

Needed: A Class-Struggle Leadership

Teacher Revolts Across U.S.



Scott Heins/Bloomberg

Thousands of teachers, students and supporters marched around West Virginia state Capitol March 2 in student-organized rally backing strike.

Beginning in mid-February, a series of statewide teachers strikes broke out, first in West Virginia, then in Oklahoma and Kentucky, and as we go to press teachers in Arizona have struck as well. They are all states where teachers unions have historically been weak and where salaries and school funding have been at the bot-

tom of the scale nationwide. After years of cutbacks and falling pay, with many if not most teachers having to take second (and third) jobs just to survive, the rebelling education workers (including staff and bus drivers) had had enough and walked out.

In each case, the strikes were sparked by rank-and-file teachers holding school-

wide meetings and using social media, while the leaders of the state affiliates of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers had to scramble to keep up. And when NEA and AFT tops in West Virginia and Oklahoma settled for token gains, the strikers voted to continue the walkout.

The strikes won important but limited gains, in itself a rare event in recent decades of union defeats. But they lacked a leadership capable of waging hard class struggle and an organizational framework to counter the sellout labor bureaucracy. The Internationalist Group has called for

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Democrats Exploit School Shooting to Push Racist Gun Control

Cops Kill Far More Every Week

When on Valentine's Day, February 14, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz took an Uber car to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida and proceeded to indiscriminately gun down 14 students and three teachers, while wounding another 14, it set off a national uproar. The horrific slaughter of innocents, particularly teenagers who had their whole life ahead of them, caused anguish far beyond the bereaved families, friends, schoolmates and neighbors of the Miami suburb. It also set off a nationwide mobilization for gun control, with young survivors of the Parkland massacre in the forefront. This immediately became part of the liberal campaign to get out the vote for Democrats in the November 2018 mid-term elections to undercut the Republican majority in both

houses of Congress and weaken the hated president Donald Trump.

The shooting was a heinous crime, that 17 lives were lost is an unspeakable tragedy, and the bravery of the students, teachers and school staff who lived through it and still speak out is admirable. Yet they have been enrolled in a reactionary push for gun control aimed at strengthening the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state, which will be used first and foremost against African Americans, Latinos and immigrants. Gun control will also not stop a deranged and/or racist mass murderer, who in this case (and in most others) was already known to the police. Any attempt to overturn or gut the Second Amendment to the Constitution securing "the right of

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YouTube

"Gun control" in practice: hundreds of thousands of youth, overwhelmingly African American and Latino, were stopped yearly in New York City and searched for illegal guns and drugs. No to gun control, abolish drug laws!

German Pilots Show the Way: Stop Deportations Through Workers' Action!

Germany: Oury Jalloh and the Fight for Refugee Rights

**Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!
For a Multiethnic Revolutionary Workers' Party!**

The following is a translation of the article first submitted for *Streikkurier No. 1*, the rank-and-file newspaper of the Berlin student assistants' strike, where it appeared in slightly edited and abridged form. It was also issued as a leaflet by the *Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the LFI*.

After 13 years of cover-up and delays, the gruesome death of Oury Jalloh in a Dessau police cell remains a case unsolved. The refugee from Sierra Leone was handcuffed by hands and feet on a fireproof mattress in 2005, yet he burned to death in police custody. It has just come out that in early 2017, even the prosecutor responsible for the case had given up the long-refuted thesis of self-immolation, and presumed murder, based on the expertise of eight specialists (including medical, toxicologists and fire experts) – whereupon the case was taken out of his hands.

For years, friends and relatives of Oury Jalloh have been fighting this cover-up of an obvious murder. They organized a commemorative demonstration in Dessau on January 7, the anniversary of his death, as in previous years. More than 4,000 people came to the small town, both from the region and beyond. The regional train from Berlin was so full that the doors could barely be closed. The mood was combative, many brought homemade posters and banners against racism.

Down With the War Against Refugees!

We not only want to commemorate Oury Jalloh, as well as to finally bring to light the truth about his murder. In his memory, we want to continue the fight – for the rights and the lives of countless others like him. Oury Jalloh is a victim of the one-sided “world war” against refugees. The only “crime” of the many people who come to Germany is the attempt to flee from persecution and misery – conditions caused by imperialist powers like Germany.

The list of victims is long. Laya-Alama Condé died in 2005 in Bremen after he was force-fed vomit-inducing substances by the police who claimed he was a drug dealer. Dominique Koumadio was shot dead in 2006 in Dortmund at point-blank range by a police officer in “self-defense.” In 2014, private cops of the nursing home operator European Homecare abused refugees in North Rhineland-Westphalia. For five years, up to 1,000 policemen periodically besieged and harassed the Gerhart Hauptmann School in Kreuzberg [Berlin], which was occupied by refugees for lack of other housing. Last Thursday [January 11], the refugees were finally expelled – under the aegis of the district government of Greens, Left Party and SPD (Social Democratic Party). German border police have also been deployed abroad, from Greece to Africa. The list goes on and on, **because its systematic – it's the system!**

The worldwide war on refugees continues to escalate – from the U.S.-Mexico border to the Mediterranean. The short “summer of welcome” [in 2015] for refugees in Germany is long gone. Racist attacks on refugees and others have massively increased. Just on New Year's Eve, security guards at a Cottbus refugee shelter opened the door to a Nazi squad and then looked on as they beat up residents. The symbiosis between state agencies and fascist gangs is an open secret, at least since the NSU revelations¹.

According to the bourgeois consensus, the racists are the alleged “voice of the people.” Politicians including Left Party leader Sahra Wagenknecht are joining in the hate campaign against refugees, allegedly to “contain” the AfD (Alliance for Germany).² In fact, it is the racist poli-

¹ It took the German police more than a decade to even notice the existence of the “National Socialist Underground”, which carried out bombings, bank robberies and killed nine immigrants from 2000 to 2011.

² The rightist *Alternativ für Deutschland*, which now has deputies in the national parliament, is increasingly just a legal cover for fascist elements.



Thousands came out on January 7 in Dessau, Germany for a memorial demonstration for Oury Jalloh on the 13th anniversary of his death.

cy of the bourgeois mainstream, currently mainly directed against Muslims, which increasingly incites and encourages fascist forces.

Labor Must Take Up the Fight for Refugee Rights

It should be clear: **An attack on one is an attack on all!** And attacks on refugees are always the spearhead of more widespread attacks on the multiethnic working class in Germany, as well as on the democratic rights of the entire population. Thus, a temporary jail for G20 opponents during the G20 summit in Hamburg last summer had prior to that been a “central reception center” for refugees.

Immigrants, regardless of their legal status, must have full citizenship rights, including equal freedom of movement in Europe. Under the Dublin III regulation, all asylum seekers now in Germany who traveled through other European Union countries can automatically be returned to those countries. **Down with Dublin**

III and all deportation laws! Class-conscious trade unionists must use their social power to defend immigrants against racist attacks and **stop deportations through union action.** This is possible: from January to September 2017, 222 deportations were prevented by the refusal of pilots to transport involuntary passengers. Compared to 18,000 deportations over the same period, that's not so many – but it points to a perspective. Transport workers unions could generalize the courageous actions of individuals and defend their members against reprisals.

The bourgeoisie and its state use racism to split the working class along ethnic lines. The struggle for immigrant rights is therefore not a matter of charity, but a necessary precondition for an effective, united struggle against the whole capitalist system, which necessarily reproduces evils such as exploitation, inequality and war and thus is ultimately responsible for the misery of those who are expelled and forced to flee. ■



Dessau, January 7: The *Internationalistische Gruppe* participated in the powerful protest and called for worker/immigrant action to stop deportations, and for a socialist united states of Europe.

Visit the League for the Fourth International/
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Drive the Imperialists Out of the Middle East!

U.S./NATO: Get Your Bloody Claws off Syria!

APRIL 15 – At around 4 a.m. on Saturday, April 14 Middle Eastern time (Friday evening in the U.S.), the United States, Britain and France carried out a missile attack on Syria. The Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, immediately responded, and within two hours from the announcement of the bombing, members of the IG and the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth were protesting outside Trump Tower in Manhattan, the home base of U.S. president Donald Trump. Our signs proclaimed, “Defend Syria, Defeat U.S. Imperialism!” “U.S./NATO Imperialists, Get Your Bloody Claws Off Syria!” and “Trump & Clinton, Imperialist Warmongers – Drive U.S./NATO Out of Syria!”

Subsequently, antiwar demonstrations have raised demands such as “U.S. Hands Off Syria,” “No War in Syria” and similar slogans which avoid taking sides in the battle. These are liberal and reformist appeals for a more “peace-loving” U.S. imperialist foreign policy, in contrast to the revolutionary call to *defend* Syria and *defeat* the Western imperialists. Ever since the first imperialist world war, it has been a fundamental principle for revolutionary Marxists, following the lead of V.I. Lenin’s Russian Bolsheviks, to stand together with a colonial or semi-colonial country under attack, and to fight to smash the imperialist aggressors. Any blow struck against the U.S./NATO imperialists and their allies in Syria is in the interests of the world’s workers.

After a week of bellicose tweets from the White House, the actual attack seemed to many to be an anticlimax. It was in many ways a repeat of the April 2017 U.S. missile attack on a Syrian air base, even down to the timing, only this time with roughly double the number of Tomahawk cruise missiles. Last year the U.S. managed to damage one hangar, but within a day Syrian jets were flying out of the same base. Result: 0. This time they hit two empty warehouses and Syria’s Pharmaceutical and Chemical Industries Research Institute, which specializes in producing cancer drugs (in short supply because of imperialist sanctions). Result: $2 \times 0 = 0$. But the danger that this attack and the imperialist onslaught against Syria represents is far greater.

The attack was also in part a diversion from Trump’s domestic difficulties, from the FBI investigation of putative Russian influence in the 2016 U.S. elections, to the investigation (leading to a pre-dawn FBI raid on the office of his personal lawyer) of election campaign payoffs to women who said they had affairs with Trump. It recalled to many people the 1997 movie *Wag the Dog*, in which a media spin-doctor fabricates a war in order to cover up a presidential sex scandal. The very next



Internationalist demonstrators immediately protested U.S. missile attack on Syria late on Friday night, April 13 outside Trump Tower in NYC. “Defend Syria, Defeat U.S. Imperialism!”

year, Democratic president Bill Clinton bombed Serbia in the middle of the Monica Lewinsky impeachment drive. This time, Trump’s missile attack comes amid controversy over his relation with adult film actress Stormy Daniels, leading one comic to dub it “Operation Desert Stormy.”

But whatever the personal factors influencing the notoriously erratic U.S. imperialist commander in chief, the imperialist attack exacerbates the already extremely tense situation in Syria, where multiple antagonistic powers have their military forces in close proximity. One misstep (or a deliberate provocation) could lead to a far wider conflagration. The Middle East is already on the brink of a regional war, with Israel, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia (along with other Gulf oildoms) lined up against Syria, Iran and Russia. Meanwhile, NATO member Turkey has invaded northern Syria. United Nations secretary general António Guterres warned just hours before Saturday’s attack, “The cold war is back with a vengeance and a difference.”

A huge difference with the situation today is that the Cold War that began after World War II, and which for almost half a century dominated world geopolitics, was a united imperialist front against the Soviet Union. Revolutionary Marxists (Trotskyists) and class-conscious workers stood for unconditional defense of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state. Today, following the 1989-92 counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc, capitalist Russia, a regional power, is facing a far from united imperialist-led front. U.N. chief Guterres remarked, “The mechanisms and safeguards that existed to prevent escalation in the past no longer seem to be present.” And the military confrontation today is hot, and threatening to become much hotter.

As the London *Guardian* (15 April) observed, “American troops are already a grenade’s toss away from Russians and Iranians in Syria, and this weekend, missiles and

planes from the US, UK and France flew at the Syrian regime.” Compared to Cold War crises of the past, the *Guardian* added, “There is less communication between Washington and Moscow and there are no longer just two players in the game, but a jostling scrum of major powers in decline and middling powers on the rise. Pursuing national agendas on such a crowded battlefield without colliding with others is increasingly hard.” Now with purges in the Trump regime, superhawks such as the new National Security Advisor John Bolton, appear to have the whip hand.

Many comparisons have been made to the Balkan Wars in southeastern Europe on the eve of World War I, where major imperialist powers were mucking around and the 1914 killing of Austrian Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo set off the carnage that cost an estimated 17 million lives. Often the claim is made that WWI came about “by accident.” In reality, all the major powers were preparing for war, but thought they had a strategy to make it short and decisive. Germany’s Schlieffen Plan called for lightning strikes, the French relied on their Maginot Line of forts. Today, war planners in Washington seem to figure

they can strike in Korea or the Middle East with impunity. North Korea’s nukes make that a more dangerous theater for a trial run. So Trump strikes first in Syria.

Trotskyists call for *defense of Syria against the imperialist attacks*, while giving no political support to the Assad regime. Proletarian revolutionaries are also for *defense of the North Korean deformed workers state* against the rapacious U.S. imperialists who laid waste to that country in the Korean War that began in 1950 and never officially ended. In particular, we support North Korea’s right to develop and possess nuclear weapons, which are a key deterrent to a new imperialist attack.

