the SPD’s Green Party coalition partners have taken a dive. In response, the mayor joined in the frenzied denunciation of the Rote Flora Autonomen center, accusing it and other far-leftists of fostering

<sup>2</sup> Operations chief Dudde later absurdly claimed the commanders of the heavily armed Special Arrest Teams feared for the lives of their cops, so they had to wait for the Anti-Terror Units (*Hamburger Morgenpost*, 10 July).

riots, “intellectual arson” and bringing in a “criminal mob,” by which he didn’t mean the G20.

Nationally, the same foam-flecked rhetoric is coming from the CDU/SPD Great Coalition, which holds four-fifths of the seats in the Bundestag. Federal interior minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU) denounced the “*Chaoten*” (chaos-mongers) and called to take a “hard line against left-wing extremism, just like right-wing extremism” (*Stern*, 10 July). We assume he didn’t mean funding left-wingers and giving them free rein, which is how the government treats far-rightists. Rather, he wants to evict leftists from Rote Flora, occupied houses in Berlin and Connewitz in Leipzig. Not to be outdone, federal justice minister Heiko Maas (SPD) called on other European Union governments to quickly execute German arrest warrants to stop “riot tourism,” and called for an EU-wide data base of “far-left extremists.” The press played up the number of non-Germans arrested.

The SPD/CDU and media witch hunt against far leftists even targeted the social-democratic Left Party, which softly criticized some of the police tactics. These reformists, however, joined in the chorus reviling the protesters, with co-chairman Sahra Wagenknecht condemning “violent excesses” that could only discredit peaceful protests. A Left Party Bundestag deputy denounced “riot-idiot” while Berlin Left Party chief (and state culture minister) Klaus Lederer called to “decisively go into action against chaos-mongers.” (*Der Tagesspiegel*, 11 July). A wing of the Left Party youth group Solid in Hamburg threatened to finger anyone who “uses force” against the “colleagues of the GdP” (the cop “union”) and turn them into the authorities, grotesquely threatening in a July 7 Facebook posting: “We know where you sleep” and “would not shy away from” leading police to their tents or sleeping places!

Another wing of Solid, around the SAV (Sozialistische Alternative, part of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) led by Peter Taaffe), criticized this shameful call and efforts by the police to “divide protests into peaceful and violence-prone.” Yet the SAV claims that cops are just workers in uniform and criticized “Autonomen tactics that provoke clashes with the police” (*sozialismus.info*, 9 July). Two days later, it attacked the organizers of the “Welcome to Hell” demo for their “martial mobilization materials” which “gave the police ammunition” to attack demos. Instead of defending the leftists being witch-hunted, they called to “distance ourselves from the idiocies of sections of the Autonomen milieu” (*sozialismus.info*, 11 July).

This is par for the course for social democrats of the Left Party, and the various Trotskyoids who dog-paddle in this reformist swamp, from the SAV to the followers of anti-Trotskyist Tony Cliff and pseudo-Trotskyist Ernest Mandel (formerly RSB and ISL, now united in the ISO on a policy of tailing Die Linke, mainly within its ranks). You get much the same from the social-democratized ex-Stalinists, like *Junge Welt* (8 July) which in its G20-Blog published a commentary (“Free Riders of the Revolt”) denouncing the “orgy of violence of the Autonomen,” and the “marauding of the modern lumpenproletariat” aimed at “tripping up the organized left.” It criticized the authorities because “riot-tourists were able to

arrive unhindered,” while “police officers, workers in the public safety sector, were misused for a demonstration of power.”

The pale-pink reformists repeat the same treacherous illusions that Leon Trotsky polemicized about against the Social Democrats who looked to the Prussian police as a bulwark against the fascists, with tragic results. “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker,” Trotsky insisted (*What Next? Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* [1932]). Genuine Leninists and Trotskyists are light-years removed from the *Biedermänner-Linke* (philistine leftists) who in their eagerness for bourgeois respectability join in the witch hunt against “violence-prone leftists.” The blind rage of anarchoid Autonomen is no program for revolution, but those who command the violence of the capitalist state and those who carry it out are on the other side of the class line.

The “riots” during the Hamburg G20 Summit were the inevitable result of plans by local and federal authorities to put the city under siege. They were directly provoked by the actions of the police starting days before the meeting as they systematically attacked groups of protesters, large and small, and even local residents. The next time around, police plan to hermetically seal off the civilian population from “violence-prone” protesters. Facing such preparations for civil war, there is only one force that can prevail against the assembled forces of capitalist state repression: the organized power of the working class. Class-conscious workers should have mobilized well in advance to use their power against the looming threat of the police-state Summit.

The Hamburg Summit brought out tens of thousands of protesters – Black Bloc and “Red Blocs,” Kurds and Turks, liberals and leftists, labor activists and environmentalists – in perhaps the biggest outbreak of mass unrest in recent years in Germany. Popular-front parades (which in fact beg the imperialists to clean up their act) and random rage are both expressions of impotence in the face of the provocations of the arrogant ruling class. They will keep happening so long as there is no effective mobilization of the power of the exploited and oppressed against their exploiters and oppressors. The CDU/SPD politicians can ignore the peaceful demonstrators and use overwhelming armed force against rioters. But if workers shut down the Hamburg harbor and take over the streets, then it’s a different story.

Can it happen, given the thoroughly bureaucratized labor movement that seeks to subordinate workers’ power to the dictates of capital? That depends above all on the struggle to build a proletarian vanguard, a Leninist and Trotskyist party that seeks to oust the bureaucrats and break the chains of class collaboration with a program of class struggle leading to workers revolution and a socialist united states of Europe. This is the key to defending immigrants and refugees, and to smashing the growing rightist and fascist threat. Forging the nucleus of that vanguard is the task that the League for the Fourth International has undertaken. As every class-conscious Greek or Spanish worker knows well, revolution in the heart of German imperialism is key to the fate of the entire continent. ■



# Capitalism Is Wrecking Mass Transit

## NYC Transit Summer of Hell?

### What about Winter, Spring and Fall?



Transport Workers Union Local 100

**Transit workers repairing 125th Street Station the day after June 27 A train derailment.**

*The following article was published in leaflet form and on our Internet site, [www.internationalist.org](http://www.internationalist.org), in August 2017.*

It would be a “summer of hell” for commuters, declared New York Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo. His remark was made in May when it was announced that a major section of interlocking tracks at Penn Station would be out of service for much-needed repairs in July and August. The closures follow a string of preventable train derailments that have left Amtrak, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the New York-New Jersey Port Authority and governors Andrew Cuomo and Chris Christie on the hook for crumbling transit infrastructure, some of which is older than the Bolshevik Revolution, and service that continues to leave straphangers fuming. In response, the capitalist politicians feud and MTA bigwigs put forward an “action plan” featuring their intention to *eliminate seats* so they can cram more passengers into already overcrowded subway cars! And, of course, more fare hikes.

The first derailment came in late March, when an Amtrak Acela Express train (the high-priced high-speed trains that connect Wall Street moguls and their Washington lackeys) was leaving Penn Station in the a.m., clipping an NJ Transit train and causing 29 trains to be canceled for the evening’s rush hour. Less than two weeks later, on April 3, an NJ Transit train derailed on the same interlocking section of tracks at Penn Station. On June 27, a southbound A train in Harlem derailed and crashed into a subway wall, leaving dozens injured. On July 7, just days before the scheduled “summer of hell” repairs began, yet another NJ Transit train derailed on the now-infamous “A interlocking” (the section of track slated for repair, which is a 21-track hub routing Amtrak and NJ Transit trains

entering and leaving Penn Station to the west). And on July 21 a Q train derailed in Brighton Beach. It’s not just derailments: on April 21 a power failure at a Manhattan station caused big rush-hour delays on more than half the system’s 22 subway lines.

The transit malaise has been going on for at least a decade. Since 2007, on-time performance has decreased by more than half on every single line in the New York City transit system. It’s assumed that a train may be delayed or re-routed at any time, for any reason. Service changes are so labyrinthine that life-long subway riders are left scratching their heads in confusion. The MTA’s new marketing scheme, Fastrack, is supposed to convince commuters that they’ve got it all under control, with scheduled service cutbacks on the weekends that supposedly allow time for repairs. Reeling off the list of these service changes is like being read the dinner specials at a Midtown restaurant (F trains will run express on the A line, A trains go local on the F line, 2 and 5 trains will switch in Manhattan, take a shuttle bus from 168th St., etc.). Or hearing a drug’s possible side effects in a TV commercial (WARNING: Fastrack may increase risk of depression, homicidal and suicidal thoughts, and proclivity for violence).

When trains are stalled, passengers are treated to pre-recorded announcements blaming it on “train traffic ahead,” or “a police investigation underway” at another station. A *New York Times* column by Jim Dwyer skewered the so-called “earlier incident” announcements – a catch-all reason used to justify service cuts that riders are sick of hearing. Dwyer cites the MTA’s signal network as the second most common cause of delay (“Because of an Earlier Incident, This Column May Infuriate You,” *New York Times*, 22 June). The MTA’s new/old transit chief, Republican

Joe Lhota (who was MTA chairman after Hurricane Sandy, now re-appointed by Cuomo) noted, “We live in a digital age. Our signal system isn’t even analog. It’s mechanical.” In addition, the frequency of signal inspections has been cut by two-thirds – from every 30 days to every 90 days. Result: more and more signal malfunctions. Inspections of MTA’s “new” fleet of decade-old train cars have also been cut back.

What’s evident to anyone who rides the subway is that the system is crumbling and in dire need of repair, maintenance and restoration. But the fact that the MTA bosses cut weekend service to less-than-bare minimum to carry this out is a reflection that New York’s “mass” transit system is not there to serve the mass of working people, but rather the needs of capital. So long as workers and corporate administrators get into Manhattan on time during the week, the bosses are at ease. It’s only when maintenance cuts into morning rush hour commutes that city rulers get up in arms – hence Cuomo dubbing the Penn Station repairs a “summer of hell.” The truth is, working people have been experiencing the hell of riding subway and regional rail for decades.