Chemical Weapons Pretext for Attack Is an Imperialist Lie

Yesterday’s U.S./British/French attack on Syria was billed as retaliation for an alleged April 7 chemical weapons attack against the population of a Damascus suburb, which is blamed on the Syrian government. This is an imperialist lie, and quite likely an orchestrated provocation from the start. The day before the missile attack, U.S. defense (i.e., war) secretary Mattis had said that the U.S. was still looking for evidence of whether chemical weapons were used, and if so by whom. But then the White House and U.S. representative to the U.N. Nikki Haley claimed they had undisclosed evidence, and the missiles were launched. In fact, the regime of Bashar al Assad, as heavy-handed as it is, *did not* use chemical arms against civilians in Douma.

In the first place, there has been no evidence forthcoming that deaths were caused by chemical weapons, although that may have occurred. Photographs provided by the White Helmets (a supposed civil defense group funded by the British and U.S. governments and linked to Al Qaeda jihadists) purport to show symptoms (foaming at the mouth) inconsistent



Syrian surface-to-air missiles respond to imperialist attack, April 14. Russian military reported that of 103 cruise missiles fired by the U.S., France and Britain, 71 were shot down by Syrian air defenses.

with the claimed chemical agent (chlorine). Then the White Helmets released a video showing a rocket with a supposed chemical warhead (unexploded) on a bed. Since it allegedly crashed through the ceiling (hole shown) how can it just be lying (horizontally) on the undamaged bed? This was clearly fabricated.

Two days after the reported attack, military chemical experts of the Russian Center for Reconciliation in Syria visited the site of the alleged attack in Douma and found no traces of chlorine or other toxic chemicals. Subsequently, the Russian military showed a video of medics from the Douma hospital who denied that any patients on April 7 had signs of chemical poisoning, and who showed how a widely circulated video was staged by provocateurs who burst into the hospital, creating panic.

Secondly, Assad (whom Trump refers to as an “animal”) had no interest in launching a chemical attack, which would with 100% certainty produce demands for imperialist intervention. The Syrian government was winning the war in the Damascus suburbs, having already cleaned out three-quarters of the area held by Islamist gangs; it had already evacuated thousands of people from Douma to Idlib; and the day before the incident it had reached a preliminary agreement with elements of Jaish Islam (the Army of Islam) which dominated the area for a ceasefire and evacuation of those who remained. Hard-line jihadists who wanted to scuttle that prospect had every interest in trying to provoke Western intervention, which they had been demanding for days.

Moreover, the Russian military had reported on several occasions (February 26, March 3, March 13) on the discovery of chemical weapons laboratories found in the Eastern Ghouta suburbs recently retaken from the Islamist gangs, warning that a provocation was in the works. Unsurprisingly, the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons did not act. The OPCW is an instrument of the imperialists. The head of the OPCW is a Turkish official who was formerly Turkey’s ambassador to Israel and its representative in NATO. In turn, the chief U.N. “investigator” for chemical weapons in Syria is Edmond Mulet, who lied about and covered up the bringing of cholera to Haiti by U.N. soldiers when he was the head of the occupation force there. “Cholera Mulet” is no one to be trusted in judging who used chemical weapons in Syria.

The Syrian government also did not use chemical weapons in Khan Shaykhun in April 2017, the pretext for Trump’s previous missile attack on Syria (see “Defend Syria! Drive U.S. Imperialism Out of the Middle East!” *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017). Massachusetts Institute of Technology scientist and specialist in chemical weapons research Theodore Postol showed conclusively that whatever chemicals were used there were released on the ground, not from a bomb dropped by Syrian planes. The “crater” where the supposed bomb hit was no bigger than an average pothole on a Queens street. The photos provided by the White Helmets show “rescue workers” with no protective gear at all hosing down bodies. If those were victims of sarin, the workers would be dead.

Nor was the Syrian government responsible for the August 2013 chemical

weapons attack in Damascus, for which it was blamed by the Western imperialists who threatened to bomb Syria then, but only pulled back at the last moment. The Assad regime would have been crazy to mount such an attack right at the moment when U.N. experts arrived in Damascus to investigate charges of chemical weapons use. Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh revealed that the Turkish secret police (MIT) had furnished the chemicals to manufacture sarin gas to Syrian jihadists. Russian president Vladimir Putin gave a succinct explanation of the claims of Syrian government chemical weapons attacks, saying that they are, in technical terms, “a crock of shit.”

Imperialists Threaten to Set Off Regional War, Or More

Various left groups claim to support a “Syrian Revolution” embodied in supposed “civil society” groups that rose up in 2011. There is no such revolution under way. The March 2011 revolt against the Assad regime quickly turned into an Islamist insurgency. Today there are several wars going on simultaneously in Syria, one layered over the other, which accounts for the shifting allegiances and creates a complex situation, especially for the Syrian population, which has suffered several hundred thousand deaths *mostly of government supporters killed by the jihadists*.

There is above all an *imperialist assault on Syria*, originally focused on the Islamic State (I.S.). Since the I.S. was decimated (but not totally defeated) last year, the U.S. has increasingly turned its weapons against the Syrian government. The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have called throughout for the defeat of the U.S.-led imperialists. We also say that any military blow landed against U.S. imperialism, including by reactionary Islamists like the I.S., is in the interests of the world’s working people. The IG/LFI seeks to drive the U.S./NATO imperialists out of the Middle East, including by workers action in the imperialist heartland (workers strikes against the war, “hot-cargoing” war materiel), as we fought for from the beginning against the U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq.¹

There is simultaneously a *sectarian/communal civil war* in which Sunni Islamists have attacked various of the numerous religious and ethnic minorities in Syria, centrally the Alawites, who dominate the Syrian government of President Bashar al Assad, but also Kurds, Druzes, Ismaili Shiites and Twelver Shiites, Greek Orthodox, Maronite, Armenian and Syriac Christians, Yazidis and others. The Assad regime has been able to hold on because it has strong support not only from the Alawites (and key sectors of the Sunni Arab bourgeoisie, as well as many urban Sunni Muslims who do not want to live under Islamist rule) but also from many of the other ethnic/religious minorities, who rightly fear that they would be massacred should the Sunni Islamists win the civil war, as in Libya.

We are for the *defeat of all sides in the inter-communal civil war* in Syria, since the victory of any side would likely lead to a pogrom against the others, or else massive forced population transfers. At the same time we defend the *right to communal self-defense* for all religious and ethnic communities facing an existential threat.

¹ See “For Workers Action to Defeat Barack Obama’s Iraq/Syria War,” *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014.

In addition, there is the Kurdish struggle to secure a Kurdish autonomous region (Rojava). But after this was achieved in early 2015, the Kurdish YPG militias in alliance with the U.S. imperialists fighting the Islamic State have expanded that area to include largely Arab regions. The IG/LFI defends the Kurds’ right to self-determination and their struggle to for a homeland, as we call for a socialist republic of united Kurdistan. However, when the YPG and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) that it dominates act as foot soldiers for the U.S. imperialists in conquering predominantly Arab regions, we are for their defeat, and have called to defend those areas (notably Raqqa, the former “capital” of the Islamic State) against the imperialist/Kurdish attack.²

With the Islamist gangs (and all of the Syrian armed “rebels” are Islamist, in one form or another), it is a war to the death: they would slaughter communists as they did in Afghanistan (where, as in Syria, they were also backed by U.S. imperialism). These gangs pose a mortal threat to secularism and any kind of democratic rights. A proletarian revolution would smash them not only militarily but also through class struggle that can win over the urban and rural poor who are often attracted to the Islamists.

In the last two years there has been a major Russian intervention which has successfully turned the tide of the civil war in favor of the Assad government. We do not call for Russians out, as this would be objectively aiding the U.S./NATO imperialists and the jihadist groups they support (as well as those they oppose, i.e., the I.S.). If the U.S. and its NATO allies directly attack Russian forces in Syria, we are for defense of the those forces against imperialism. But we do not support the actions of the Russian forces, which today prop up the Assad regime in the ethnic/communal civil war and tomorrow could try to impose a coalition government with some “moderate” Islamist gangs. Moreover Russian president Vladimir Putin has repeatedly offered to be part of a coalition with the U.S. in the imperialists’ “war on terror” that is terrorizing the region.³

On top of this, since the beginning of 2018 there has been a Turkish invasion in the North. We are for the *defense of the Kurdish areas* (such as Afrin) *against attack by Turkey*, which is part of the NATO imperialist alliance, but in areas where Kurdish forces dominate Arab populations (as in Mambij or along the east bank of the Euphrates), the YPG can only hang on due to its alliance with the U.S. military. There Trotskyists are for *defeatism on both sides* in a clash between the YPG/SDF and their U.S. allies, on the one hand, and Turkish forces allied with Syrian Islamists on the other.

While the battlefields of Syria are many-sided and complex, the IG/LFI fights in all cases for the program of *permanent revolution* put forward by Leon Trotsky and embodied in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. We call for workers revolution throughout the region. With the Syrian working class largely destroyed by the civil war, the key force to carry forward such a revolutionary program is the Egyptian

² See “Defend Raqqa – Drive U.S./NATO Imperialists Out of Syria and Iraq!,” *The Internationalist* No. 43, May-June 2016.

³ See “Flashpoint Syria: Russian Intervention and Imperialist Aggression” (30 October 2015), published in *The Internationalist* No. 42, January-February 2016.



Internationalist contingent at NYC anti-war demonstration, 15 April 2018.

and especially the Turkish proletariat. We *defend the Palestinians* against the Zionist oppressor state, demanding an end to the murderous siege of Gaza, where the Israeli military has recently massacred dozens of peaceful demonstrators. And we call for an *Arab/Hebrew Palestinian workers state*, through joint struggle of Hebrew-speaking and Arab workers against their bourgeois rulers, as part of a *socialist federation of the Near East*.

The U.S./NATO assault against the Syrian regime is part of an imperialist offensive that seeks to demonize the Syrian government in order to topple it. A major reason for this is that Syria has historically been part of a “resistance front” opposed to Israel, and in particular is allied with Iran, which the Zionists target as their main enemy (as do the Saudis). With Republican Trump threatening to undo the nuclear accord with Iran negotiated by Democrat Obama, a clash could easily take place in Syria – such as another criminal Israeli bomb attack – that would lead to an imperialist/Zionist/Arab monarchist attack on Iran. The IG and LFI *defend Iran’s right to have nuclear weapons*, of which Israel has hundreds and the U.S. has thousands.

Meanwhile, all sides are aware that an attack by the imperialists and their regional flunkies on Russian forces supporting the Assad regime could trigger a far wider war, possibly on a world scale – extending to Ukraine, the Baltics, Norway and Korea. Yet that prospect may not deter the Zionist madmen, and imperialist hotheads in Washington (whether the America Firsters around Trump or the “multilateralists” around the Democrats and the Pentagon). They all share a dangerously deranged belief in their own unlimited power and “right” to world domination. Those warmongers include the Democratic standard-bearer in the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton, who last year called for bombing Syrian airfields, exactly the program being pushed for by hardliners in the Trump regime today.

The U.S. is playing a dangerous game in Syria and the Middle East that could threaten the future of humanity. The only way to put a stop to this is by fighting to smash imperialism through international socialist revolution. That is why the crucial response to Trump’s latest deadly Syria adventure is to break with Democrats, Republicans and all capitalist parties, and to build revolutionary workers parties, fighting on the program of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks, in the U.S. and around the world. ■

Transport Workers Call for Labor Action to Stop Deportations

Los Angeles: Salvadorans Mobilize Against Cancellation of TPS

“We’re Here and We’re Not Leaving”

LOS ANGELES, January 31 – In yet another act of sadistic cruelty, on January 8 the Trump administration suddenly put an end to the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) program for immigrants and refugees from El Salvador. (Last November, the feds canceled TPS for Haitians.¹) Some 260,000 Salvadorans who have lived and worked in the U.S. for an average of 21 years, including parents of over 190,000 U.S.-born children, face the prospect of deportation. The action had been dreaded ever since the immigrant-bashing president took office. Still, its announcement was like a thunderbolt, sending shockwaves of anxiety and fury coast to coast. Being sent to the impoverished, violence-torn Central American country would mean being forced into a life of grinding poverty and misery for the vast majority of the working-class immigrants, and would be a death sentence for many.