Dwyer and the bourgeois liberals who administer NYC for Wall Street see the main culprit as overcrowding. Since 1985, subway ridership has increased from 1 billion annually to 1.8 billion, an 80% growth in volume. Yet the number of subway cars in service and miles of track in the system have not increased at all, and the number of NYC transit workers has *fallen* by 8% (from 51,500 to 47,500). The liberals see a system bursting at the seams with new riders, crazed Republicans in Washington slashing Amtrak funding, a governor in control of the MTA who plays the blame-game with Mayor De Blasio, and no obvious way out, especially since the increased ridership reflects that New York’s economy is up compared to the rest of the U.S.

Liberal pundits also point to political corruption as the problem. But the whole system is based on political patronage. The MTA board are all political appointees and few have even a clue about transit. Historically, most appointees by the governor represent real estate interests in New York City and the surrounding area. In fact, Joe Lhota made a cool \$13 million in 2013 from real estate investments, according to the *New York Times*. In return for handing over the MTA board to the wheeler-dealers of New York City’s local bourgeoisie, Cuomo receives millions in campaign contributions from those very interests. The MTA’s recently completed capital projects show how pervasive their control is.

The 7 line’s one-station extension to the former Hudson Rail Yards, now the largest private real-estate development project in the country (which Donald Trump’s company once headed up), cost \$2.1 billion. The renovated PATH station at the World Trade Center, which did not extend a single foot of track or increase passenger capacity, cost \$4 billion. The three-station extension of the Q line along Second Avenue cost \$4.5 billion, and they made sure to stop short of Harlem. Even the big business media couldn’t miss the obvious racism of that. What do these capital projects have in common? They are of little use to subway riders but raise the value of real estate in their respective areas, bolstering profits begot

through speculation.

With public outcry reaching a fever pitch, the bourgeois politicians and transit bosses have weighed in with their emergency fixit programs. MTA chief Lhota announced an *NYC Subway Action Plan*, a grab bag of measures, several of them recycled from the Authority’s earlier “six-point plan” announced last May. This includes stationing EMT teams, “combined action teams” and subway repair rapid response teams near key stations. The purpose of these steps is to cut down on delays, aiming at reducing average response time from 45 minutes to 15 minutes. Beyond such obvious steps, Lhota’s prime proposal was to *remove seats* to make “standing only” cars to jam in another two dozen passengers each! Another of the MTA boss’s bright ideas was to solve the problem of subway trash by banning eating on the trains!!

Now a detailed analysis by the *Times* (“New York’s Subways Are Not Just Delayed, Some Trains Don’t Run at All,” 8 August) shows that the policy of spacing out trains, even after delays have exacerbated severe overcrowding, has led to “dozens of trains being canceled every day and reducing the system’s capacity by tens of thousands of riders.” On the Lexington Avenue corridor (4, 5 and 6 trains), only 77 of 90 scheduled trains pass through Grand Central Station at the height of the morning rush hour (8 to 9 a.m.), and 76 out of 88 trains from 5 to 6 p.m. Rather than inserting more trains, which can run as frequently as 2-3 minutes apart, even with antiquated technology, in an interview “Mr. Lhota said the agency should adjust the published schedules to reflect current conditions”!

Meanwhile, the underlying problems of signal, track and power problems, which cause over half the delays and most of the derailments, get short shrift. The MTA action plan vows to fix 1,300 of the most problematic signals (one-tenth of the total) *by some time next year*. However, the plan does not address the No. 1 point in Transport Workers Union Local 100’s plan, to have signal maintainers check *all* signals once a month instead every 90 days. Nor does it shorten the inspection and scheduled maintenance cycles for subway cars, or provide for “gap trains” to fill in for delayed trains – as the TWU proposed and the MTA used to do. While the Agency says it will hire 2,700 workers, several times that many are needed to ensure adequate maintenance and sharply increase the frequency of trains to alleviate the excruciating overcrowding.

Rather than fixing the subways, the MTA boss is setting out to *increase* the pain and discomfort of the more than 6 million passengers a day who endure the dysfunctional mass transit system. *Times* columnist Dwyer noted that the MTA allots three square feet standing room per person, compared to five for a 150-pound sheep on a boat. The author of livestock handling guidelines for the American Meat Institute remarked that subway cars are more crowded than cattle or pig trucks. And if the MTA has problems enough with delays due to sick passengers, wait until they have pregnant women and elderly passengers collapsing with nowhere to sit in seatless trains.

Of course, it is not a matter of a particularly misanthropic (people-hating) administrator, but of the priorities of the capitalist class whose interests he represents.



## NYC Subways and Capitalist Crisis

Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, between his xenophobic, racist and sexist tirades, Donald Trump gesticulated about increasing infrastructure spending. His vision for infrastructure is *profitable* infrastructure, which means privatization. MTA chief Lhota has taken up this theme, calling for companies to “adopt a station” in exchange for naming rights, as with sports stadiums. But privatization could never make mass transit profitable – it would inevitably increase fares and cut services, which would decrease ridership and interfere with everyone’s ability to get to work. An ensuing labor shortage could cut into profits. Yet the very reason U.S. infrastructure is falling apart is *because* of the U.S. capitalist class’s falling rate of profit – which was underlined by so-called fiscal crisis of the 1970s.

After the Vietnam War, the Federal government was faced with the consequences of running a massive budget deficit to simultaneously finance the war and poverty programs aimed at heading off ghetto unrest. What took shape was a massive counter-offensive by the bourgeoisie against the working class, beginning with public-sector unions. In NYC, this meant attacking the sanitation workers, teachers, and transport workers. In 1975, the Municipal Assistance Corporation (“Big MAC”), headed by Lazard Frères investment banker Felix Rohatyn, was set up by the state to lead the assault. MAC was invested with the authority to issue special New York City bonds to attract investment, after Wall Street declared the city insolvent.

To restore profitability, the ruling class sought to reduce expenditures on “social overhead capital” by slashing taxes and cutting spending on transportation, education and other vital public services. MAC imposed a *10 percent wage cut* on city unions, fare hikes for subways, an end to open admissions at the City University (CUNY) and the introduction of tuition. In addition, the state set up an Emergency Financial Control Board (EFCB) with direct control over the city’s finances. The EFCB “deferred” (stopped) all infrastructure maintenance – including bridges, tunnels and subways. Today, the sorry state of mass transit in NYC can be directly traced back to 1975, Big MAC, the EFCB, Democratic governor Hugh Carey, Democratic mayor Abraham Beame, and the financial moguls they served.

The capitalist assault on NYC, which left the MTA \$34 billion in debt to the very banks who forced NYC into bankruptcy, was then generalized nationally and internationally with closures of auto plants (particularly those with the most militant workers), union busting (PATCO, Hormel, Greyhound), defunding of public schools and a stepped-up anti-Soviet Cold War, from Afghanistan to Central America. The deliberate di-



Benjamin Norman for The New York Times

**Grand Central Station at rush hour, July 2017. Since 1986 the number of passengers has increased by 80% to 1.8 billion annually, but the number of subway cars stayed the same while the number of transit workers has fallen.**

lapidation of New York City’s subways was not about “fiscal irresponsibility,” “spendthrift” city governments and the like, but the first act of a broader war on the unions and the Soviet Union, the first workers state in history. Following the counter-revolutionary destruction of the (bureaucratically degenerated and deformed) workers states of the USSR and East Europe, the global capitalist war on working people escalated.

The deterioration of the New York City subways is not an isolated phenomenon, but reflects the overall course of world capitalism. To bolster sagging profits, the bosses slash labor costs by speed-up, lowering wages by union-busting, outsourcing production to low-wage countries and other means. They short-sightedly defer maintenance on constant capital and key infrastructure. They “invest” in speculative “bubbles” (the tech bubble, dot-com bubble, housing bubble). And when the whole financial edifice comes tumbling down, as it did in the market crash of 2007-08, the capitalist government “bails out” the Wall Street financiers while imposing “austerity” and mass unemployment on the workers, throwing millions out of their jobs.

This is not going to change by adopting a different economic policy, for example by junking “neoliberalism” and returning to Keynesian deficit financing, as many liberals and reformists wish. The capitalist system as a whole is in economic crisis. Sure, it’s quite possible to solve the crisis of the NYC mass transit system in relatively short order. The MTA could *hire thousands of new operators, conductors, engineers and maintenance personnel* to increase the frequency of trains. They could *double the trains on lines open on weekends* and intensify modernization work on others. They could greatly *accelerate the introduction of communications-based-train-control* (CBTC), and adopt stop-gap systems to reduce congestion on key lines (Lexington and Eighth Avenue corridors). But they won’t because the substantial cost won’t produce immediate profits.

The problems of the New York City have been exhaustively analyzed, and the solutions are known. The signals at

key centers (such as the W. 4th Street Tower in Manhattan) date back to the 1930s, involving hand-turning of switches and wires encased in cloth, which could lead to total chaos in case of even a small fire. A decision to go over to CBTC was made after a deadly 1991 accident at the 14th Street station on the Lex that killed five people. But at the present pace, introducing modern computer controls on every subway line would cost \$20 billion and take half a century. Twenty-five years on, they have only been introduced on the L line, where they didn't buy enough CBTC-equipped cars and there were still long wait times between trains. And that line is where Lhota proposes to start ripping out seats!

Capitalist imperatives govern every aspect of the public transit system. Three years ago, the Regional Plan Association published an extensive report (*Moving Ahead* [May 2014]) on accelerating the transition from "fixed block" to "moving block" (CBTC) signal systems. But since these planners are governed by the criteria of the profit system, they want to link such technology that increases safety and efficiency to replacing two-person train operating systems (driver and conductor) with one-person (OPTO) or driverless trains. This is a recipe for a deadly disaster. Imagine what the casualties from the June 27 derailment of the A train at 125th Street would have been if there had been no transit workers to guide passengers through the smoke-filled tunnel. Luckily, in the past TWU Local 100 has resisted such moves.

### A Class-Struggle Program for NYC Transit

Independent union action is key to a safe, efficient and comfortable mass transit system, for it can go against the demands of capital. A militant union leadership would fight to revive and implement the TWU's historic demand for **free mass transit**. NYC mayor de Blasio now wants to introduce half-price fares for low-income New Yorkers. But this would only benefit those below federal poverty levels (\$12,000 annual individual income, \$16,000 for a couple), making the vast majority of workers pay the extortionate full fare that amounts to *subway robbery*. Instead of soaking the 6 million daily riders to the tune of \$7 billion a year, unions and riders groups should call to **abolish the fare** and **rip out the turnstiles**. This would also put an end to the over 90,000 arrests and tickets yearly for the non-crime of evading the MTA's rip-off fare.

A class-struggle leadership of labor would fight to **refuse to pay the MTA's staggering \$40 billion debt** burden imposed on it by Wall Street. In 1981 the Transit Authority had zero debt, but as the capitalists demanded tax cuts and bankers sought to cash in on bonds, the MTA's annual debt service now totals over **\$3 billion**, one fifth of its \$15 billion operating budget. This includes continuing to pay interest and principal of bonds for infrastructure that has surpassed its useful life. And with all the financial flim-flam and funny-money bookkeeping by the Agency, a union fighting for the interests of transit workers and working people generally would demand to **open the MTA's books to inspection by union committees**.

## Honor Darryl Goodwin: Killed by NYPD Persecution



Jefferson Siegel/New York Daily News

**Darryl Goodwin together with TWU Local 100 supporters outside court, June 29.**

Last May 17, station agent Darryl Goodwin, a black 27-year New York City transit worker and member of Transport Workers Local 100, was arrested and suspended from his job without pay for not stopping assisting a passenger and immediately opening a gate for a posse of cops (who have keys and duty Metrocards) chasing a suspect. He did so as soon as the police identified themselves. After berating Darryl, they then framed him on charges of obstructing government administration, resisting arrest and causing injury to a police officer.

We called for all workers to defend Darryl Goodwin and demand that all charges be dropped and his lost wages be paid. At a court hearing on June 29, dozens of transit workers showed up to support their union brother. His next scheduled court hearing was on August 10, where dozens of transit workers and a representative of the Internationalist Group again showed up to support Goodwin. However, Darryl's deteriorating health prevented him from showing up. His high blood pressure and heart problems were exacerbated by the confrontation and criminal charges, as well as having to work overtime to make up for lost wages as a result of his suspension.

On August 15, Darryl Goodwin died as a result of merciless persecution by the NYPD. We honor his memory as we fight for cops out of the unions. In the case of TWU Local 100, that includes the armed "revenue agents." The police are the professional enforcers for capital, the enemies of the workers movement. Darryl's death tragically shows this once again. ■

For mass transit to serve the interests of the working class rather than capital will require taking the subway and bus system out of the hands of the MTA bosses, the capitalist politicians and their masters on Wall Street and impose **workers control**. A first step in that direction would be to form **union safety committees with the power to shut down**

*continued on page 71*



Despite Exemplary Militancy, Failure to Spread to the Industrial Proletariat Resulted in a Draw

# Mexican Teachers Strike of 2016: The Struggle Continues



The battle at Hacienda Blanca on 19 June 2016. Even after the massacre at Nochixtlán that day, in which cops killed eleven, teachers and their supporters fought the federal police in every town on the road to Oaxaca.

## Defeat the Imperialist Assault on Public Education With Internationalist Workers Mobilization!

*The following article is translated from Revolución Permanente No. 7, April-May 2017, published by the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International.*

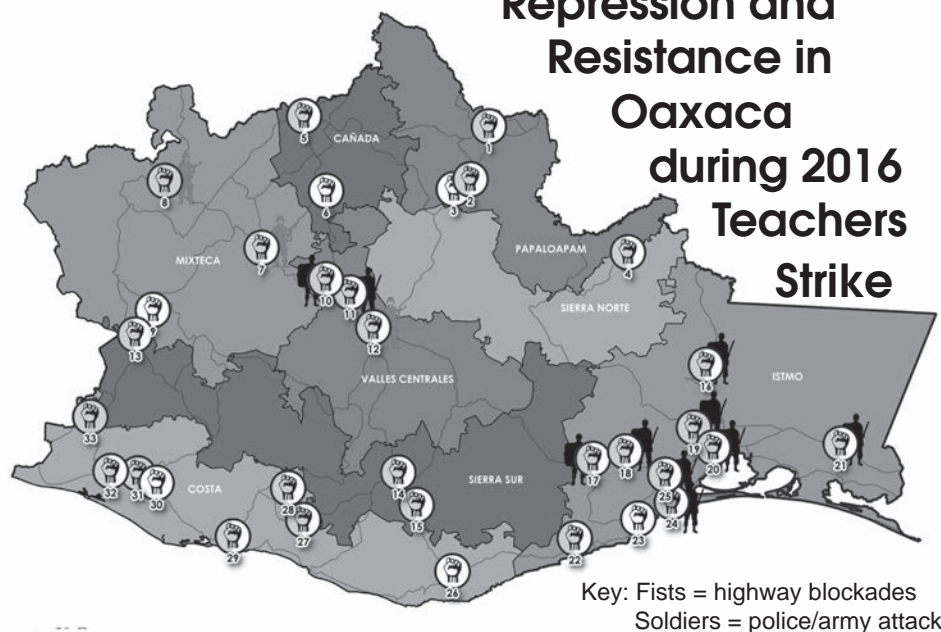
The teachers' strike that lasted from May to September of 2016 has been one of the sharpest class confrontations in recent Mexican history. On one side, the federal government sought to impose the "educational" counter-reform dictated by imperialist financial agencies. Its purpose was to annihilate public education, eliminate the labor rights of teachers and destroy what it sees as the prime obstacle to these designs: the National Coordinating Committee of Education Workers (CNTE). On the other side, hundreds of thousands of teachers organized in the CNTE in Oaxaca, Chiapas, Guerrero, Michoacán and other states, put up a determined resistance, even against brutal state repression that reached its peak on Bloody Sunday, 19 June 2016, in Nochixtlán, when federal and state police used live ammunition to try to break through one of the highway blockades that had paralyzed the state of Oaxaca.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See "Mexican Teachers Strike Braves Murderous Repression," *The Internationalist* No. 43, May-June 2016.

As on other occasions, the self-sacrifice and combativeness of the teachers was an example for education workers and other sectors, and not just in Mexico but also beyond its borders. It was truly an epic class struggle. Even before the strike began, the government of President Enrique Peña Nieto of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) thundered ultimatums, echoed by the mass media and spokesmen for big business. Soon it went over to open repression. The striking teachers were demonized as terrorists, privileged and ignorant, but in spite of the avalanche of slander against them, the firm support of the parents, indigenous communities, and in general of the "common people," gave the teachers the strength to persist and survive.

There was an enormous potential to *extend the strike* to the education sector nationwide, and from there to key sectors of the industrial proletariat. This was the perspective of the Grupo Internacionalista, which intervened at every stage of the struggle, both in Oaxaca and in the national capital (Mexico City), arguing for a class-struggle program. When the capitalists took aim at public education and tried to finish off an important stronghold of "independent" unionism in Mexico,

## Repression and Resistance in Oaxaca during 2016 Teachers Strike



they were attacking all the exploited and oppressed. There were, and still are, other sectors under government attack, like the oil workers, health workers, etc., who comprised the potential for a working class counter-offensive, at the head of the urban and rural poor, against their repression and starvation at the hands of the bourgeoisie.

But this road was blocked by a number of obstacles. First among them is that in most of the country, the education workers are still regimented under an apparatus of *corporatist* control: the National Union of Education Workers (SNTE), a government organization dedicated to preventing independent workers unions. Under the now-deposed chief Elba Esther Gordillo and her designated successor Juan Díaz de la Torre, the SNTE has been the government's main weapon in imposing and carrying out the education counter-reform. This "labor" front for the capitalist state actively blocked the mobilization of teachers in central and northern Mexico, while in Oaxaca and Chiapas it deployed thugs and paramilitary forces (the infamous gangsters of "Section 59") to break the strike.

Another important factor was that the "independent" unions, despite occasional empty words of "solidarity," did nothing to join with the teachers' struggle. This is a direct result of their leaders playing by the bosses' rules: not only do they restrict themselves to the narrowest kind of business unionism, but they adapt to the dictates of corporatist labor law whose function is to prevent proletarian mobilization. Instead of overcoming these barriers, the leaders of the "independent" unions form class-collaborationist alliances with politicians and parties of the bosses, particularly with the PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution) and its offspring MORENA (the National Regeneration Movement) of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, directing unrest in the rank and file into the sterile channels of bourgeois parliamentarism. It was these popular-front alliances that undermined and finally buried the struggle

to defend the SME electrical workers union against president Felipe Calderón in 2009.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, there is the class-collaborationist program of the leadership of the CNTE itself. At the end, the leadership pushed to end the strike on the basis of some vague, verbal promises by the Secretary of the Interior not to go forward with the layoffs called for under the education counter-reform – all made in private meetings with the union leadership of Section 22 in Oaxaca and Sections 7 and 40 in Chiapas, with nothing in writing. This position was consistent with the program of subordination to the bourgeois-populist MORENA, especially in Oaxaca: just as in 2006 when Section 22 backed the same López

Obrador (at that time, presidential candidate of the PRD) while state legislators of the PRD called for the intervention of the federal police against the teachers strike; also when [in 2010] the section called for a vote for Gabino Cué for governor, who ended his term under the sign of mass repression and the dead of Nochixtlán; and once again [in June 2016] when it backed Salomón Jara, MORENA's candidate for state governor.

The teachers' courageous struggle has at least blocked the implementation of key elements of the counter-reform: in Oaxaca and Chiapas the famous "teacher evaluations" have not been applied, and the threats to fire striking teachers were not carried out. But it was not enough to defeat the attack from the bosses, their parties and their government.

The need to draw a balance sheet of the recent struggles is deeply felt by many teachers. In Section 22, the new state leadership's idea of a critical evaluation of the experience of the past year is to conclude that demonstrations, work stoppages and strikes are ineffective. In the framework of their strategy of "mobilization-negotiation" they want more "negotiation" and less "mobilization." This conclusion is false: what is needed is to overcome the limits of localized, trade-union struggle and mobilize the heavy forces of the working class, not to beg the capitalists but to defeat them. And this is perfectly possible.