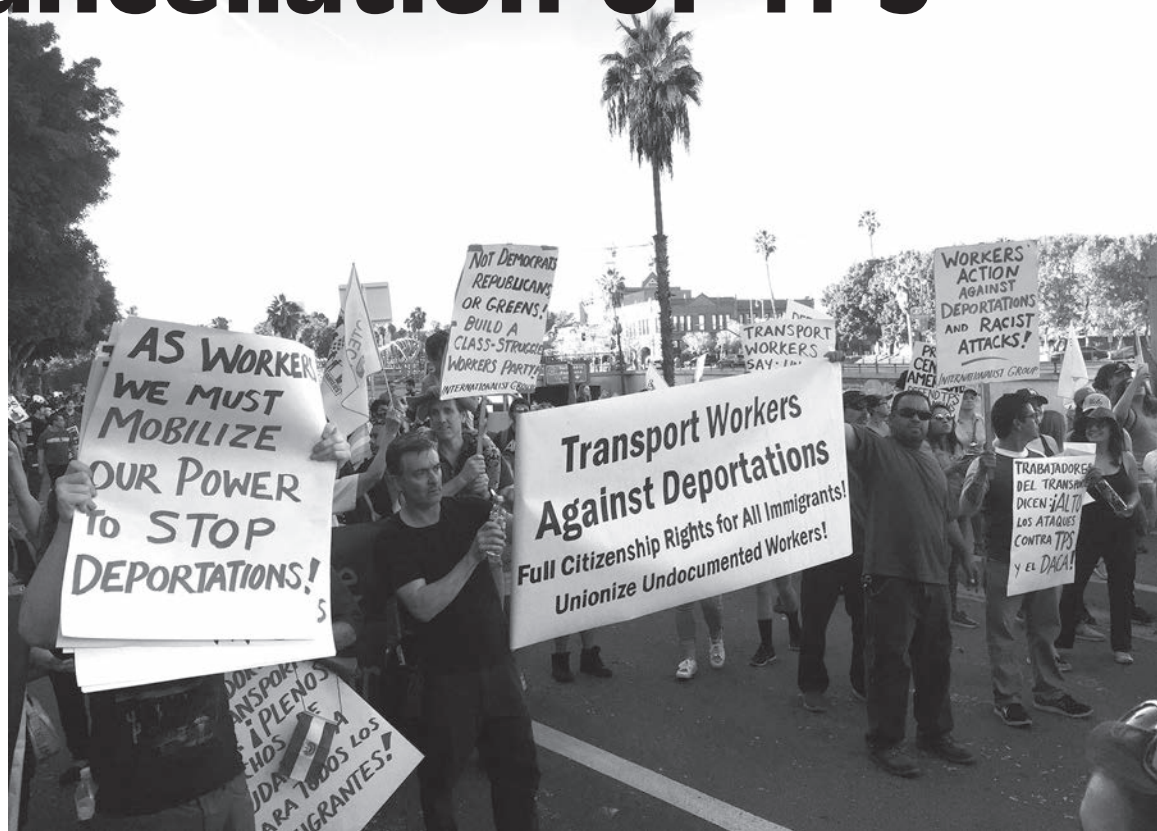
Then when members of Congress suggested that an immigration accord include protections for people from El Salvador, Haiti and African countries, Trump let loose a barrage of vile racist invective against “all these people from shithole countries” (*Washington Post*, 12 January). While Democrats and liberal media criticized the “polarizing” rhetoric from the White House, the fact is that liberal Democrat Barack Obama greased the skids for racist Republican Donald Trump by deporting millions, far more than any previous president, and beefing up the I.C.E. immigration police. And the Dems are still angling for a “deal” to save the almost 800,000 undocumented immigrant youth under the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program in exchange for increased “enforcement” (i.e., repression against immigrants).

In the Los Angeles area, home to an estimated one million undocumented immigrants and more than a quarter million Salvadorans, outrage over the announced termination of TPS sparked an emergency protest on Saturday, January 13. The march,

called by the National TPS Alliance and the Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), started with a rally of hundreds at La Placita Olvera, across from Union Station, who then marched 1,000-strong to the I.C.E. jail at the federal Metropolitan Detention Center. Marchers chanted, “I.C.E. out of L.A.!” and “*Aquí estamos, y no nos vamos, y si nos echan, nos regresamos*” (We’re here, and we’re not leaving, and if they throw us out, we’re coming back). Immigrants rights groups and a couple of unions had a visible presence.

An article on the L.A. Taco (15 January) website noted a woman holding a sign saying “The U.S. Funded the Civil War in El Salvador.” Denouncing the racist U.S. president, the executive director of CARECEN, Marta Arevalo, said in her speech, “We’re going to march, we’re going to fight, we’re going to get arrested, and we’re going to vote.” The article noted: “Many of the speakers emphasized the importance of generating voter turnout for Democrats in the midterm elections and supporting pro-immigrant legislation in Sacramento and Washington, DC. But not everyone in the crowd agreed with supporting Democrats. A group of activists in the crowd briefly attempted to drown out the remarks of Congressman Jimmy Gomez and L.A. City Councilman Gil Cedillo with a chant that called for a break with the Democratic Party.”

The Internationalist Group marched together with a “Transport Workers Against Deportations” contingent, whose banner called for “Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!” and “Organize Undocu-



Internationalist Group marched together with contingent of Transport Workers Against Deportations on January 13 calling for union action to defend immigrants and stop deportations.

mented Workers!” The contingent carried signs advocating “Workers Action against Deportations and Racist Attacks!” and “Not Democrats, Not Republicans, Build a Workers Party!” Calling to break with the Democrats, they chanted, “Transport workers here to say, immigrants are here to stay!” “Stop deportations, this is the hour, labor/black/immigrant power!” “*Arriba, abajo, la migra p’al carajo*” (Up, down, the migra can go to hell) and “*Ni ilegales, ni criminales, somos obreros internacionales*” (We are neither illegal nor criminal, we are international workers). The chants were picked up by many in the crowd.

The statement put out by the transport workers emphasized the need to mobilize labor to stop I.C.E. In the face of the bipartisan capitalist assault on immigrants, we must bring out our class power to fight back this attack on our Salvadoran sisters and brothers! A few days later, on January 16, around 50 activists came out to a 7-Eleven store in Koreatown in L.A. to resist as reports circulated that *la migra* was coming. It was expected that I.C.E. was going to carry out an audit (and possibly arrests) growing out of the nationwide raid on nearly a hundred 7-Eleven stores the week before. Activists held signs saying “Immigrants Are Welcome Here,” and “Labor and Community Against Raids.” Roofers Local 36 brought their union banner. The mobilization was organized by the Koreatown Rapid Response Network, and as the responders stood at the ready outside the 7-Eleven, word came that I.C.E. would not be coming to the store.

It was a small victory, organizers said, but an indication of the kind of mass mobilization that is needed around the country, and on a far larger scale, to actually stop the deportations. The Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International have insistently called to bring out

the power of the working class to stop deportations and racist attacks. A few dozen resisters may courageously make a stand against the I.C.E. snatch squads. Yet if the I.C.E. Gestapo were repeatedly met by mobilizations of thousands prepared to put a stop to the raids it would be a very different story. Ultimately, it will be necessary to undertake strike action, shutting down vital sections of the economy, including the ports and public transportation.

Deportations Weaken the Working Class

The working class has a vital interest in defending immigrant workers, who have played a key role in class struggles in this country. This is notably the case with Salvadoran immigrants, largely working-class in origin, many of whom participated in militant labor battles before being forced to emigrate to the U.S. in the late 1980s. (The union hall of the UNTS labor federation was bombed in 1989 by supporters of the death squad regime backed by the U.S. in the Salvadoran civil war.) As the statement of Transport Workers Against Deportations noted (see below for full text):

“Salvadoran immigrant workers have infused the U.S. workers movement with desperately needed militancy. In Los Angeles, in particular, courageous Salvadoran workers played a key role in groundbreaking class battles to unionize undocumented immigrant workers, for example in the successful struggle to organize immigrant janitors shown in the movie *Bread and Roses*.”

As David Huerta of the SEIU noted at the January 13 march, many of the participants in that Justice for Janitors campaign are Salvadoran and Honduran TPS holders who are now at risk of deportation. Hugo Soto of UNITE-HERE Local 11 (hotel, airport and restaurant workers) said that



On January 13, outrage over the cancellation of Temporary Protected Status for immigrants from El Salvador and Trump’s racist smears brought hundreds into the streets to protest in Los Angeles.



Koreatown Rapid Response Network mobilized 50 people on short notice to protect workers at a 7-Eleven store from a planned audit (and possible arrest) by the I.C.E. police. They were successful: la migra never showed up.

most of his union members are immigrant women, and 300 are TPS holders.

Not only have Central American immigrant workers in Los Angeles waged sharp struggles to unionize, including resisting the brutal 1990 assault by L.A. police on a sit-down by striking janitors in Century City, they have protested injustices against all the oppressed. In the midst of the 1992 riots and military occupation of Los Angeles after the racist cops who beat Rodney King were let off, janitors of SEIU Local 399 marched demanding justice and protesting the criminalization of undocumented immigrants. More recently, with the massive 2006 marches for immigrants rights in which 500,000 jammed into downtown L.A. and more than a million struck on May Day, immigrant workers brought the international workers day back to the U.S. after pro-capitalist labor misleaders had long ago replaced it with the flag-waving “Labor Day.”

Today there are approximately 35,000 Salvadoran “*tepeseros*” in the Los Angeles area, and some 1,000 Haitian TPS holders in L.A. County alone. A mass deportation would have devastating consequences for them. The potential deportees have lived in this country for decades and have built lives here. Most will have to face the agonizing decision of whether to rip their families apart or subject them to a precarious life of poverty and fear in countries their children have never known. In turn, El Salvador and Haiti will lose desperately needed income sent back from family members working in the United States. This could have a ruinous effect on their already dilapidated economies.

Central American Hell Made in U.S.A.

The country to which Salvadoran TPS-ers are to be deported is a charnel house of poverty, gang violence and bloody repression *as a direct result of U.S. actions*. To say that the conditions in El Salvador are desperate is an understatement. It has the highest murder rate in the world, ten times that of U.S.-devastated Iraq. This is the legacy of imperialist intervention in the region – decades of U.S.- sponsored dirty wars, death squad regimes propped up by Washington and gangs deported from the United States. The two rival street gangs terrorizing poor neighborhoods in the tiny Central American country, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and the 18th Street Gang (Mara 18, or M-18 in Spanish), were both born in Los Angeles.

In his “State of the Union” speech,

Donald Trump highlighted MS-13, as he did in July 2017 during a visit to Long Island, where police say gang members were responsible for 17 murders in 2016. This is part of Trump’s claim that undocumented immigrants are drug traffickers, “rapists” and generally “bad hombres” responsible for bringing violent crime to the U.S. This is the exact opposite of the case. Not only are immigrants (including those lacking the papers demanded by the authorities) less likely to commit crimes (including violent crimes) than the U.S. population in general, the gangs originated in the U.S. and were exported to El Salvador. Trump & Co. then turn around and use gang violence as another excuse for their racist policies.

The gangs were mainly made up of refugees from the U.S.-sponsored dirty war, and initially formed as protection from gangs (such as the Crips and the Bloods in L.A.), including the main gang – the Los Angeles Police Department. The 18th Street Gang originated in the Rampart district, where in the 1990s scores of cops from the LAPD’s notorious anti-gang unit regularly beat up, robbed, planted drugs on, framed, raped, shot and murdered Central American immigrants. Starting in the mid-1990s under Democrat Bill Clinton, the U.S. began deporting gang members back to El Salvador. Dumped in a country most deportees left years before, lacking any skills and unable to find work, many of those who weren’t already gang members were easy prey.

Meanwhile, women deported from the U.S. face a particularly dire future. At least 1,200 women and girls simply vanish in El Salvador each year. If women are able to somehow navigate the gangs, they face hideous repression at every turn. Abortion has been banned in all cases in El Salvador since 1998. The Internationalist Group held a protest outside the Salvadoran consulate in New York in 2013 protesting the ban. We highlighted the case of Beatriz, a 22-year-old pregnant woman (with a one-and-a-half-old son) whose fetus was anencephalic (lacking a brain) and hadn’t the slightest chance of surviving. Nevertheless, the Salvadoran state denied her an abortion and only after international protest was she allowed to terminate the pregnancy which posed a grave danger to her life.²

Moreover, between 1998 and 2013 more than 600 Salvadoran women were jailed for the “crime” of having a miscarriage. Among them was a 19-year-old who was sentenced to 30 years in prison for mis-

² See “Down with El Salvador’s Abortion Ban!” *The Internationalist*, June 2013.

carrying after being raped. And this anti-woman policy is now implemented not by a right-wing government but under the presidency of Salvador Sánchez Cerén, a former leader (Comandante Leonel González) of the leftist FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) guerrillas in the 1980s. Trotskyists called for the victory of the leftist guerrillas in the Salvadoran civil war, while warning that their petty-bourgeois politics aimed at securing a niche under capitalism. Now converted into a bourgeois party, the FMLN panders to the anti-abortion Catholic church just as their rightist rivals do.

“Temporary Protected Status” was set up to allow immigrants to stay in the U.S. when some disaster hit their country of origin. Salvadorans have been eligible for TPS off and on since 1990, when it was granted to those who had fled the decade-long civil war. Their current status was initiated in 2001 following a pair of earthquakes. Notably, it applied only to immigrants already in the U.S. and not to those in El Salvador trying to escape the devastation. (In the same way, after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, TPS was granted to Haitians already in the U.S., while the U.S. invaded the Caribbean country on the pretext of “humanitarian aid” in order to put down potential uprisings.) Moreover, out of the estimated 2.1 million Salvadorans in the United States (one-third of the population of El Salvador), there are many more who have no documents at all.