The courageous teachers, who time and again have resisted riot clubs, tear gas and bullets from police and paramilitary death squads who have killed scores of their comrades *need a program* for class struggle that points toward international socialist revolution. This is the program embodied in the Russian October Revolution of 1917 whose centenary we celebrate this year, Leon Trotsky's strategy of *permanent revolution* that the Grupo Internacionalista fights for today. The GI mobilized to bring this program to the teachers in struggle, at the same

<sup>2</sup> See "Life and Death Struggle for Independent Unions in Mexico," *The Internationalist* No. 30 (November-December 2009).





**Elba Esther Gordillo (La Maestra) in 1989 with Mexican president Carlos Salinas de Gortari when he appointed her president of the corporatist SNTE teachers pseudo-union in the basement of Los Pinos, Mexico's White House. In 2013, she was arrested by the current president Enrique Peña Nieto on charges of corruption. Under Gordillo, SNTE gunmen assassinated scores of dissident teachers. Grupo Internacionalista called for her to be released so that she could be tried by a teachers tribunal for mass murder.**

time as we addressed other sectors with the perspective of a nationwide strike. The struggle over the anti-education, anti-union “reforms” began with the teachers strikes of 2013. The great battle of 2016 was the second, but still inconclusive act. Now we must prepare a victorious third act, when we finally bury the imperialist-capitalist assault.

### **Two Lines in the Teachers Strike: Class Collaboration vs. Class Struggle**

Faced with the government's cruelty, the teachers mobilization in Oaxaca was not limited to the capital, but shook the entire state. For weeks, almost 40 highway blockades cut the state off from the rest of the country. Federal Police convoys that sought to dislodge the teachers' *plantón* (strike encampment) in the center of Oaxaca were stalled for days. When the police finally broke through using live ammunition in Nochixtlán, teachers and poor townspeople flooded the streets to resist. In spite of the massacre, the police encountered mass resistance every ten miles or so, in Huitzo, in Hacienda Blanca, in Viguera, in San Lorenzo. Against the assault rifles of the municipal, state and federal police, the teachers resisted with barricades, sticks and stones. They refused to be cowed by the massacre.

Government repression galvanized the determination of the teachers to fight: they blockaded the airport in the capital and besieged the offices of the state Education Department, the IIEPO. They also blockaded the Santa Maria del Tule fuel depot of the state oil company, PEMEX, for several days. The examples of joint action with the embattled state health care workers were also important, as they carried out work stoppages inspired by the teachers.

From the beginning, CNTE leaders knew that they faced a government that wanted to smash the teachers movement. But the strategy of the leadership was not based on mobilizing a powerful national teachers strike, much less a nationwide strike by the workers. In their speeches, the leadership talked of “walking out together and going back together,” but they settled for a strike limited to Oaxaca and Chiapas, accepting that in Guerrero and Michoacán there would only be intermittent work stoppages, to prevent the militant teachers from being fired. Even though the strike inspired teachers to stop work in Tabasco, Veracruz and even in SNTE strongholds like Monterrey, Nuevo León, the CNTE had no coherent plan for extending the strike.

Harassed and threatened by the government, the CNTE leadership rather than trying to strengthen the strike, instead sought refuge in alliances with a sector of the bourgeoisie. It undertook discussions with representatives and senators from the PRD, which went nowhere. Later, in desperation, it held out its hand to López Obrador. On the eve of the Oaxaca state elections of June 5 last year, the Executive Committee of Section 22 put out a position paper

calling for support to MORENA and López Obrador as the only ones who supposedly “supported” the teachers in their struggle against the education reform.

And how would López Obrador “support” the teachers? By promising that he would modify the “education reform” once he was elected president in 2018. In fact, he publicly called on the CNTE not to seek the “repeal” of the education counter-reform. A little later, in mid-July, he insisted that “repeal would be a failure of the government.. this is not good for anyone... We don't want to build the new Mexico on top of ruins. There must be order and we need to get to 2018 with stability, with social peace... [I]f Peña Nieto is thoroughly beaten, there won't be stability, there won't be government” (*El Universal*, 14 July 2016).

The result of the June 5 elections was a disaster. Within days, the emboldened federal government unleashed open repression, breaking the blockades and arresting the leaders of Section 22. On June 16 the attacks began on highway blockades in Jalapa del Marqués, Juchitán, and Salina Cruz, on the Pacific coast of Oaxaca state. Finally, federal troops tried to break the barricades in Nochixtlán, where they encountered fierce resistance from the primarily Mixtec population. The troops fired indiscriminately. The massacre of Nochixtlán on that bloody Sunday of June 19 left eleven dead and 200 wounded.

The cruelty of the repressive forces immediately unleashed the anger of the population, who reestablished the barricades within hours. On the next day, tens of thousands marched in the state capital to condemn the government's crimes. The bourgeoisie then proceeded with caution. To cool off the struggle,

the government proposed to establish “round tables for dialogue” to seek a “political solution to the conflict” with the CNTE. With the leaders of Section 22 still imprisoned as hostages, the government played at negotiation for weeks, waiting for the movement to wear itself out, so that it could then break off talks and condition their resumption on ending the strike.

The problem wasn’t a lack militancy or capacity to keep the strike going on the part of the teachers. The problem was the leadership, more precisely its program of class collaboration and prostration before the bourgeoisie. For them, the enormous combativeness of the ranks only served to motivate a return to “negotiations,” where they never got anything. The lack of a revolutionary leadership capable of pursuing a strategy of class struggle, seeking to broaden the movement to the rest of the workers movement and to unleash a working-class counteroffensive was alarmingly obvious. And this was no coincidence: the CNTE leadership applied the same strategy in 2013. Although Section 22 is constantly reshuffling its executive posts, the change in personnel does not guarantee any change in the union’s policy.

### The Struggle Against Corporatism Requires a Revolutionary Leadership

The hard experience of the 2016 teachers strike is another demonstration of the need for a class-struggle program to break the shackles of corporatist “unionism.” The SNTE is headed by the *charro*<sup>3</sup> Juan Díaz de la Torre, who was installed at the head of this state-controlled outfit by the very same PRI president Peña Nieto, just as his predecessor and mentor *La Maestra* Elba Esther Gordillo was by then-president Carlos Salinas (also of the PRI) in 1989. To dismantle public education, the Mexican bourgeoisie must annihilate the CNTE and reestablish the unquestioned authority of the SNTE over all education workers. Hence the government’s praise of the role

<sup>3</sup> *Charro* = cowboy. At the beginning of the Cold War, in 1946-48, the Mexican government completed the state takeover of the unions, expelling the “reds” from union leadership positions (jailing many for years), seizing union offices at gunpoint and firing hundreds of union militants. Henceforth, union leaders were directly appointed by the government. The emblematic figure for this corporatist takeover was Jesús de León, who was installed at the head of the railroad workers union and who liked to dress up in Mexican cowboy (*charro*) outfits with big sombreros and silver decorations. Thereafter the corrupt leaders of these state-controlled *corporatist* labor organizations, whose task is to prevent the rise of genuine workers unions, were known as “*charros*.”



Women teachers in the front line facing riot police during CNTE blockade of Oaxaca airport, 26 May 2016.

played by the SNTE throughout the process of imposing the education reform: for example, Juan Díaz de la Torre’s presence at the pompous ceremonies announcing the triumph of the reform alongside Secretary of Education Aurelio Nuño, as well as the funding of the SNTE by the Education ministry to the tune of hundreds of millions of pesos for promotion of the reforms (“Secretariat of Education Gives 550 Million Pesos [US\$33 million] to the SNTE to Promote Reform”, *El Universal*, 4 April).

This is neither an accident nor an occasional anomaly: the SNTE was created in 1943 by decree of president Manuel Ávila Camacho as a government apparatus to control the teachers, who at the time were organized in several dozen education unions. Its founding congress was presided over, funded and organized by the same Ávila Camacho. Its creation was announced in the Mexican Federal Register and applauded by the then-secretary of education Jaime Torres Bodet for embodying “the spirit of unity that all of us Mexicans long for.” Its first general secretary was the former secretary of education, Luis Chávez Orozco. Since then, all its leaders have been imposed directly by the government.

There have been various attempts to organize independently against the SNTE’s corporatism, like the Revolutionary Teachers’ Movement led by the communist teacher Othón Salazar at the end of the 1950s. These efforts met with little success, but in 1979 dissident teachers joined together to form the CNTE in the course of a wave of strikes that reached every region of Mexico. Since then, the CNTE has acted as a dike holding back – sometimes only partially – attacks against education and the teachers. Despite the obsequiousness of CNTE leaders before their executioners, the Mexican bourgeoisie is not satisfied with





**Grupo Internacionalista study circle outside Section 22 headquarters during teachers strike, 2 June 2016. During weekly study groups and nightly film showings, GI warned against support to the populist MORENA of López Obrador. Banner reads: “Against Bourgeois Repression, Class-Struggle Mobilization!”**

the political game of give and take that, in part, undercut the insurgent teachers struggles of the 1980s. Now the bourgeoisie is ready to free itself from any hint of resistance to its privatization plans.

Many of the most militant teachers know that they will soon have to return to the streets. But this time resistance will not be enough. What’s needed is a program of *class* struggle against the bosses, their state and their politicians, based on complete political independence from the bourgeoisie. The current leadership of the CNTE is very far from this perspective. In spite of the attack looming against the teachers, it concludes that the road of mobilization is not to be taken. In the perspectives document for the state convention of the CNTE, in preparation for the national convention held this past March, the leadership of Section 22 declared:

“The experience of the recent days of struggle is constantly moving; it is urgent that we critically revise the forms of struggle that we have put in practice for over 36 years, some of which, due to the duration of the struggle itself and the enemy’s attacks, have become worn out, so that we must proceed together to revise the forms of struggle that we might use in coming days of struggle.”

This summing up dismisses as outworn the “forms of struggle” employed by the dissident teachers movement since its organizational foundation as the CNTE nearly four decades ago. Despite being a conveniently ambiguous declaration, the critique is clearly aimed against mass mobilization and labor strikes. In fact, spokespeople of Section 22 openly declare that the struggle must be “moderated” and that militant mobilizations must be abandoned. The problem, however, is not rooted in the actions characteristic of teacher militancy, but on the contrary in the *program* that guides them.

In Oaxaca a new mood of struggle can be felt, with a new union leadership that isn’t compromised by the repeated sellouts and betrayals of its predecessors. However, the new leadership wants to justify a program based on canceling (or at least diminishing) mass mobilization, and steering a course of conciliation with the class enemy. When the new state leadership was seated, it began a series of round-table “discussions” with the newly-elected PRI governor Alejandro Murat (son of PRI strongman and former governor José Murat). So what has been the result of these “discussions”?

On December 1 [2016], a mobilization of Section 22 prevented Murat Jr. from being sworn in before the state legislature: he had to do it from the state

radio and television studios. Despite the union’s denunciation of his inauguration as illegitimate, as in the past, the teachers’ militant action only served as a prelude to negotiations behind closed doors. The governor agreed to regularize the situation of nearly 3,700 education workers in the face of the refusal of the Secretariat of Education under “Porky Pig” Aurelio Nuño to pay their wages. However, in exchange the union agreed “not to affect the school calendar,” and that the “regularized” employees would first be subjected to the fraudulent “teacher evaluations” that provoked the strike in the first place (*Proceso*, 7 December 2016). Thus, they offered to let the new governor work in “peace” in exchange for some limited concessions.

For the teachers, the mobilization of key sectors of the proletariat is not an extra luxury, but a necessity. The government is well-known for wearing down the teachers by attrition in order to beat them. This is a product of the social character of the teachers: they are not part of the industrial proletariat, and a strike of education workers does not paralyze the system of capitalist production, nor does it threaten, in itself, the profits of the capitalist class. Contrast the swiftness with which the government moves to cut off strikes in industrial sectors, for example, the strike by steel workers in Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán in March 2016.<sup>4</sup>

### Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

From the beginning of the teachers strike, the Grupo Internacionalista fought for a perspective of extending the strike to the entire education sector and into the workers movement. In the encampments in Mexico City and Oaxaca (where we organized study groups, film screenings, forums, etc.), we brought

<sup>4</sup> See “The Mexican Steel Workers Strike and the Struggle Against Corporatism,” *The Internationalist* No. 47 (March-April 2017).

dozens of striking teachers to appeal to workers of other labor organizations and trade unions to mobilize their power in a joint strike with the teachers. We uniquely defended the need for political independence in relation to the bourgeoisie and its parties PRI, PAN (the clerical-rightist National Action Party), PRD, MORENA, PT ("Labor" Party), etc. From the beginning of the strike we fought against illusions in MORENA, and when the leadership turned to openly using the strike as a vehicle for MORENA's state electoral campaign, we denounced this as a betrayal.<sup>5</sup>

This earned us attacks from MORENA loyalists inside the union, who absurdly accused us of being "PRIista provocateurs." Despite the campaign against us, events proved us right and many teachers who had doubts about the correctness of their leaders began to take our arguments more seriously. Many teacher unionists accompanied us on brigades that we organized to make contact with various sectors of the working class to put into effect our program for the broadening of the strike, against the leadership's strategy of keeping the strike isolated and limited to negotiations with bourgeois Congressmen and the fictitious "dialogues" with the state ministries.

Our daily work included polemicizing not only against the partisans of MORENA, but also against fake leftists (who even call themselves "communists") who are instrumental in carrying out the program of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. One of the most influential political forces in Section 22 is the Union of Education Workers (UTE), led by the Stalinists (by definition, defenders of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie) of the Communist Party of Mexico (Marxist-Leninist). The union leadership's line is almost always a blurred carbon copy of the UTE's program.

The truth is that the teachers struggle, along with that of the oil workers, miners, steel workers and other trades

<sup>5</sup> See "Mexican Teachers Strike Braves Murderous Repression."

still under the iron heel of corporatism, as well as the auto workers, telephone workers (now facing a union-busting drive) and all the oppressed, if they are to be victorious, cry out for the forging of an authentic communist vanguard, the nucleus of a workers party armed with a program of internationalist struggle against imperialism, and not another version of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois nationalism that has failed time and again since the failed Mexican Revolution of 1910-17.

To defeat the attack against the teachers, and not simply to trade blows, it is necessary to field a powerful proletarian counteroffensive. The attacks on education and health care, elementary democratic rights, have been sponsored and implemented by the entire Mexican bourgeoisie, the ever-obedient lackeys of the imperialist financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. This shows the impossibility of guaranteeing a free, high quality education to the whole population within the framework of the rotting capitalist system of our epoch. The workers can – and must – defeat the exploiters.

This makes indispensable the theory and program of *permanent revolution*, formulated and advocated by Leon Trotsky, and confirmed by the Russian Revolution of 1917: in this epoch of decaying imperialism, only the struggle for workers power, for a workers and peasants government, can achieve the most elementary democratic gains, as part of an international socialist revolution. Only a Leninist and Trotskyist revolutionary workers party, a section of a reformed Fourth International, will be capable of leading the workers struggles to victory, extending the revolution to the south and the north, into the very heart of the imperialist beast.

The courageous teachers who have fought with determination for years and decades – and who continue to do so today – deserve a leadership with a program to win. ■

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## Transit Hell...

*continued from page 64*

*the system* in case of unsafe conditions on the tracks, for workers and passengers. Such committees would demand the **installation of existing track safety technology** that can put an end to the needless deaths of transit workers and a dangerous system in which an average of five workers a day suffer serious injuries (see “NYC Transit Workers: Fight for Track Safety and Free Mass Transit!” *The Internationalist* No. 46, January-February 2017).

To win any significant gains requires using the union’s tremendous power, residing in transit workers’ ability to bring the center of world finance capital to a grinding halt, just as they keep it moving round-the-clock year-round. That means **defying New York’s union-busting Taylor Law** which declares it illegal for public employees to strike. In 2005, TWU Local 100 struck in the face of massive fines on the union and individual members. But TWU leaders in Washington ordered the members back to work. On Day 3, despite the solid walkout and public support, Local 100’s then-president Roger Toussaint (who never wanted the strike, forced on him by a militant membership), collapsed and called it off. This capitulation resulted in a contract defeat, jail time for Toussaint, a \$2.5 million fine on the Local, and each member docked five days pay.

The 2005 strike could have won, if it had a leadership up to the task. It underscored the need to **oust the pro-capitalist union misleaders** who have hamstrung workers’ struggles (Toussaint was constantly hobnobbing with Hillary Clinton, the Democratic senator from Wall Street) and to **forge a leadership with the program and determination to wage the class struggle through to victory**. Such a leadership would **mobilize union power to stop racist police terror** against African Americans, Latinos and immigrants, and to **block I.C.E. raids and deportations**. It would also demand **all police** (including armed MTA revenue agents) **out of the unions**.

It all comes down to a question of *class power*, and a political fight against the parties and politicians of capital. But Local 100 president John Samuelson is in bed with Democratic governor Cuomo and the MTA. Last year, the governor put Samuelson on the MTA board, no doubt a payoff for going two years without a contract. Now the TWU chief has lined the union up with Democrat Cuomo and Republican Lhota against liberal Democrat de Blasio. A big-dollar union TV ad campaign portrays the mayor as sitting on piles of cash for refusing to pony up half a billion dollars for the MTA, controlled by Cuomo, who has siphoned similar amounts from the MTA budget. Which bourgeois politician comes up with the dough is not the concern of workers and riders. A fighting TWU leadership would call to **break with all the bosses’ parties** and **build a class-struggle workers party**, as Painters Local 10 in Portland, Oregon did last year.

Bottom line: The 42,000-member Transport Workers Union Local 100 touches the lives of millions of New Yorkers in a way no other labor organization does but for the 150,000-strong United Federation of Teachers. Despite the

best efforts of big business press to demonize transit workers (calling strikers in 2005 “rats”), masses of working people can see that if the TWU wins, we all win. To successfully fight back, labor must be at the forefront of all struggles of the oppressed, armed with a revolutionary program and a class-struggle leadership at the helm fighting for a workers government. ■

## Correction

In our article on the historic May Day 2008 ILWU longshore union strike that shut down all West Coast ports against the U.S. imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (*The Internationalist* No. 28, May-June 2008) we stated incorrectly, and have repeated since, that this was “the first time ever that an American union has struck against a U.S. war.” Actually, it was the second such strike action. Class struggle militant Jack Heyman, a retired ILWU Local 10 longshoreman who played a key role in the 2008 strike, clarified this at a November 12 forum in San Francisco on the Russian Revolution and its relevance today.

The first American labor industrial action against a U.S. imperialist war was organized by the longshore union in Seattle in 1919. In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution, a revolutionary fervor spread throughout Europe and North America sparking revolutions (in Hungary and Bavaria), general strikes, occupations and other forms of militant labor action which challenged the rule of the capitalist class in Belfast, Barcelona, Glasgow and elsewhere.

The Seattle Central Labor Council, a strong defender of the Bolshevik Revolution, published and distributed in its journal the *Seattle Union Record*, 20,000 copies of Lenin’s speech to the Congress of Soviets in April 1918 on the task of consolidating proletarian power. It was reportedly “avidly read by radicals up and down the Pacific coast as well as in Seattle’s shipyards.” A strike by maritime workers in the Seattle shipyard led to the Seattle General Strike in February 1919.

According to one account, later that year Seattle dock workers noticed a mysterious shipment of 50 rail cars destined for Vladivostok labeled “sewing machines”. When a savvy longshore gang suspicious of the cargo intentionally dropped a crate load on the dock, stacks of rifles bound for the counterrevolutionary Kolchak White Army were revealed. The longshore union declared that its members would not handle the cargo, forbade any terminal to handle it and notified all ports of their action. The Seattle Central Labor Council backed the longshoremen. The 20 September 1919 *Seattle Union Record* 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....”

This solidarity strike was directed against Russian counter-revolutionaries and their backers, the imperialist Expeditionary armed forces of the U.S., Britain, France and Japan. In fact, this Seattle longshoremen’s “hot cargo” action in support of the Russian workers revolution was the first U.S. workers strike against U.S. imperialist military intervention. May Day 2008 was No. 2, and no less significant for that. ■

# **CLASS STRUGGLE EDUCATION WORKERS**

## **Brooklyn Protest Against I.C.E. in the Courts**

Across the country, snatch squads of plainclothes Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) police have been staking out courthouses aiming to kidnap undocumented immigrants who show up there on unrelated matters. According to the Immigrant Defense Project, arrests in courts in New York State are up 900% since January, going from 11 in all of 2016 to 110 by late November. Now this sinister secret police operation is being met with public protest.