Washington has often granted TPS to people from its client states, as granting refugee status would be awkward, and sending back immigrants after a natural disaster could lead to their collapse. In any case, TPS is a precarious state, hardly

loved by those who hold it. The U.S. Customs and Immigration Service set a deadline of September 2019 for Salvadorans to leave or to legalize their status. If a 2017 ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court (Ramirez v. Brown) holds, some with close relatives who are citizens or residents, may be able to obtain permanent residency. But this is only a minority, and depends on having a sympathetic immigration judge, a good lawyer, and good luck, which is in short supply under the Trump regime. Most Salvadorans and Haitians (and soon Hondurans) face the prospect of having their lives in the U.S. ripped up.

The Internationalist Group and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (Class Struggle International Workers) call for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants** (as well as asylum for refugees), and for **worker/immigrant mobilizations to stop raids and deportations**. The fact that transport workers have taken the step to mobilize behind these demands is an important development in this area that could be a hotbed of resistance to the attacks by the anti-immigrant Trump government. But to effectively fight those attacks requires a **break with the Democratic Party**, which is also an enemy of immigrants. The legal basis for deporting undocumented immigrants was laid by Bill Clinton’s 1996 “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act.” The racist ravings of Trump are only the crudest expression of the common policy of the capitalist class. The crucial ingredient to an effective fight in defense of immigrants is to build revolutionary workers parties, from Central America to the U.S., that fight for international socialist revolution. ■

TRANSPORT WORKERS AGAINST DEPORTATIONS

- **Mobilize Labor’s Power to Stop Deportations and Racist Attacks!**
- **I.C.E. Hands Off Central Americans, Haitians! Let Them All Stay!**
- **Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!**

We will be marching on Saturday, January 13 to protest attacks on TPS and DACA and to defend all immigrants.

Our Salvadoran brothers and sisters are under attack. The January 8 cancellation of TPS (Temporary Protected Status) would deport some 260,000 immigrants and refugees from El Salvador who have been living in this country for an average of 21 years, including parents of over 190,000 U.S.-born children. This comes after the Trump government’s grotesque shutdown of the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program, putting close to 800,000 young undocumented immigrants at risk of deportation.

The desperate conditions in El Salvador that have led workers and their families to flee were in fact made in the U.S.A. – from U.S. imperialism’s dirty war against left-wing rebels of the FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) in the 1980s to the creation of El Salvador’s murderous gang violence through deporting rival gang members from Los Angeles. Refugees from Honduras (including tens of thousands of

children), Nicaragua (whose TPS status was canceled last year) and Guatemala have also fled U.S.-instigated violence, coups and deadly police.

Salvadoran immigrant workers are not just victims, they have infused the U.S. workers movement with desperately needed militancy from their experience waging hard-fought class battles in El Salvador. In Los Angeles in particular, courageous Salvadoran workers played a key role in groundbreaking class battles to unionize undocumented immigrant workers, for example in the successful struggle to organize immigrant janitors shown in the movie *Bread and Roses*.

It’s not just Trump. Obama threw more than 8 million people out of the U.S. The racist rulers of this country, Democrat and Republican, are ratcheting up their anti-immigrant witch hunt to instill fear and division among the working class in an attempt to prop up their decaying capitalist system of exploitation for profit.

Immigrants and refugees are not enemies – our fight is against the racist rulers in Washington and Wall Street who exploit and oppress us all.

The enormous power of the multi-racial working class must be mobilized including through labor-centered mass action, to stop deportations, to unionize undocumented workers and to fight for full citizenship rights for all immigrants.

As workers and defenders of democratic rights, we say it doesn’t matter how people got here: everyone should have equal rights. LET THEM ALL STAY!

Teacher Revolts...

continued from page 1

the formation of elected school-based strike committees, including members of all education unions as well as non-union workers, to select delegates (recallable at any time) to statewide coordinating bodies.

We print here the on-the-spot-report and analysis of the West Virginia strike. An additional eyewitness report from Oklahoma is available on the Internationalist Group site on the internet, www.internationalist.org.

CHARLESTON/NEW YORK, March 11 – During almost two weeks, the statewide strike by some 30,000 teachers and other school personnel in West Virginia riveted the attention of labor and left activists across the country. For nine school days, every public school (757 in total) in all of the Appalachian Mountain state’s 55 counties was shut down. Thousands of educators flooded the capitol building in Charleston day after day, demanding action from the governor and legislators. Then things really took off when on February 28 strikers refused to go back to work despite the announcement by the governor and union leaders of a deal to raise salaries by 5%, and the 98-1 vote for it by the state House of Delegates.

From the outset in late January, the struggle of the West Virginia education workers – not only teachers but also custodial, cafeteria and bus workers – was driven by unrest in the ranks, who were fed up with seeing their livelihoods ravaged. The leaders of the unions (West Virginian Education Association, American Federation of Teachers/West Virginia and West Virginia School Service Personnel Association) tried to hold the movement in check, and when that failed, to channel it in a “safe” direction with a back-room deal for a 5% raise. But as thousands of union members gathered in the capitol realized their power, and that this business-as-usual policy was leading to a defeat, they rose up against the sellout. Every county voted a resounding, overwhelming “NO!”

The strikers rejected the “agreement” negotiated behind their backs, first of all, because it did nothing to fix the ever-mounting premiums, deductibles and co-pays of the Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA) beyond a temporary freeze announced before the strike; and second, because the state Senate was refusing to approve a the pay hike. This became the lightning rod as Republican Senate president Mitch Carmichael deliberately provoked strikers with talk of only a 4% raise, or using the money for the PEIA, or paying for a raise with cuts to social benefits. But as the strikers stood firm, on March 6 the WV Senate approved and the governor signed the bill for the 5% raise, while some other anti-union bills (notably attacking seniority) were shelved.¹

The settlement was only a partial victory – partial because nothing was done about the PEIA beyond the 17-month freeze of current levels of costs and benefits (to expire in the summer when there are no schools in session to be shut down by a strike) and a task force appointed by the governor to “study” the problem (a non-solution which even the *Charleston Gazette-Mail* ridiculed). “A freeze is not a fix,” as teachers’ signs declared and demonstrators chanted over and over in the capitol. Partial also because the paltry raise – barely \$2,000 (before taxes) – won’t move the state out of the bottom tier of teach-

¹ In the final state budget, the 5% pay raise was extended to all state employees.



Class Struggle Education Workers brought message of solidarity to West Virginia strikers from City University of New York Conference to Defend Immigrants, March 5.

er pay nationally, much less provide a living wage. West Virginia teachers’ pay is reported as averaging \$45,000 a year, making it 48th in the U.S., so low that a huge percentage of educators have to take a second job.²

But despite its limited nature, the result was a victory nonetheless, as an energized, mobilized and united workforce was able to beat down opposition from hard-nosed union-busters, and to overcome the foot-dragging, diversions and outright sabotage by the sellout union bureaucracy. They did it despite the fact that since 2016, West Virginia has a so-called “right-to-work” law intended to cripple unions. Moreover, they did it in the heart of “Trump country,” where Democrat Hillary Clinton got barely a quarter of the West Virginia vote in 2016 (the second lowest state vote in the U.S.) and particularly in the southern counties where only one in seven voted Democratic. But these were also the centers of mine worker militancy, from the mine wars of 1912-22 to the wildcat strikes of the 1960s and ’70s and the Pittston coal strike of 1989-90.

Importantly, this was a strike by women unionists – three-quarters of WV and U.S. teachers are female – who were not going to let themselves be pushed around. Certainly not by a governor who called them “dumb bunnies” (at a February 6 town hall event in Logan County) for daring to strike, and not by some labor fakers whose go-along-to-get-along policies have been an unmitigated disaster. In this country where women still only earn 80% as much as men, and in the state of West Virginia where at the present rate women won’t reach wage parity until around 2099 (!), there were plenty of coal miners’ daughters active in the struggle who are ready to, and know how to, fight for their rights – which they did.

What working people from coast to coast witnessed, and what the West Virginia educators set off, was a stunning explosion of labor struggle in a union movement paralyzed for decades by the class collaboration of the pro-capitalist bureaucracy, forever beholden to the Democratic Party. The WV teachers strike was not, as some bourgeois commentators and fake-leftists have claimed, a revolt against the unions, it was *a rebellion inside*

² The official figures themselves are suspect. There are reports of teachers with, for example, 19 years seniority who only make \$39,000 a year; or with a masters degree and 15 years seniority making \$41,000.

the labor movement against the misleaders whose policies have led to the devastation of the unions. In the course of the struggle, the labor rebels *got a taste of their power*. But, then, so did the capitalist ruling class, from Wall Street to Main Street. So as everyone recognizes, the fight is by no means over.

Across the country, all eyes were on West Virginia. On March 4, an Internationalist team from Class Struggle Education Workers and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth³ drove to Charleston to convey a message of solidarity with West Virginia strikers that had been voted the day before at a City University of New York Conference to Defend Immigrants. At the capitol on March 5, jammed by some 7,000 strikers and supporters, when asked what was going on, an official of the WVEA said he didn’t know, confirming that the union tops were not in control. He said a woman from Mingo County told him, “You can support us but we’re doing it.” More bluntly, other strikers had remarked, “You can either get behind us or we’ll run you over.”

The teachers struck together with school staff and bus drivers, thwarting any attempt at strikebreaking: no buses, no kids. In a state with high poverty rates, where in many schools 100% of students depend on free breakfast and lunch, strikers and other volunteers collected and packed food for their kids throughout the strike. (Senator Carmichael cynically responded, “if you have money to buy food for students, you must not need a raise”!) They communicated through a by-invitation Facebook group, “West Virginia Public Employees United,” that ballooned to 24,000 members. They didn’t flinch when the state attorney general declared the strike “unlawful.” They didn’t buckle when the union tops sold them out for empty promises.

The rank-and-file action was hardly spontaneous. A mid-January protest on Martin Luther King Day reportedly drew a little over a hundred demonstrators to the state capitol. But by the end of the month county-level union assemblies were voting to walk out. A public opinion survey showed 72% thought teacher pay was too low. The strike was also unusual in that it was backed by school superintendents, worried about teachers leaving because of

³ The CSEW is a tendency in New York City education unions politically supported by the Internationalist Group; the RIY is the youth section of the IG.

impossibly low pay and benefits (currently the state is short over 700 teachers). This official acquiescence won’t be repeated in a hard labor battle – which is what it will take to win a solid victory.⁴

The West Virginia strikers went about as far as they could as a loosely organized rebellion. In future battles, forging a leadership with a program for powerful *class* struggle will be key. It’s necessary to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucrats who have run the unions into the ground, but a generic “rank-and-file opposition” will founder on the shoals of the capitalist state. Look at Miners for Democracy in the 1970s: helped into office by the government and courts, the MFD’s Arnold Miller was soon negotiating sellout contracts just like his predecessor Tony Boyle – and facing wildcat strikes in protest. A real struggle for “affordable health care” and raising teacher pay means taking on the energy conglomerates and the state power that serves their interests.

The teachers’ struggle is political and can’t be won without breaking from *all* capitalist parties and politicians, whether Trump or the Democrats. As the strikers were leaving the capitol on March 6, Democratic legislators were telling them to “remember in November.” But it was Democratic then-governor, now senator Joe Manchin who first pushed for slashing the state corporate income tax. And the WVEA, AFT/WV and UMWA all endorsed Governor Jim Justice in the 2016 Democratic primary.⁵ The answer is not some phony labor party like the “Working Families Party,” which is just another ballot line for liberal Democrats.⁶ What’s needed is a *class-struggle workers party* fighting to put an end to the dictatorship of capital.

A Strike That Came From the Ranks

The momentum for the statewide strike kicked off on January 25 with a jammed meeting called by the Logan County WVEA together with the AFT and school service personnel. The next day an overwhelming majority voted for a one-day walkout to protest lack of funding for the PEIA, attacks on seniority and the call by the governor for an insulting 1% pay hike. School employees in Mingo and Wyoming counties also voted for a one-day work stoppage and rally in Charleston. The Mingo WVEA president said that state union leaders “kind of suggested that we hold off on it to see what happens, but our people were so fired up about it they said, ‘No we’re not waiting, we’re going to do this now,’ so we did” (*Charleston Gazette-Mail*, 30 January).

On February 2, hundreds of teachers from the southern counties flooded the state capitol building. A teacher from Logan County commented, “We’re here because we are the coalfields. We’ve been taught since we were little not to put up with this kind of treatment, and we won’t anymore.” In other counties, teachers rallied outside schools in the frigid temperatures before work. On February 11, union representatives from all 55 counties met near Flatwoods, reporting that an overwhelming majority of public school employees had voted for statewide action.

⁴ In the last West Virginia teachers strike, in 1990, Jefferson and Greenbrier counties tried to force teachers back to work, threatening to fire them.

⁵ A longtime Republican, Justice ran for governor as a Democrat, then switched back to the Republicans in 2016 to back Trump.

⁶ See “Working Families Party: Putting Lipstick on a Pig,” *The Internationalist* special issue, November-December 2012.

After a rally at the capitol on February 16, state union leaders announced a two-day walkout the next week. “The entire state of West Virginia will be shut down,” said WVEA president Dale Lee.