On November 14, Ishmael García Velásquez showed up in Brooklyn Criminal Court, as he had on seven previous occasions, for a hearing on misdemeanor charges.

When the hearing was once again adjourned, I.C.E. agents grabbed García Velásquez, dragged him into a private elevator and with the aid of court officers whisked him out of the building. His lawyer, Rebecca Kavanagh, said her client had no criminal record, no previous removal record and was only there because was insisting on his innocence. The lawyer was able to tweet a picture of the arrest to warn others, but two more were arrested in court the same day (*Village Voice*, 16 November).

Two weeks later, on November 28, Genaro Rojas Hernández was in court on charges of violating a restraining order. After Kavanagh was appointed as his attorney by the court, a judge asked them to step into the hallway where Rojas was pounced on and arrested by I.C.E. agents, who shoved his lawyer out of the way. This time, incensed public defenders with the Legal Aid Society stormed out of the courthouse and organized a picket line of up to 100 attorneys and supporters outside the building. Impromptu signs demanded “ICE Out” and “ICE, Go Back to Where You Came From” (*Village Voice* and *New York Post*, 28 November).

Fed up with the sinister actions of the I.C.E. cops who are scaring immigrants away from the courts, the Legal Aid lawyers’ union United Auto Workers Local 2325, called a protest on the steps of Brooklyn Borough Hall on December 7. Scores of immigrant rights, legal and religious groups and leftist and community activists joined the sizeable crowd of some 200 people.

Supporters of Class Struggle Education Workers, Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and the Internationalist Group came with signs calling for “Workers Action to Stop Deportations,” “I.C.E. Jails Out of NYC” and “Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants.” Also present were supporters of



**December 7, Brooklyn Borough Hall protest.**

the Democratic Socialists of America and Refuse Fascism.

Luis Mancheno, from the Bronx Defenders told the crowd, “I.C.E. agents lurk in the halls of justice to snatch immigrants away from their right to have their day in court.... Mothers are afraid of fighting for the custody of their children.” Amanda Jack from the Brooklyn Defenders denounced the I.C.E. for “terrorizing the courts” (RT, 7 December). The Association of Legal Aid Attorneys is calling on the Office of Court Administration and Chief Judge Janet DiFiore to prohibit I.C.E. from entering the courthouses and to stop coordination with the feds.

However, the courts no less than the immigration cops are part of the apparatus of state repression that serves to enforce the racist injustice that is and always has been a mainstay of American capitalism. OCA officials defend the “right” of the I.C.E. agents to make arrests in the courts, and accuse the Legal Aid attorneys of trying to obstruct “justice.” It will take an independent mobilization of working people, immigrants, African American, Asian and Latino activists and all defenders of democratic rights to stop the I.C.E. marauders.

Rapid response networks and immigrant defense groups which have been springing up at schools, hospitals and on the City University of New York campuses are important. Class Struggle Education Workers and CUNY Internationalist Clubs have undertaken such initiatives. What’s needed is to bring out the power of labor, from such unions as the UFT, PSC and hospital workers DC 37 and 1199 who work with immigrant students and their families to stop the I.C.E. with mass action. The action by the dedicated attorneys of Legal Aid is an important first step. ■

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# Whose Life Is On the Line? Cop Stats

When in late December 2014 a deranged man gunned down two cops in Brooklyn, one Chinese and one Hispanic, the “conversation” among liberals sidelined talk of police brutality and racist killer cops, turning instead to near-religious worship of the police. Instead of “black lives matter,” the “color-blind” talk that “all lives matter” turned into “blue lives matter.”

From the halls of Congress to City Hall, from the mouths of politicians and newscasters, we hear relentless and hallowed affirmation of the role of the cops who supposedly “go out and put their lives on the line every day for us.” This shibboleth is repeated so often that someone might think that being a cop is actually a dangerous job. Not so. Notwithstanding the recent killing of the two NYC cops, the job is one of the safest and getting safer.

While there are no even remotely accurate official statistics on the number of people killed by the police, the government keeps a careful count number of cops who die while on the job. They are, after all, the first line of defense of capital, the ruling class depends on them.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics being a cop doesn’t even come close to the top ten most dangerous jobs in the U.S. Fishing and logging are far more dangerous. Construction jobs, mining, refuse and recycling collectors have a much higher fatality rates than cops. It’s more than twice as dangerous to be a truck or taxi driver. Of the 900,000 uniformed cops in 2013, 100 died from job-related injury. That’s a fatality rate of about 11.1 per 100,000. (*Most of those deaths come from vehicular accident, like ramming a pole in a reckless high-speed chase.*)

Moreover, the *murder* rate for cops is 3.77 per 100,000. That is well below the murder rate for the U.S. as a whole at 5.6 per 100,000. Let’s put that another way: a police officer is 33% *less likely* to be murdered than the average person. A resident of Baltimore is more than *nine times* more likely to be murdered than is a cop (“By the Numbers: How Dangerous Is It to Be a Cop?” Foundation for Economic Education, 19 August 2014). And it is safer today to be a cop than at any time since 1875.

According to the FBI, 76 cops were killed in 2013, and of those, 27 were killed as a result of “felonious acts,” the other 49 by accident. According to the cops’ own “Officer Down Memorial page,” the two cops shot in Brooklyn in December were the only NYPD cops killed in 2014 not by accident. Nevertheless, increasingly, a militarized police force includes cops who ride



**Robocops impose curfew in Baltimore on 1 May 2015 following police murder of Freddie Gray. Police are armed and armored for civil war. But whose lives are actually threatened? Not the cops’.**

around in mine-resistant Humvees and Bearcats with .50 caliber machine guns, as though their lives were in constant danger. Forget the statistics, you’re a lot more likely to be injured in a bar filled with lot of drunken, off-duty, heat-packing cops than is a U.S. occupation soldier in Afghanistan.

A young black man is far more likely to be killed by a cop than a white young man. But the police do not collect and publish data on this because they don’t want the public (i.e., you) to know. They collect data on every imaginable “misbehavior” except their own use of deadly force disaggregated by race. The thousands of police organizations are permitted by the feds to self-report.

In a recent report, the FBI says there were 461 “justifiable homicides” by the police, but this drastically undercounts the real figures. According to the several data bases now tracking the gruesome body count, police in the U.S. killed upwards of 1,000 people a year in 2014 and 2015. But when cops get killed, the accused get punished. When cops kill, they are rarely charged and almost always get off.

What is really dangerous? Being a 12-year old black kid with a toy gun. A black resident of public housing compelled to use darkened stairways inhabited with trigger happy cops. A young black women stopped for a traffic violation. A black teenager wearing a hoodie in a gated housing complex. Driving, walking or sitting while black, or even opening the door to your own home, can bring a death sentence carried out by the roaming executioners in blue. Being black in America, or Latino, or an immigrant – *that* is a truly dangerous occupation. ■

## Bolshevik Revolutions...

*continued from page 80*

Lenin receiving “German gold,” and the like.

In Italy recently, the leading bourgeois newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, last June interviewed Marco Ferrando, one of these pseudo-Trotskyist leaders. The interviewer remarked, “The current relevance of the idea of the Revolution and of Marxism is testimony to the crisis of world capitalism.” Interesting that a bourgeois paper would recognize that. To which Ferrando replied, “Even the advance of the social conquests in the West, like the welfare state, was possible ... also because of a world balance of forces marked by the heritage of the Russian Revolution.” Well, yes, in a way: the bourgeoisie granted those social programs in part out of fear of red revolution. Yet after the Soviet Union fell in 1991-92, they began ripping up those programs.

A lot of reformist leftists want to go back to the “welfare state” capitalism of yesteryear, but the fact is that this is no longer possible because of the advanced state of decay of capitalism. The relevance today of Red October is the fight in the here and now for socialist revolution. And that means a study of the betrayal of the program of Lenin and Trotsky by the usurper Stalin and his bureaucratic heirs who prepared the way for the imperialist-led counterrevolution of 1989 to 1992. We have written a great deal on that, and there are some bulletins here with our Trotskyist analysis of this process, so I won’t go into that in detail today. I will just say that almost every single pseudo-Trotskyist tendency ended up on the counterrevolutionary barricades with Boris Yeltsin, either figuratively or literally. In contrast, the genuine Trotskyists

fought tooth and nail against the counterrevolution and for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucrats who had prepared the way for it. And we are justly proud of the fight we waged.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, a period of bourgeois triumphalism set in. The watchword was the so-called “death of communism.” The capitalist ideologues declared that Bolshevism had been buried, some even proclaimed the “end of history” with the triumph of liberal democracy. What actually happened is very different. The restoration of capitalism led to endless imperialist and nationalist wars and mounting economic crisis. When we wrote on the 90th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution 10 years ago, we stressed that “barely a decade and a half later, U.S. imperialism is sinking in the quicksands of the Near East while its economy is in crisis, teetering on the edge of a severe recession or new depression.” That was in 2007, and by the next year a financial crisis on Wall Street set off a world capitalist depression.

Of course, the bourgeois lie of the “death of communism” was bought by much of the left. In Italy, the Communist Party, the PCI, once the largest Stalinist party in the West with millions of members, ceased to exist and its remnants are today in the Democratic Party along with the former Christian Democrats. Various supposedly Trotskyist groups argued that it was necessary to abandon any vestiges of Leninism and Trotskyism. Almost all of them had long ago abandoned the Trotskyist defense of the deformed workers states against counterrevolution. But now the followers of the late Ernest Mandel declared that one had to ditch the dictatorship of the proletariat, and also revolutionary proletarian vanguard parties, as Lenin had outlined in *What Is To Be Done?* Instead,

the Mandelites called to build parties of the “broad vanguard,” like the New Anticapitalist Party in France.