Trying to head off the strike, the state legislature passed a bill raising the pay hike to 2% and the governor ordered a freeze on PEIA payments. But the walkout took place on February 22-23 as upwards of 5,000 strikers filled the capitol with a sea of red shirts, many with red bandannas, symbolizing miners’ struggle. In the face of the strikers’ determination, state union leaders had to extend the walkout to Monday, February 26, and then to Tuesday. By then, Governor Justice and legislators were getting desperate, so in behind-the-scenes talks with union leaders they agreed to a 5% raise. After announcing it, the governor abruptly left (supposedly to coach a girls basketball game). But when WVEA president Dale Lee and AFT/WV leader Christine Campbell spoke on the steps of the capitol, the crowd erupted.

According to various accounts, the thousands of educators gathered there responded angrily, chanting “We won’t back down!” “We aren’t going back for that!” and “Back to the table!” People were angry that they hadn’t been consulted, were presented with a done deal and told to go back to school Thursday. Most media announced that the strike was over. But instead the Wednesday “cooling off period” heated up. In the capitol strikers chanted, “We were sold out!” Again, jam-packed meetings and votes were held, county by county. As reports came in, hour by hour, in each case strikers voted to stay out. By late evening of Wednesday, February 28 every county superintendent in the state had announced that there would be no school the next day.

The biggest issue cited by many for rejecting the deal was the lack of a fix for the PEIA health insurance. But on Thursday the Senate voted to table the bill for the 5% raise, and on Friday it didn’t even put it on the agenda. By then there was talk on the Facebook page of occupying the capitol. However, that went nowhere as there was no organization or means to carry it out. The union leaders told anyone who asked that the movement was out of their hands now. When Carmichael announced his 4% “solution” on Saturday (March 3), they saw their chance, and a joint WVEA-AFT/WV-WSSPA statement called for everyone to come to the capitol Monday to demand that the 5% deal be honored. There was no mention of the PEIA.

In the end, the agreement that was approved on March 6 was not very different from the deal that teachers rejected six days earlier. The *Charleston Gazette-Mail* emblazoned on its front page, “TEACHERS WIN.” It’s true that the strikers beat down the hard-line union-busters and made some gains – as we said, a partial victory – due to their determination and unity. But this also reflected the fact that sections of the bourgeois ruling class backed the strike, not only school authorities but particularly pro-Democratic media like the *Gazette-Mail*. The *New York Times* (3 March) waxed lyrical about the heritage of coal miners’ struggles and how “West Virginia Teachers Give a Lesson in Union Power.”

The striking educators saw the power of their collective action, and that is a considerable achievement, especially after so many strikes that have been lost by the deadbeat, play-by-the-rules business union bureaucracy. This is already having an effect beyond the state. Worried about a spillover as the



Kanawha County teacher makes a point: Rosa Parks’ refusal to sit in the back of the bus was illegal, and key to civil rights struggle.

Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers scheduled a strike for March 2, the school board there hurriedly negotiated a contract after stonewalling for months. And teachers in Oklahoma, which is No. 49 in teacher pay, have been directly inspired by the West Virginia teachers revolt, planning a walkout on April 2 to demand a \$10,000 pay increase. As strikers left the WV capitol on March 6, they chanted “West Virginia first, Oklahoma next!”

Lessons of the West Virginia Teachers Strike

During our visit to Charleston, strikers and their supporters emphasized, “We got the world watching us.” “We’re making history,” teachers kept repeating. “I am part of a history lesson,” said a Kanawha County eighth-grade history teacher. In fact, as they congregated, thousands strong, day after day in the rotunda and corridors and outside the capitol building, across the country educators, labor and left activists were watching intently, as were capitalist politicians and the bourgeois media. Many are saying that the historic 2018 West Virginia teachers strike could spark the rebirth of a near-moribund labor movement. But for that to happen, one must ask, what are the key lessons to be drawn from this powerful struggle?

The big business press is worried. “Could Wildcat Teachers’ Strikes Spread to Other States?” asked Bloomberg Politics (6 March). Earlier (2 March) it wrote of the walkout as “one of the country’s biggest unauthorized ‘wildcat’ strikes in decades.... As uncommon as work stoppages have become in the U.S., big wildcat strikes like West Virginia’s are almost unheard of.” The liberal *New York Times* (9 March) headlined about a “crowd-sourced strike” and how “Striking Teachers Defied West Virginia, and Their Own Union, Too.” The *Times* commented: “Wildcat strikes led by rank-and-file workers are rare these days, but they recall the big miners’ strikes that racked West Virginia’s coal country in the early part of the 20th century.”

The same theme – that the strike was in defiance of or against the unions – is echoed by some leftists. “Wildcat Roars in West Virginia: Teachers to Stay Out on Strike,” declared the anarchist website *Its Going Down* (1 March). The World Socialist Web Site (6 March) ran an article on “The West Virginia teachers strike and the rebellion against the trade unions.” The WSW, a/k/a the Socialist Equality Party, claims the unions are “not working-class organizations, but agencies

of the corporations and the state” (“Lessons of the West Virginia teachers strike,” 8 March). With pseudo-leftist verbiage, this dubious outfit led by one David North (who for years was head of a non-union printing company) aids the bosses by fueling reactionary anti-union sentiment.

The WSW/SEP poses as Trotskyist even as it rejects Leon Trotsky’s analysis of the unions as workers organizations led by a privileged pro-capitalist bureaucracy, the “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class,” as American socialist Daniel De Leon put it. These imposters write off the unions as bourgeois institutions in order to justify not defending them against capitalist attack.⁷ Genuine Trotskyists, in contrast, call to defend the unions by ousting the sellout misleaders and forging a class-struggle leadership. As Trotsky wrote:

“The primary slogan for this struggle is: *complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state*. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy.” – Leon Trotsky, “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (1940)

Unsurprisingly, the WSW anti-union propaganda fell flat with the union teachers engaged in a hard-fought, militant strike.

Lesson One: The strike was not a wildcat but a revolt inside the unions for a militant policy.

Whether coming from corporate rightists or fake leftists, what these arguments all have in common is that they equate the unions with the union leadership. The West Virginia teachers strike was not a wildcat – it was in fact authorized by all three education unions, both at the state level and in formal votes at the county level. That continued to be so after the strikers said “no” to the February 27 deal, and the union tops still managed to focus the strike on winning the 5%, which hadn’t been the main demand. What is true is that *the strike came from the ranks* and it *partly escaped from the stifling grasp of the labor bureaucracy* that is terrified of class struggle (which it is incapable of waging), as that would upset its cozy class collaboration.

Militant strikers were instinctively aware of this, particularly as they nixed the deal with the governor. Rather than denouncing unions, they chanted, “We are the union bosses!” (*Jacobin*, 1 March). The

⁷ See “SEP/WSWS: Scab ‘Socialists,’” *The Internationalist*, December 2007

militants then organized the opposition through the unions at the county level, and the state leaders acquiesced. While labor bureaucrats typically seek to maintain tight control over a strike, or any union action, this was made difficult by the fact that WV public sector unions are prohibited from collective bargaining. In the past, the authorities have tried to play the WVEA and AFT/WV off against each other. But here in order to organize a walkout or strike, all the unions had to get together at the county level, along with non-unionized employees. That was the backbone of the strike, but it was largely informal. The next time there should be an *elected mass strike committee based on assemblies of all strikers*.

Wildcat? Anyone who had any experience with a real wildcat strike could see the difference. In the West Virginia coalfield wildcats of the mid-1970s, strikers burned effigies of UMWA leader Arnold Miller. Mark Lance of the CSEW, who covered the great 1977-78 coal strike for *Workers Vanguard*, then the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism, noted that workers shouted down and drove off union reps while burning the contract. Here, however, when union leaders spoke – even national AFT and NEA leaders – they were often well-received. Understanding that this was a rebellion against the union *leadership*, not against the unions, is key to realizing the potential for the West Virginia teachers strike to lead to a revival of class-struggle unionism.

Lesson Two: The West Virginia teachers strike is the answer to Janus.

The strike comes just as the U.S. Supreme Court is considering the case, *Janus v. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 31* which conservatives are pushing in order to break the power of public employee unions, the last bastion of a once-strong U.S. labor movement. If, as is likely, the Court rules against the union, it would eliminate the “agency shop” whereby unions receive fees from non-members who enjoy the benefits of union-negotiated wages, benefits and job protections. The response of the labor bureaucracy to this existential threat has been to intensify calls to vote Democratic. Class-struggle unionists, in contrast, call to *mobilize labor’s power to bust the union-busters*.⁸

The union tops are quite explicit about their role in clamping down on union struggle in order to maintain “labor peace,” at least when talking to the bourgeoisie. An *amicus curiae* (friend of the court) brief submitted by the AFT in the *Janus* case argues that eliminating the agency shop would “impair the collaborative relationship,” and lead to a “more confrontational, less cooperative relationship” between the union and management. During the strike,

⁸ The agency shop is closely tied to the dues check-off, where the employer deducts union dues from employee paychecks and then passes this money onto the union. This arrangement is the ultimate in class collaboration, guaranteeing the union leaders a steady income while giving the boss control over it. Class-conscious unionists do not support the dues check-off, calling instead on the unions to collect their own dues, which also makes for stronger unions. At the same time we call to smash this attempt at union-busting with sharp class struggle. See “UFT Tops Won’t Fight Union-Busting ‘Right-to-Work,’” Endorse Democrat de Blasio,” Class Struggle Education Workers, 12 February 2017; and Class Struggle Workers – Portland, “It Will Take Hard Class Struggle to Defeat ‘Right to Work,’” reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

AFT president Randi Weingarten said that backers of *Janus* should “look at West Virginia for what will happen if they get their way.... In West Virginia, which lacks collective bargaining, ... thousands of teachers mobilized and took on the governor and legislature” (*Washington Post*, 5 March).

For labor fakers like Weingarten, the West Virginia teachers strike is not an example to be followed but a specter to be waved about in order to scare the bourgeoisie into keeping class collaboration safe and sound; class-struggle unionists, in contrast, see the teachers strike as a harbinger of what a combative labor movement could achieve.

Lesson Three: The strike showed it is possible to break through strike bans.

Asked by the media early on whether a strike would be illegal, WVEA president Lee responded, “probably, yes.” He added that, after explaining the legal consequences to educators, “This is an action that they overwhelmingly voted for us to call, and we called it.” Shortly before it began, state attorney general Patrick Morrisey declared that “the impending work stoppage is unlawful,” and that he was “prepared to act.” This was based on a state supreme court decision dating back to the last West Virginia teachers strike in 1990, when a Democratic attorney general asked to court to declare that “any strike or concerted work stoppage by the public teachers of this state is illegal.” The court agreed, ruling that “Public employees have no right to strike.”

Striking teachers were well aware of the court ruling and the attorney general’s threat, but they weren’t intimidated. Teachers in the capitol had signs noting that unions were once illegal. A math teacher from Calhoun county commented to us, “What Rosa Parks did was illegal; what the suffragettes did was illegal.” Under New York’s Taylor Law and in 23 other states, strikes by teachers and other public employees are expressly illegal, subject to jail sentences and/or fines. The labor bureaucracy hides behind this legal prohibition. The NYC United Federation of Teachers has used this excuse on several occasions to rule out of order proposals for union action by a delegate who is a member of Class Struggle Education Workers. The CSEW calls to *shred the Taylor Law with massive strike action*.

West Virginia teachers just showed that this can be done. Since the state was not prepared to jail 30,000 strikers, especially in the face of broad public support for the teachers, the attorney general’s declaration and the supreme court ruling became dead letters.

Lesson 4: The strike underscored the need to break from all capitalist parties and politicians and to build a workers party that fights for all the oppressed.

The West Virginia teachers strike exploded the myth spread by the Democratic Party that white workers who voted for Trump in 2016 were nothing but anti-union racists. In fact, Obama got far more votes in West Virginia than Hillary Clinton, and West Virginians have far more trust in organized labor (43% in a recent opinion poll) than the rest of the country (28%). The fact is that the Democratic Party’s economic policies and economic desperation due to the devastating loss of coal mining jobs pushed workers into the arms of Trump. Clinton became *persona non grata* in WV for her statement that “we’re going to put a lot of coal miners out of business.” As for Trump, 49% no longer believe he is bringing back coal jobs,

as promised in his presidential campaign (*Register-Herald* [Beckley], 21 January).

Now we have Governor Jim Justice elected as a Democrat with union backing promising to raise teachers’ pay, then once in office proposing a 1% raise that amounted to a pay cut, while slashing benefits and upping the cost of health insurance. Justice is the owner or CEO of over 50 mining companies, worth \$1.6 billion according to *Forbes*, making him the richest man in the state. Meanwhile, the leading Republican contender for U.S. senator is Don Blankenship, former chairman and CEO of Massey Energy, who was found guilty of conspiracy to willfully violate mine safety and health standards leading to the death of 29 miners in the 2010 Upper Big Branch mine disaster. For this he got a slap-on-the-wrist one-year sentence in a country club prison.