The followers of the late Pierre Lambert declared that it was necessary to go back to the First International, which even included some bourgeois populists. And the Lambertists then proceeded to call for a Sixth (bourgeois) Republic in France, a “Working People’s Party” (rather than a workers party) and to build an International Liaison Committee for a Workers International rather than a Trotskyist Fourth International. And while we Trotskyists fight for new October Revolutions on a proletarian socialist program, the late Nahuel Moreno, who died just before the counterrevolutionary wave crested, called to fight for new *February Revolutions* on a bourgeois-democratic program. Moreno criticized Trotsky’s program of permanent revolution, both because it didn’t call for such bourgeois-democratic revolutions and because Trotsky insisted on proletarian leadership. Moreno also “updated” Trotsky’s Transitional Program



**Members of Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (TIC, Class Struggle International Workers) organized and narrated photo exhibit and slideshow at November 5 celebration. The photo is of Krupskaya speaking to Red Army soldiers during the Civil War.**





Internationalist photo

**Band led supporters of the Internationalist Group, Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and others in singing Russian and Latin American revolutionary songs at November 5 celebration of centenary of the Bolshevik Revolution.**

to turn it into its opposite, a call for various capitalist reforms.

Those were the reformists. And then you have some centrists, who sometimes adopt a revolutionary posture but in practice act as reformists. There is the Fracción Trotskista, led by the Argentine PTS, which claims to have broken with Morenoism because it doesn't call for a "democratic revolution." But they keep the essentials, fighting everywhere on a democratic rather than socialist revolutionary program. They systematically gut all the Leninist and Trotskyist policies of their working-class content, for example describing the Paris Commune as "grassroots democracy" rather than as the first workers government in history, and calling soviets the democratic organs of "the masses" rather than the basis of proletarian rule. They call for "free and sovereign" – i.e., bourgeois – constituent assemblies everywhere. And they run in Argentine elections as a coalition called the FIT, the Left and Workers Front, on a typical reformist program.

Then there is the case of the International Communist League and its U.S. leading section, the Spartacist League, from which the founders of the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International came. After we were bureaucratically expelled, which was the only way they could get rid of us, the SL and ICL started systematically revising the Trotskyist program. They declared that the workers' consciousness had suffered a qualitative reversal, and that workers' struggles no longer had anything to do with the final goal, socialism. This was then used as a justification for abstention from the class struggle, and even desertion in the middle of sharp battles as they did in abandoning our comrades in Brazil in the midst of their sharp fight to oust the police from a municipal workers union.

The ICL then went on to drop the calls to defeat one's own imperialism in imperialist wars, they abandoned the call for independence for the colonies, which was a condition for membership in the Communist Third International. In particular,

they refused to take a clear stand for independence for Puerto Rico, the largest remaining colony in the world, recently saying that statehood would be an expression of self-determination, whereas it would threaten the very existence of the Puerto Rican nation. At the same time the ICL has embraced bourgeois nation-building nationalism, from Quebec to Catalonia. And with their defense of national borders they have refused to call for asylum for refugees. As in the campaign over Brexit, or British exit from the European Union, this has brought them into close proximity with rightist forces.

So in their different ways, all these once ostensibly Trotskyist tendencies have ostentatiously abandoned Trotskyism. Almost without exception, as we have pointed out, they reject the key thesis of Trotsky's Transitional Program, that "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." The ICL says that that "predates" the present "deep regression of proletarian consciousness" – in other words, that it's outdated – but just about everyone says the same thing one way or another. Namely that the problem today is not concentrated on the issue of leadership but on the backwardness of the working class.

Now, this may seem like a lot of hairsplitting or abstract theorizing, but it has very real consequences. The fact is that revolutionary crises have broken out repeatedly in recent years, and it is precisely the absence of a recognized revolutionary, proletarian vanguard that has spelled defeat. Look at the record: Oaxaca in 2006, where the organs of bourgeois state power were thrown out of the state capital for five months – police, army, governor, courts, legislature, government bureaucracy. But while various fake leftists went on about a "Oaxaca Commune," there was no serious attempt to enlist the powerful Mexican working class, without which an uprising in a rural province was doomed to failure.

Then we had the Arab Spring in early 2011, at the same time as labor in Wisconsin was on the verge of a general strike;



**Leon Trotsky, founder and first commander of the Soviet Red Army, with soldiers during the Civil War.**

the Indignados, or Outraged movement in Portugal, Spain and Greece a couple of months later; and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States in the fall. Several years later, in 2014, there were the explosive protests involving tens of thousands of young people taking the streets in what became known as the Black Lives Matter movement, shutting down tunnels and highways and city centers. In 2015, the leftist populist SYRIZA coalition was elected in Greece in a battle against austerity that had already seen 30 general strikes, or what goes for a general strike these days.

And they all end in failure. Why? Because there was no recognized proletarian revolutionary leadership, and the various radical and not-so-radical left tendencies didn't present one. In the Near East and North Africa, all the left joined the bourgeoisie in praising a "revolution" when it hadn't yet happened. The point was to bring to bear the power of the working class to make a real, social and socialist revolution. In southern Europe, the left capitulated to the petty-bourgeois Indignados leadership which banned red flags and party symbols, and is now continued in the bourgeois populist Podemos party in Spain. In Greece almost the entire left (including the ICL) fell for Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' referendum swindle in July 2015 when he called on the masses to vote against the Eurobankers' austerity, and then when they did he turned around and implemented it himself.

Lately we have had more bourgeois populists, like Bernie Sanders who postured as a "democratic socialist" while running for the Democratic Party presidential nomination. In Britain you had the reformist Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, and in the U.S. there has been the dramatic growth of the Democratic Socialists of America, the DSA, which still to this day acts as a pressure group in and on the Democratic Party.

Now all of these movements have awakened a great deal of support, including and in particular from young people. But none of them have put forward a program for revolution, and certainly not workers revolution. On the Williamsburg Bridge from Manhattan to Brooklyn in New York

there is a stenciled slogan, two of them actually, dating from the Occupy Movement, a little worn by now. One says "Join the evolution" (with an image of Evo Morales, the Andean capitalism leader of Bolivia). In others words, not revolution. And the second says "We will be ephemeral," that is that they would disappear quickly, which was sort of a play on the Occupy slogan, "We are invincible, another world is possible." And, of course, they were indeed ephemeral.

Yet while they were ephemeral, these movements keep coming up because American capitalism keeps throwing them up, because it is rooted in racist oppression. Over 1,100 people are killed every year by the police in the United States, over a



**From the slide show at the November 5 celebration: The Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee that carried out the insurrection. What is notable is who was not there: Stalin.**





Internationalist photo

**Some photos from the exhibit prepared by members of the TIC, which was featured at November 5 celebration of Bolshevik Revolution centenary.**

third of them African Americans. This is part of the continuing heritage of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, even though they have been formally abolished. As the founder of American Trotskyism emphasized in a pamphlet we have here, it was the Russian Revolution that taught communists in the U.S. about the black question, because the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed peoples of the tsarist empire was key to making the October Revolution.

Today youth are no longer mesmerized by the “death of communism” illusion or the claim that there will be a new era of prosperity and democracy. They don’t believe it because it isn’t true, and their own experience tells them that. For anyone in this country 26 years old or younger, which just happens to be the age after which they lose their parents’ medical insurance under Obamacare, they have not had one year of their life in which the U.S. has not been at war. You may recall that when the U.S. launched its invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in October 2001, Dick Cheney, the vice president, declared that the war “may never end, at least in our lifetime.” He got that right. The U.S. is still occupying Afghanistan, and we are still calling to drive them out, to defeat the imperialist occupiers.

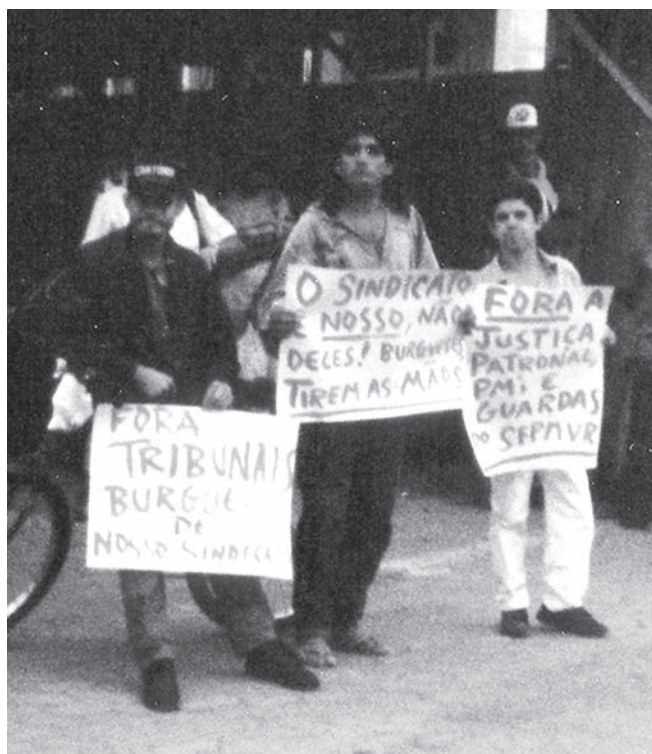
The economic crisis that broke out in 2007-2008 led unemployment in the U.S. to spike to 23 million jobless ... and to stay there. It hasn’t fallen a bit. In Europe youth unemployment is astronomical – almost 50% of young people in Greece are jobless, more than 25% in Spain. In this country, the government just

disappears the long-term unemployed from the statistics by not counting anyone who hasn’t had a job in two years as part of the workforce. But those people still exist, many of them vote, and quite a few voted for Donald Trump because they saw the Democrats’ economic policies spelled their own ruin. That is also the origin of the opioid crisis, of the dramatic fall in life expectancy in areas of high unemployment like West Virginia, and the appearance of actual organized fascists in the U.S. over the last year under the protective umbrella of the Trump regime.

It should be recalled as well that following the counter-revolution in the Soviet Union – which all those pseudo-Trotskyists hailed – the unemployed male workers in Russia



**From the slide show: Alexandra Kollontai, head of the Zhenotdel, the Bolshevik Party’s Department for Work Among Women, with delegates at the Conference of Women Communists of the Peoples of the East in 1920.**



**The coherence of words and deeds: signs say “Bourgeois Courts Out of Our Unions!” and “Bosses Courts, Military Police and Municipal Guardas Out of the Union.” The Brazilian comrades of the LFI called for cops out of the unions, and then carried it out in Volta Redonda in 1996. As a result they were subjected to nine different court suits. The ICL abandoned them in the heat of the struggle, then slandered them and tried to sabotage their defense struggle.**

began dying in increasing numbers, many due to alcoholism. And in Greece there has been the sharp increase in suicides. All these signs of social pathology are consequences of the decaying capitalism and the economic depression which the bourgeoisie continues to deny but which working people experience personally. And yet there has been no sharp increase in radical *class* struggle pointing to possible revolution. Why not? Because the opportunist left has tailed after the various popular revolts and populist movements, or wallowed in self-satisfied abstentionism. But they have not fought inside the workers movement to build a leadership that can lead the class struggle to victory.

This underlines the sharp difference between the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International from virtually the entire left which claims to be Leninist and Trotskyist. Our motto, in the words of the Brazilian comrades, is that there should be a coherence between words and deeds. If we call for something, we try to carry it out. We called to extend the struggle in Oaxaca to the millions-strong Mexican industrial working class, and we pushed our small forces to the limit participating in the radical teachers mobilizations in 2006, 2013 and 2016. We called in Brazil to strike for freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, and in 1999 teachers in the state of Rio de Janeiro

did just that – the first time ever that unionists did so. And the next day, in coordination, the dock workers of the ILWU shut down every port on the U.S. West Coast for the same demand.

We called for workers strikes against the war, beginning even before the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, and after several years of pushing for that, on May Day 2008 the ILWU longshore workers again shut down all West Coast ports against the war in Iraq and Afghanistan and for immigrants’ rights, a historic action, in which the IG played an active role. Recently we have called for workers mobilizations against the fascists and racists, and our comrades in Portland have taken the lead in organizing just that, in the Portland Labor Against the Fascists mobilization that brought out some 300 unionists and supporters on June 4. We also publicized the action of the ILWU which called to shut down the ports and to march to shut down a fascist provocation in San Francisco this last August 26, a call which was directly and explicitly inspired by the action of the Portland workers and which electrified the local left. As a result, the fascists cancelled, which was an important victory, in which we were heavily involved, even though we don’t have a local in the Bay Area.

One reflection of that commitment to carrying the revolutionary program into the class struggle is what we call the “transitional organizations” fraternally allied with the Internationalist Group. Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas, or Class-Struggle International Workers, helped prepare this event, as you have seen. The TIC is a small beginning, but the bravery of immigrant workers without the papers demanded by U.S. capitalist rulers, Republican and Democrat alike, has led to important struggles, including at the Hot and Crusty Bakery in Manhattan, and the B&H Photo store and warehouses where they achieved unionization. Some of the workers and activists who have played a key in those struggles are here today. But, as always under capitalism, this was only a temporary victory by the workers who can only win definitively through revolution. As we emphasize in calling for full citizenships for all immigrants, this demand has only been won in the French Revolution of 1789-99, in the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Bolshevik October Revolution of 1917.

There are also a number of members of Class Struggle Education Workers here tonight who have taken the lead in organizing immigrants defense committees in the schools and hospitals in New York. On the West Coast, members of Class Struggle Workers – Portland are watching and participating in this by videoconferencing. These are small organizations, including both supporters of the IG and also class-conscious workers and teachers. And this last August, the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth was founded as the youth section of the IG, and many of them are here tonight as well.

Above all, we have emphasized the need to build a party of professional proletarian revolutionaries, as Lenin argued for and the Russian Bolsheviks achieved. We seek to bring the working class to the fore on the revolutionary program, both through study in our weekly study groups, one in English and the other in Spanish, and through participation in action. We uphold Trotsky’s Transitional Program as a program to



mobilize the working class to overthrow capitalism, rather than distorting it into a mishmash of reform demands on the capitalist state. We have called from the beginning to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution through splits and fusions. As an expression of that, over the past two years we had a fusion with the wonderfully named “Better-Late-Than-Never Faction” peremptorily expelled by the Spartacist League the day after they handed in their declaration; and we have won new sections of the LFI in Italy and Germany, opening the door to systematic work in Europe.

We are sure that young people will find their way to authentic Trotskyism, because they will need to in order to fight for revolution. The Trotskyist movement has been decimated over and over. First due to fascist genocide and Stalinist repression in the 1940s, then as a result of a deep-going revisionist split in the 1950s known as Pabloism, which denied the need for an independent revolutionary vanguard. By the 1960s, the numbers of Trotskyists had dwindled, but then a new generation came into the struggle, and we rediscovered the genuine Marxism of Trotsky because we had to – we needed that revolutionary orientation in order to fight against the imperialist war in Vietnam, to guide our work as we went into the industrial working class. In the United States, many of us had been prejudiced against Trotskyism because of the reformist policies of many who claimed to represent it. In particular, the Socialist Workers Party ran much of the antiwar movement. We rightly despised them because they tried to exclude any radicals, especially anyone with a National Liberation Front flag. But the demands of the class struggle forced us to reexamine everything.

In fighting against the war in Vietnam we faced an antiwar movement allied with bourgeois politicians in a “popular front.” Here in New York, for example, there was a huge antiwar march that featured the Republican mayor John Lindsay, the same mayor who tried to bust the transit workers union, the teachers union and the sanitation workers union. We knew that such a movement couldn’t stop an imperialist war, so we went to the library to read Lenin. So we read where he wrote that you had to fight to *defeat* your own imperialism, not just for peace or a different foreign policy, and that you had to *fight imperialist war with civil war*, that is, class war. So we decided that was right, and went out to implement it. In Boston we went to the Lynn General Electric factory where they built the jet engines for the warplanes that were bombing Vietnam. A strike had broken out, and so we offered our support. When we arrived, a bunch of leftist antiwar students from SDS, there was a little tense hesitation for about 15 seconds, and then they said “come on in.” We were chanting on the picket line, “Warmaker, strikebreaker, Smash GE.” And within a couple of weeks the head of GE was denouncing “Viet Cong [Vietnamese Communist] strikers.” The point is that we were forced by the logic of the class struggle to come to terms with Trotskyism, in order to fight the popular frontists.

Today the once-Trotskyist ICL declares that we have been thrown back to before 1914. Others say similar things, all of

which reflect a loss of confidence in the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat, the hallmark of anti-Marxist revisionism. We say the opposite: just as the Bolsheviks built their party on analyzing the actions and the defeat of the Paris Commune of 1871, we will prepare the Red Octobers of the future on the basis of the lessons we have learned from the revolution whose centenary we celebrate today, and of the counterrevolution that took place a quarter century ago that we fought against then, and which we continue to oppose as we call to defend the remaining deformed workers states including North Korea, China, Cuba and Vietnam against counterrevolution from within and without.

In uniquely upholding the programmatic continuity of Lenin and Trotsky, we in the League for the Fourth International reaffirm our commitment to be the party of the Bolshevik Revolution. ***Long live the Bolshevik Revolution of Lenin and Trotsky!*** ■

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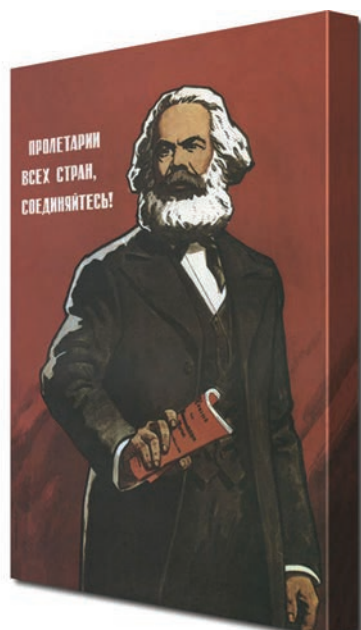
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**ON 7 NOVEMBER 1917** (25 October according to the old style Julian calendar), the Bolshevik Party of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky led the Soviets (Councils) of Workers and Soldiers Deputies in the insurrection that took power in the crumbling Russian empire and established the first workers state in history. The October Revolution became a beacon for the struggles of the oppressed the world over. Despite the subsequent degeneration of the Soviet Union under the Stalinist-nationalist bureaucracy and the imperialist-led counterrevolution that finally destroyed the USSR, proletarian revolutionaries still stand on the internationalist program of Krasnaya Oktyabr, or Red October. We print below the remarks of Jan Norden on behalf of the League for the Fourth International at a celebration of the centenary of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution held by the Internationalist Group in New York City this past November 5.

We are meeting today to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, which was the key event of the 20th century that determined the course of world history for the next 75 years and beyond. It is also 25 years

## 1917-2017 We Fight for New Bolshevik Revolutions



Workers of all countries, unite!

since the imperialist-led counterrevolution that overthrew the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state and restored capitalist rule throughout East Europe. That was a world-historic defeat for the proletariat. But as Rosa Luxemburg wrote in January 1919, shortly before she was murdered by the social democrats in power, "revolution is the only form of 'war' in which the ultimate victory can be prepared only by

wandering around, and several tendencies which falsely

claim the mantle of Trotskyism, all hailing the continued "relevance" of the October Revolution, but with a very different program for today. Even the capitalist ruling class is aware of its relevance. The *New York Times* has been running a year-long series of articles, each one more counter-revolutionary than the last, praising the tsar, resuscitating the hoary story of *continued on page 74*

a series of 'defeats'." This is because the working class can only achieve lasting victory on a world scale.

So speaking on behalf of the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International, I want to talk about the lessons of that revolution and the counterrevolution, and why the program of the Bolshevik October Revolution retains its full validity today. When Lenin mounted the speakers platform at the Petrograd Soviet on the night of October 25 (or November 7 according to our calendar), he ended with a simple proclamation: "Long live the world socialist revolution!" Not a phony "democratic revolution" of the social democrats or the Stalinist illusion of "socialism in one country," but to fight for international socialist revolution. That was the program of Lenin and Trotsky, the co-leaders of the 1917 October Revolution, and that sums up our program today.

Certainly a lot of people on the left will be having some kind of celebratory event around this 100th anniversary who have no intention of carrying out that program. There are new-style social democrats of *Jacobin*, some Stalinist zombies



Тов. Ленин ОЧИЩАЕТ  
ЗЕМЛЮ ОТ НЕЧИСТИ.

Comrade Lenin sweeps the world