Both Democrats and Republicans represent big business, no matter what they may say on the campaign trail. During the strike, Democratic state senator Richard Ojeda was lionized by the liberal media and many teachers for supporting a pay increase. Yet Ojeda, who supported Bernie Sanders in the 2016 primaries and is now running for U.S. Congress, was elected proclaiming his support for Trump. He boasts of his military record of participating in the brutal U.S. occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and while now claiming to support DACA and a “path to citizenship,” he hailed Trump’s call to “take benefits away from people who come here illegally.” This typical double-talking capitalist politician is no friend of labor or the oppressed. Class-struggle unionists call to *defeat U.S. imperialism’s wars, for full citizenship rights for all immigrants and for workers action to stop deportations*.

In many ways, the West Virginia teachers revolt recalls the 2011 outpouring of labor protest in Wisconsin against the union-busting bill of Republican governor Scott Smith. That, too, was sparked by teachers. It was even bigger – 30,000 workers ringed and occupied the state capitol daily, over 100,000 rallied on weekends – and it lasted longer, almost a month. It brought the state to the brink of a general strike.⁹ This scared the hell out of even the “progressive” labor leaders, who capitulated as the union tops called off the marches. Instead they told protesters to look to the courts and a recall election – i.e., to vote for Democrats. The recall fizzled, the courts did nothing, the anti-labor law passed, state workers lost the right to collective bargaining, teachers’ wages fell, education unions lost over half their members, and teachers fled the state (12% of high school teachers left in the last year alone). Those are the wages of betrayal.

The union misleaders’ chaining of the workers movement to the partner parties of U.S. capitalism and imperialism is central to their sabotage of workers’ class interests. Democrats governed West Virginia on behalf of the coal bosses for generations, from the 1930s until 2014, presiding over endless mine disasters and closures, and slashing taxes on the energy giants.¹⁰ The Democratic nomination of billionaire mine

⁹ See “Wisconsin Unions Vote to Prepare a General Strike – The Time to Act Is Now” (22 February 2011) and “Wisconsin: For a General Strike Now!” (13 March 2011), and other articles in *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011.

¹⁰ See “Capitalism Killed West Virginia Miners,” *The Internationalist* No. 23, March-April 2006 on the Sago mine disaster.



Yuri Keegstra

Labor bureaucracy’s betrayal of Wisconsin workers’ struggle on eve of a possible general strike led to devastation of the unions.

boss Justice is nothing new: West Virginia Democrats elected Jay Rockefeller, first as governor and then as senator, from 1977 to 2015. Class-conscious labor militants in West Virginia should instead follow the example of the Portland, Oregon Painters Local 10 that in 2016 declared:

“Whereas, Democrats and Republicans are and have always been strike-breaking, war-making parties of the bosses, and

“Whereas, so long as the labor movement supports one or another party of the bosses, we will be playing a losing game, therefore be it

“Resolved, that IUPAT Local 10 does not support the Democrats, Republicans, or any bosses’ parties or politicians, and ...

“Resolved, that we call on the labor movement to break from the Democratic Party, and build a class-struggle workers party.¹¹

Lesson 5: The WV teachers strike showed the need to dump the sellout bureaucracy and build a class-struggle opposition fighting to replace the dictatorship of capital with workers rule.

The CSEW has written, “like the tango, it takes two to class-collaborate, and the Trump Republicans aren’t interested in that dance.” As for the Democrats, with barely one-third of the seats in the West Virginia legislature, they have nothing to offer. Up against hard-nosed union-busters, WV union officialdom caved. It didn’t want the strike, reluctantly went along with it because of the insistence of the ranks, and tried to end it at every opportunity. But it’s not enough to call to replace one set of leaders with another: the labor bureaucracy is a parasitic layer sitting atop the unions, seeking to cooperate with management, and more broadly with capital and its state. A mobilized membership was able to overcome sabotage at the top this time, but that won’t cut it next time around. To really defend educators, students and public education generally, it’s necessary to forge a leadership with a program to wage the class struggle through to victory.

This requires a hard struggle to raise consciousness about the scope of the struggle, and across the board. We must be clear, first of all, as to *who are our friends and who are our enemies*.

Many strikers saw police as allies and did not object to the linking of teachers’

pay with that of the cops. Yet the West Virginia State Police is a paramilitary force that was established in 1919 to put down miners in the mine wars. In 1921 state police joined with company gun thugs to confront the march of some 15,000 armed miners protesting martial law in Mingo County that set off the Battle of Blair Mountain, leading to the arrest of almost 1,000 mine workers on bogus murder and treason charges. In 2018, police would have been used to arrest teachers in this strike if a government agency ordered it, as the attorney general threatened. The cops are not fellow workers, they are the armed fist of capital. Class-struggle unionists call for *cops out of the unions* and for *workers mobilization against racist police murder*.

Also, strikers chanted “thank you, supers” after county superintendents met with the Senate March 2, asking the legislators to grant the pay increase. Yet superintendents are bosses and next time could seek injunctions to enforce a strike ban. Likewise, there was a lot of support for the strike from the media, such as the *Charleston Gazette*. In other situations, such as the 2005 New York transit strike, the big business press has been positively rabid, denouncing “selfish” strikers and baying for union leaders’ blood. In a fight for a real pay hike – like the \$10,000 increase in teachers’ starting salaries from the present \$33,000 to “at least \$43,000 by fiscal year 2019” that was promised in the 2014 budget – strikers will likely face a viciously anti-union press.

In short, the kind of leadership that’s needed to fight and win a real class battle must have the program and determination to take on the capitalist ruling class down the line. That requires joining with other sectors of the working class that have the power to shut down the state (such as the CWA workers now on strike against Frontier Communications). It means reviving the miners unions in a struggle to expropriate the energy giants rather than just calling to tax them. It means fighting against corporatization and privatization of public education, and for labor action not only to fully fund the PEIA but to demand free, quality health care for all. It means calling, in the words of the Class Struggle Education Workers program,¹² “For a class-struggle workers party to fight for a workers government.” ■

¹² Class Struggle Education Workers Formed (2008).

Agreement for Joint Work Between the Class Struggle Education League and the Internationalist Group

26 January 2018

The Class Struggle Education League, based in the Lowell, Massachusetts/New Hampshire area, and the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, hereby agree to carry out joint work aiming at an early fusion of our forces, on the basis of:

- Statement of the Class Struggle Education League (January 2018);

- The programmatic positions embodied in the documents of the First National Conference of the Internationalist Group, “The Trotskyist Struggle for International Socialist Revolution” (published in *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015) and the First International Conference of the League for the Fourth International, “The Struggle to Reforge a Genuinely Trotsky-

ist Fourth International” (published in *The Internationalist* No. 50, December 2017).

This agreement formalizes the perspective for carrying out joint work first discussed during the visit by IG representatives to meet with the CSEL in late October 2017. Since that time, the CSEL comrades have carried out further intensive reading and discussion of IG/LFI publications; additional study of key differences between the LFI and other ostensibly Trotskyist tendencies, particularly the latter-day Spartacist league/ICL and the Fracción Trotskista; and distributed IG/LFI literature at events and demonstrations.

A CSEL comrade’s recent trip to work with the IG’s New York local included participating in the IG contingent at a rally in Philadelphia for the freedom of Mumia Abu-

Jamal; joining IG and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas comrades in distributing Internationalist literature to workers at a large unionized facility facing a possible strike and participating in our Marxist study group.

Perspectives over the following period includes the following:

- Distributing the IG statement “Let Haitians Stay!” as well as *The Internationalist* and other IG/LFI publications at the January 27 Boston rally protesting the deportation of Morocco-born activist Siham Byah and the detention of immigrant activists Ravi Ragbir, Maru Mora-Villalpando and others.

- Pursuing opportunities for labor-based solidarity with and defense of immigrants in the Lowell/N.H. and Boston areas.

- Gathering further information on Teamster organizing among African im-

migrant car attendants in Boston for use in materials on class-struggle defense of immigrant rights.

- Seeking to further consolidate the Marxist study group in the Lowell/N.H. region established by the CSEL; systematic discussion with youth and trade-union contacts there and in Boston; to further develop perspectives for key work in the Boston area, including a periodic campus sale.

- February 17 joint forum on the Haitian Revolution.

- Joint preparations for May Day with an eye toward our early fusion.

- Working on a more in-depth balance sheet and Marxist analysis of Socialist Alternative and its internal crises that can be used particularly in approaching current and former members of that organization. ■

Statement of the Class Struggle Education League Where We Come From and Where We Are Going

January 2018

The Class Struggle Education League seeks to take our place as revolutionary working-class activists and cadres in the fight to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution. As part of that effort we are presenting this brief statement on the CSEL’s origins, development and perspectives.

The Class Struggle Education League has its roots in the Lowell/New Hampshire branch of Socialist Alternative (SAIt). The establishment of the CSEL grew out of our efforts to deepen, generalize and draw the lessons from struggle against the politics of class collaboration within SAIt and its parent body, the Committee for a Workers International (CWI).

At the time that our two founding members resigned from SAIt in September of 2017, we had eight and five years’ membership, respectively, in the organization. We were part of the inchoate internal opposition to SAIt’s blatant tailing and building of the Bernie Sanders campaign for the presidential candidacy in the Democratic Party of racism, war and exploitation, the oldest and most experienced capitalist party in the world.

This inchoate opposition never coalesced into a faction. Nor did it have any theoretical consistency, as its supporters ranged from defenders of CWI “orthodoxy,” including formal opposition to the Democratic Party, in some branches, to a semi-Maoist orientation in others, to a softness towards petty-bourgeois identity politics in yet others – although it should be noted that such softness partly reflected a reaction to the Labourite adaption towards social chauvinism that SAIt had absorbed from its mother party.

Thus this opposition within SAIt was a far cry from a principled, programmatically cohesive Leninist faction modeled on the tradition of James P. Cannon. However, orbiting around opposition to SAIt’s endorsement of a bourgeois politician and capitulation to the Democratic Party, the opposition’s members saw themselves as

defending the basic Marxist principle of the political independence of the working class. Yet the opposition failed to accomplish this modest task. Even the basic question of proletarian class independence was blurred by the fact that some opposition supporters considered it acceptable to vote for candidates of the bourgeois “third party” Greens.

Nor did the opposition succeed in preventing the SAIt leadership’s suspension of a founding cadre, Margaret C., on the laughable grounds of “creating a negative atmosphere” by refusing to back down from opposing support to the Democrats. This was followed by her expulsion on the pretext that visiting comrades in opposition branches such as Mobile and Lowell/New Hampshire supposedly violated the terms of her suspension. (It should be noted that Margaret continued to uphold the general framework of traditional CWI politics, which we have rejected.)

The bureaucratic measures aimed at suppressing opposition to the class-collaborationist “Bernie turn” caused widespread indignation, compounded by the outright sexism used in attempts to discredit and silence this widely respected comrade with 31 years in the organization. As we said in a motion passed unanimously at a SAIt Lowell/NH branch meeting and forwarded to the Executive Committee on 18 March 2017, the leadership’s measures were “a violation of democratic centralist norms” and the organization’s own established procedures.” In retrospect, we were much too circumspect in our language regarding this anti-democratic grotesquerie. Meanwhile, without a coherent programmatic agreement hammered out in vigorous debate, the opposition was easy pickings for a not terribly competent internal regime. One by one, clots of oppositionists resigned in a combination of demoralization, disappointment and/or indignation at affronts to their personal dignity.

Through the course of this oppositional struggle, and continuing subsequently, we undertook a reexamination of the mean-

ing of Marxism, Leninism and Trotskyism, and we found SAIt and the CWI lacking in all ledgers. From failure to defend the deformed workers states – both in the past (Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union) and in the present (e.g., North Korea and the People’s Republic of China) – to the claim that cops and prison guards are “workers in uniform”; from the slogan of the “Party of the 99%” to backing “Brexit” and SYRIZA in Greece, we came to reject *in toto* the rotten history of social-democratic opportunism that passes for Marxism in the CWI.

During the course of our reexamination, we held discussions with representatives of Left Voice, the U.S. publication of the Fracción Trotskista tendency. Initially attracted to them due to their criticism of not only the Bernie Sanders campaign but also the bourgeois Greens, as well as the motion they supported in UAW 2865 in 2015 calling on the AFL-CIO to end its association with police unions, we were put off by their approach as a “media project” rather than a Leninist party. Study of their materials led to the conclusion that their approach to the Democratic Socialists of America has been just as tailist as the one employed by Socialist Alternative. We also noted the failure of Left Voice articles about the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to forthrightly call for the deformed workers state’s defense against threats from U.S. imperialism, which have escalated under the rabid Donald Trump administration.

Through our investigation of these and other key issues we concluded that the cause of international proletarian socialist revolution is best embodied in the historic Trotskyist program that was upheld for three decades by the Spartacist tendency (now International Communist League), which the ICL has increasingly decisively abandoned in the wake of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR. Studying the literature of the ICL alongside that of the League for the Fourth International and its U.S. section, the Internationalist



CSEL at the gravesite of Antoinette Konikow, revolutionary Marxist and pioneer of the communist movement in the U.S.

Group, we were won to the positions of the IG on all points of contention. Among those that have stood out particularly over the recent period are the genuine Leninist position on the national question; the fight for the independence of Puerto Rico and all colonies; defense of refugees and immigrants; and the struggle to mobilize the power of labor against fascist provocations (notably over anti-fascist mobilizations in San Francisco and Portland).

Our conclusion is that the League for the Fourth International are the true heirs of the program of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and we seek fusion with them to further the cause of world communism.

The Internationalist

This perspective is being concretized is an agreement for joint work between the CSEL and IG/LFI with a perspective for early fusion.

Danny K.
Mike G.

Appendix: Draft CSEL statement of principles first outlined in Fall 2017

[The points below are included here for reference, based on the effort to draw up a "statement of principles" first outlined in late Fall 2017.]

1. Proletarian Political Independence

We unequivocally oppose voting for or supporting any capitalist parties or politicians. In the United States, that means unrelenting opposition to all wings of the Democratic and Republican parties, including the Democrats' "inside/outside" sheepdogging agents such as Bernie Sanders and the Democratic Socialists of America. We similarly oppose voting for or supporting small-time bourgeois or petty-bourgeois parties like the Green Party or any such formations that are yet to exist. What's needed is a revolutionary workers party committed to the overthrow of the world capitalist system, and it is such a Leninist vanguard party that we seek to forge.

2. Reformism versus Revolutionary Politics

The main contradiction in society today, as it was a hundred years ago, is the contradictions between the social nature of production and the private ownership of the means of production. In the age of imperialist decay, this is heightened by the contradiction between increasingly international productive forces and the national boundaries of capitalism. There has been no crisis that capitalism hasn't been able to worm itself out of; no concessions to the working class and oppressed that it hasn't been able to claw back. While we support and defend every legitimate reform that benefits the proletariat and other oppressed layers of society, we, at the same time, understand that short of a socialist revolution that dismantles the capitalist system once and for all, the energies and efforts of the working class will be squandered fighting the same battles over and over again.

3. The Labor Movement

Despite the savage losses the unions have suffered in the last forty years, they are still the basic defense organizations of the working class. They must be defended by class-struggle means. One of the key



CSEL contingent at International Women's Day in Boston highlighted the cases of Jeffrey Pendleton, a New Hampshire labor martyr who was arrested on 8 March 2016 and died in jail five days later; and Nina Droz, a Puerto Rican political prisoner, in jail since May Day 2017 for protesting against austerity imposed by Yankee imperialism.

tasks for communists is to embed ourselves into the unions and struggle against the reactionary, pro-capitalist (usually Democratic Party) trade-union bureaucracy and to replace it with a communist leadership committed to the class struggle.

4. Revolutionary Integrationism and Black Liberation

In the United States, a key task of the communist vanguard is the fight against racist oppression and the struggle for black liberation. World capitalism and American capitalism in particular (both the U.S. and the hemisphere) were founded on genocide against the indigenous population and the enslavement of Africans. Throughout its history, the United States ruling class has excelled at pitting one segment of the working class against other segments of the class. The multiracial working-class unity needed to overthrow capitalism requires the labor movement taking up struggle against racism in all its forms. Only socialist revolution, by dismantling the material basis for racial oppression, can lay the foundation for the eradication of racial, nativist and other forms of bigotry and oppression. We stand on the program of revolutionary integrationism as first developed in the 1950s by Richard S. Fraser inside the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. In contradistinction to both the liberal integrationism of the mainstream Civil Rights

Movement and black nationalism (which so often covers for self-proclaimed Marxists tailing after black Democrats), revolutionary integrationism explains the strategic role of the fight for black freedom as key to proletarian revolution, and that only workers revolution can fulfill the promise of black freedom.

5. Women's Oppression and the Tribune of the Oppressed

We stand on the historical Marxist understanding of the oppression of women and the program developed by Marxists from Bebel, Zetkin and others in Germany to the Russian Bolsheviks on how to fight it. The source of women's subjugation is the economic and social unit of the family and women's subservient role inside it. We stand for the replacement of the family with socialized services – such as free laundries and cafeterias – as well as for free high-quality health care, birth control and access to abortion. From the March on Versailles to the February Revolution, from the immigrant picketers of the 1912 Bread and Roses Strike to Ahd Tamimi today, working women have time and time again demonstrated their ability to rank among the most ferocious defenders of their class. Bringing this to bear on the basis of a revolutionary program is key to socialist revolution and a crucial task of the revolutionary party. Furthermore, we stand on the Leninist

conception of the vanguard party as the tribune of the oppressed. We fight to mobilize the power of the multiracial working class in defense of women, youth, gays and lesbians, gender-nonconforming people, immigrants, indigenous people, religious minorities and all those targeted by chauvinism, bigotry and capitalist persecution.

6. Imperialism and the Deformed Workers States

We stand against imperialism and colonial oppression. We understand that imperialism is not a policy, but the "highest stage of capitalism" and inextricable from the decaying capitalist system. We stand against all imperialist wars, occupations and "humanitarian interventions," whether under the aegis of the United States or other imperialist powers, NATO, the United Nations, et al. In the belly of the imperialist beast, a precondition of forging a revolutionary workers party is unflinching opposition to all militarist adventures and CIA plots in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. We further call for independence for all colonies. In the United States, this includes championing independence for Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam. We further stand on the Trotskyist understanding that the Soviet Union was a bureaucratically degenerated workers state and that other countries where capitalist rule has been overthrown (e.g., North Korea, China, Cuba, Vietnam) are deformed workers states. We stand for unflinching defense of these deformed workers states from imperialist attack and internal capitalist counterrevolution. We stand for proletarian political revolution in the deformed workers states to oust the anti-revolutionary, nationalist, bureaucratic castes and for the establishment of revolutionary workers democracy. At the time of this writing, a key task for revolutionaries in the United States is forthright defense of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea against imperialism, including its right to arm itself with nuclear weapons.

7. Internationalism

"Nothing human is foreign to me" – Karl Marx. We are internationalists. The cause of socialism and liberation anywhere on the face of the planet is our cause. We understand that the forging of an international revolutionary Trotskyist party is not only the answer to the myriad oppressions and degradations engendered by the world capitalist system, it is also the only path to preserving human life on this planet. We seek to reforge, including through splits and fusions of communist militants, the Fourth International as the party of international proletarian socialist revolution. ■

Boston: Let Siham Byah Come Home! No Deportations!

By Class Struggle Education League

On January 27, hundreds of defenders of immigrant rights from many leftist organizations, labor unions, churches and sanctuary networks rallied in front of the U.S. Immigration Courts in the JFK Federal Building in Boston to protest the deportation of Siham Byah. "Justice 4 Siham! Justice 4 Naseem! End All Deportations Now!" they demanded.

A prominent Occupy Boston activist and single mother from Nahant, Massachusetts, Byah was grabbed by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) police last November 7. Seized at what had been

a routine immigration check, she was torn from her eight-year-old son Naseem, subjected to beatings and brutal conditions in Bristol County Jail where she launched a hunger strike, then shipped without warning to a facility in Virginia. Despite her legal appeal and an official letter from I.C.E. saying that she was not slated for deportation until her case was completed, on December 27 Siham was deported to Morocco.

As an Occupy Boston activist, Byah was well known for organizing demonstrations in solidarity with the "Arab Spring" wave of protests and uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, as well as speaking out in defense of the Pal-

estinians and being a trenchant critic of the Moroccan monarchy. Prior to her kidnapping by I.C.E., in 2012 she had received a summons to return to Morocco to stand trial for treason. Although at this time she is reportedly safe with family, Siham Byah's life is in ever-present danger. The Class Struggle Education League demands *No Deportations! Let Siham Byah Come Home!*

A highlight of the rally was Byah's piped-in phone call to speak to the crowd. Addressing the pathetic clot of pro-Trump, pro-I.C.E. "Resist Marxism" trolls hanging around the edges of the protest, she delivered a colorful excoriation of the "MAGA"

scum before making a powerful appeal on behalf of herself, her son, and the thousands of others living in the shadow of summary kidnapping and deportation.

After an initial round of speeches, the rally marched through downtown Boston to the steps across from the Massachusetts State House next to the Saint-Gaudens monument to the Massachusetts 54th, the first regiment of free blacks (some of whom were escaped slaves or the sons of escaped slaves) called up after the promulgation of the Emancipation Proclamation to fight for the Union in the U.S. Civil War.

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The “Anti-Fascism” of the Bourgeoisie is a Fraud

Macerata, Italy: For Workers Action to Defend Immigrants and Stop Fascists!

The following article is translated from a February 2018 supplement to *L'Internazionalista*, published by the *Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia*, section of the League for the Fourth International.

The point-blank shooting of six African immigrants by the fascist Luca Traini in Macerata on February 3 was attempted mass murder. Driving around town, this former candidate of the Lega Nord shot at anybody that he could find with dark skin. When he was finally arrested with the Italian flag wrapped around him, he screamed, “Viva Italia” and gave a fascist salute. After his capture, the fascist organization Forza Nuova (FN) promised to pay for his legal expenses, while the fascists of Casapound and FN organized demonstrations of solidarity with him. Matteo Salvini of the Lega (formerly Northern League) justified the fascist gunman’s actions and called for expelling half a million immigrants. His coalition partner Silvio Berlusconi¹ then one-upped him by calling for deporting 600,000.

The Democratic Party (PD) mayor of Macerata and Interior Minister Marco Minniti (also PD) at first refused to authorize the February 10 antifascist demonstration in Macerata, effectively criminalizing anti-fascist protesters. In response, the leadership of ANPI, ARCI and the CGIL² cancelled their participation, which led to a revolt (possibly for the first time) in the ANPI ranks, who declared that they would participate despite the ban. In the end, the authorities relented and upwards of 25,000 people marched in the small city in the Marche region to denounce the murderous fascists. There were significant numbers from the bourgeois popular-frontist Potere al Popolo (PaP, Power to the People) and the secular-liberal ARCI. Some 300 metal workers of the FIOM, 100 or so from the syndicalist SI COBAS, many CGIL and other unionists, as well as sizeable groups from smaller unions marching under their union banners showed the potential for working-class mobilization. Politically, though, it was a different story.

Although left and labor groups were present, almost all, like the bourgeois populists, call on the *capitalist state* to act against the fascists. Yet the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie is a breeding ground for the fascist action squads, and their ultimate protector. Whether working directly with the *squadristi* (in the case of



Some 30,000 people joined in the February 10 anti-fascist demonstration in Macerata, Italy. At first the authorities refused to authorize the demo. The capitulation by the leadership of the National Association of Italian Partisans (ANPI) to the ban by the Ministry of the Interior led to a revolt by the membership, which was prepared to march, prohibition or not. The government eventually relented.

P2)³ or exonerating fascist bombers, as in the 1960s, '70s and '80s, the institutions of the capitalist state hold the fascist killers in reserve for future use against a radical left and workers movement. Today, the police and courts are the scourge of the immigrant population, while the bourgeois parties compete with Salvini in anti-immigrant measures and appeals. The guard dogs of capital will not protect immigrant workers. Instead, a revolutionary proletarian vanguard must mobilize the power of the workers movement to defend immigrants.

In the toxic atmosphere of an anti-immigrant election campaign, fascists have attacked immigrants at home and on the streets. The *festa* (festival) of the Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori (PCL) in Genoa was attacked by Casapound on the night of January 12-13. SI Cobas workers have also been the targets of fascist aggression. Immigrant solidarity centers have been broken into and trade-union organizers assaulted. These attacks are continuing and increasing, as the fascist Forza Nuova demonstration in Rome last October showed, mimicking Mussolini’s 1922 March on Rome. But the response of the opportunist left, whether openly reformist or vacillating centrists, has been to propose an “anti-fascist united front” – in reality a popular front with sections of the bourgeoisie – or to explicitly call on the capitalist state to come to their rescue with bans on fascist expressions.

For opponents of racist reaction and defenders of the oppressed, the poor and working people, the issue is starkly posed: how to

³ Historically the *squadristi* or Black Shirts were the paramilitary squads of Benito Mussolini’s National Fascist Party. In 1981, the ties of the “Propaganda Due,” or P2, secret lodge that included top military leaders, the heads of the Italian intelligence agencies and leading right-wing politicians (notably Silvio Berlusconi) to fascist terrorists were revealed, including financing the perpetrators of the August 1980 Bologna train station massacre.

defeat these deadly enemies of the working class and oppressed. Bourgeois populists like Potere al Popolo and reformist leftists who embrace the old PCI ideology of Stalinist leader Palmiro Togliatti – that the Italian state and constitution were born out of the Resistance, and are therefore supposedly anti-fascist – usually tell people to rely on the police and/or bourgeois institutions. But the police and bourgeois institutions notoriously work with and exonerate the fascists, as in the bombing of Piazza Fontana (1969), of the *Italicus Express* (1974), of Piazza della Loggia (1974) in Brescia and the Bologna train station massacre (1980). In each case, fascist perpetrators were acquitted.

This rulers of capitalist Italy have always stood by the rabid fascist bloodhounds. Frightened to death by the Biennio Rosso of 1919-20, particularly the massive factory occupations and the proletarian-led insurrection of September 1920, practically the entire bourgeoisie backed Mussolini’s rise to power to ward off the “red menace,” and subsequently supported his corporate state. Spreading the deadly illusion that you can fight fascism by appealing to bourgeois democracy, Potere al Popolo calls for “the people” to control capitalist institutions; Rifondazione Communist says that “we are anti-fascist and anti-racist just like the Constitution”; and Contropiano issues classless appeals, “Against any form of fascism, and any racism, for democracy, in order to remain human!” The new PCI, meanwhile, wants to “rebuild a new popular sovereignty.” All in the

framework of bourgeois rule.

Groups in Italy that call themselves Trotskyist sing the same tune, putting forward a social-democratic strategy calling on the bourgeois state to ban the fascists. Sinistra Classe Rivoluzione (SCR, Left, Class Revolution, affiliated with the International Marxist Tendency) calls to “Ban all neo-fascist organizations!” The Frazione Internazionalista Rivoluzionaria (FIR, Revolutionary Internationalist Faction, linked internationally to the Fracción Trotskista current) published an article (13 July) titled “Outlaw Casapound,” that calls for “A propaganda action to pose the issue of banning Casapound, the organization that instigates private violence and racial hatred.” Such a “strategy” of looking to the state power of the ruling class for protection is suicidal: you can be sure that any political prohibitions will eventually be used against the left, labor and immigrants.

Contrary to this bourgeois and reformist claptrap, *mass worker/immigrant mobilizations are urgently needed to stop the fascists and drive them off the streets*. This requires a revolutionary class mobilization against capitalist rule. As Leon Trotsky wrote in 1932 of the rise of the German Nazis and their Italian predecessors:

“At the moment that the ‘normal’ police and military resources of the bourgeois dictatorship, together with their parliamentary screens, no longer suffice to hold society in a state of equilibrium – the turn of the fascist regime arrives. Through the fascist agency, capitalism sets in motion the masses of the crazed petty bourgeois and the bands of declassed and demoralized lumpenproletariat – all the countless human beings whom finance capital itself has brought to desperation and frenzy.”

–What Next? *Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* (1932)

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Piacenza, February 10. (Top) Anti-fascist protest of SI COBAS. (Bottom) Brutal police charges against the anti-fascist protesters led to several arrests.

SI Cobas: Il Piacenza

¹ The former prime minister and media magnate whose political vehicle is Forza Italia (or “Go Italy”). Along with the Lega, the third component of the ultra-right coalition is Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy), the descendant of the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement (MSI).
² ANPI = National Association of Italian Partisans. ARCI = Italian Recreational and Cultural Association, left-wing anti-fascist umbrella group. CGIL = Italian General Confederation of Labor, the largest union federation, historically close to the now-defunct Italian Communist Party (PCI).

For Workers Mobilization Against Military-Police Occupation!

RACIST EXECUTION IN RIO

Drive the Military Police and Army Out of the Favelas!

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

MARCH 16 - The murder of Marielle Franco, a city councilwoman in Rio de Janeiro, on Wednesday, March 14, was a state crime. It was a summary execution by professionals: she was gunned down by at least four shots to the head while sitting in the back seat of car with windows. In addition to the councilwoman, the driver of the vehicle, Anderson Pedro Gomes, was also shot and died. The reason for the attack is utterly clear: it was a reprisal for Marielle's denunciation of the racist repression that for many years has been carried out by the multiple police and military forces in Rio, particularly in *favelas* (slums) like the da Maré district where she grew up. Now, as the rapporteur of a commission named by the city council to monitor the intervention of the army in Rio,¹ she became a priority target to be eliminated by the "forces of order".

Around the world, Marielle's execution has been met with protests and demonstrations expressing grief for the loss of this fighter, a comrade fallen on the field of battle. But now is the time not just for rendering homage. This must be the spark to set off a struggle to *massively mobilize the power of the working class to expel the UPPs (Police Pacification Units), the PM (Military Police) and the army from the favelas* of Rio de Janeiro, and to *defeat the army/police occupation* of the city.

The intellectual authors of this double murder passed down the execution order to their modern-day slave catchers (*capitães do mato*) days before that fate-

¹ On February 16, Brazilian president Michel Temer ordered the Brazilian Army to take over policing in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

Workers Revolution Will Avenge Marielle Franco

Internationalist Group (IG)

U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International

Marielle Franco (Rio de Janeiro, 27 July 1979 - 14 March 2018).

ful March 14. The latter, for their part, eagerly awaited the go-ahead order from their masters with their fingers on the trigger. Significantly, the execution took place a few days after March 8, International Women's Day, a date that despite all the propaganda about the "Maria da Penha Law,"² has not prevented Brazil from having a prominent place in the number of women murdered.

Marielle Franco (Rio de Janeiro, 27 July 1979 - 14 March 2018) was 38 years old, oriented her activity to the defense of blacks and the poor and systematically denounced violence against this population. A critic of the intervention in Rio by the federal Security Forces, the black council-

² A 2001 Brazilian law increasing the severity of punishment for domestic violence. It was named after Maria da Penha, a women's rights activist whose husband twice tried to kill her, leaving her a paraplegic. Despite going to the courts and twice obtaining convictions, after 17 years of prosecution and appeals, her husband was jailed for barely a year.

woman (the only one among the 51 members of the city council), had in recent days censured the action of the Military Police in the Acari neighborhood. Marielle was a sociologist, a feminist, Brazilian politician and human rights activist. Receiving the fifth-highest number of votes in the 2016 elections for city council, elected on the PSOL ticket³, she was one of the few fresh faces in Rio's politics.

"It all ends on Wednesday," says the samba by Tom Jobim, the most famous song in the soundtrack of the Brazilian play, *Orfeu da Conceição* and the film *Black Orpheus*.⁴ Yes, the blood of the courageous fighter for social causes was shed on Wednesday, March 14, in the heart of Rio, very close to the Marquês de Sapucaí Sambadrome stadium which in the last Carnival reverberated with sambas that severely criticized the governments of that would-be Bonaparte, interim Brazilian president Michel Temer, the governor of Rio de Janeiro state, Luiz Fernando Pezão, and Rio mayor Marcello Crivela.

The cartoon by the renowned cartoonist Carlos Latuff, published on March 15, reported in a simple and precise manner the chronology of the murder of Marielle. Her communications adviser, who was in the car and was hit by shrapnel, recounted: "The murder occurred when the victim was returning from an event called Young Black Women Moving Structures."

Another great "coincidence" is the fact that the day before the murder, the councilwoman had denounced police violence in Rio on social networks. In one of the posts, Marielle wrote: "You can chalk up the

³ Party of Socialism and Liberty, a social-democratic split-off from the PT (Workers Party) after the latter took the reins of the federal government in 2002.

⁴ The song laments that the glorious activity of the *Carnaval*, the passion of building illusions and constructing dreams, all comes to an end on Wednesday when reality sets in.

homicide of another young man on the Military Police account. Matheus Melo was coming out of a church. How many more are going to have to die for this war to end?" And four days before her death, she wrote, again on social networks:

"What is happening now in Acari⁵ is absurd! And it has been happening forever! The 41st PM battalion is known as the Death Battalion. ENOUGH of smearing the population! ENOUGH of killing our youth!"

And again:

"We need to scream so everyone knows what's going on in Acari right now. The 41st Battalion of the Rio de Janeiro Military Police is terrorizing and raping residents of Acari. This week two young men were killed and thrown into a ditch. These days the police walk the streets threatening the residents. It has always happened and with the [military] intervention it has become even worse."

The Emblematic and Daily Slaughter of the Black Population

From Haiti to the Mothers of Acari, from Cláudia Ferreira who was dragged behind a police *camburão*⁶ to the Maré favela, killing black people has been the policy of the capitalist state in Rio and around the country.

As rapporteur of the City Council commission to investigate the military intervention, Marielle Franco, a black woman from Rio de Janeiro and child of the Maré favela, knew very well that, whether under the military dictatorship or in the "Democratic State of Law," the reality of the state in the daily life of the favela population is always the same. The "secret" of the capitalist dictatorship of the Brazilian bourgeoisie and its enormous enrichment is due to paying one of the lowest minimum wages around the world, enforced by racist repression. This was a product of slavery, as we can see in a section of LQB's founding documents (which criticizes the PCO, which at the time of the rupture did not "want to blacken Causa Operária (Workers Cause)," a clear case of "left" racism).⁷

Marielle fell into a pool of blood into which other black women have also fallen. For example, the newspaper *Extra* (16 March 2016) reported that "exactly two years after the death of Claudia Silva Ferreira, dragged by a PM vehicle for

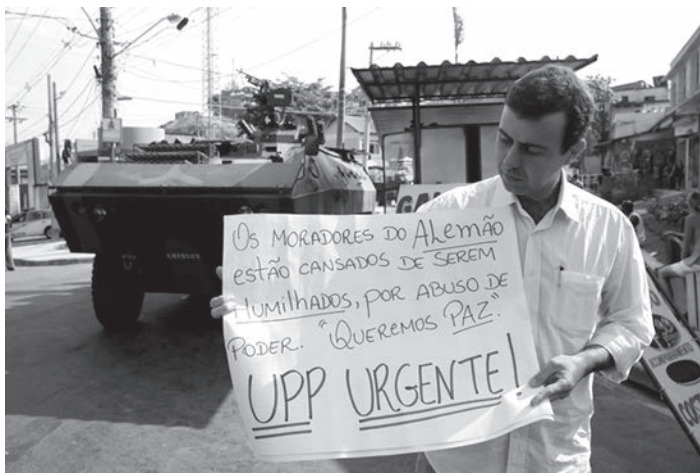
⁵ In July 1990, eleven youths were kidnapped by police, who robbed and then killed them. The mothers of the disappeared youths, known as the Mães de Acari, joined together to demand justice, only to have one of their number assassinated in 1993.

⁶ The ominous black vans of the military police.

⁷ The PCO (Workers Cause Party) is a Brazilian leftist party that was formerly part of the international grouping led by Jorge Altamira and his Argentine Partido Obrero (Workers Party).



Internationalist contingent at protest against the racist execution of Marielle Franco, New York City, March 16.



Parliamentary deputy Marcelo Freixo of the PSOL in the Complexo do Alemão favela during the military occupation calls for military police posts (UPPs).

300 meters on the Intendente Magalhães Highway in the North Zone of Rio, the six policemen accused of the crime were released and were not even put on trial. “

So too, after more than a quarter of a century, those responsible for the Acari massacre were not punished. Take the case of Mrs. Tereza de Souza Costa, 65, the mother of one of the victims:

“It has been 25 years without news of her son, Edson de Souza Costa, who disappeared at the age of 17, after leaving home for a walk with ten friends at a site in Suruí, in Magé, in the Baixada Fluminense [just outside the city of Rio de Janeiro]. Tereza is one of seven women who became known as Mother Courages of Acari. Four of them died without knowing the whereabouts of their children.

“On 26 July 1990, according to investigations of the time, the youths were abducted by men who identified themselves as police officers. Since then, nothing has come to light. Due to lack of evidence, the investigation was closed in 2010 without anyone being indicted for the crime that became known as the Slaughter of Acari, although no body was found. “

—From the article by Daniel Marenco, *O Globo*, 3 July 2016

As you see, in Brazil, particularly in the “Marvelous City” of Rio de Janeiro, whether under the governments of the right or the left, state policy, like that of the Zionists in Israel, has been to establish a kind of Gaza Strip and kill blacks and poor people as a form of containment and discipline of this social sector. Marielle Franco was “a daughter of the Maré favela”, she experienced and condemned the presence of the Armed Forces in the Maré who were sent by former President Dilma Rousseff under the pretext of “guaranteeing law and order.” In reality, they were only sent as support troops to guarantee the transfer of billions to the capitalists in the spending spree for the 2014 World Cup and the 2015 Olympics. Meanwhile, the militarized popular front government in Rio, led by former governor Sérgio Cabral, while sending Military Police to invade the Maracanã Village – an indigenous temple, sacred to this population – also had the Maré cordoned off by steel plates, thus converting it into a South African “bantustan” from the time of apartheid, only this time, *made in Rio*.

Equally emblematic were the movements of “Where Is Amarildo?” (the mason from the Rocinha favela who was “disappeared” while in the hands of the Military Police during the “Hot Winter” of the convulsive year of 2013; and the move-

ment “Free Rafael Braga.”⁸ These movements of protest grew quite large at that time, as the denunciation of the slaughter of blacks in Rio’s favelas and moros (hills) grew in prominence. At the time, the slogans of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil and the Comitê de Luta Clássica (LQB/CLC) were widely seen, read and discussed:

“Drive Brazilian troops out of the favelas of Rio and Haiti! Build union-based self-defense groups in the neighborhoods! Police of all kinds are not part of the working class, they are the armed fist of the bourgeoisie.”

It should also be noted that Rio’s favelas have been a vast training ground for Brazilian troops that, shortly after taking office in his first term in government, former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva sent to Haiti to lead a neo-colonial occupation replacing U.S. troops.

Army Out of Rio, Military Police Out of the Favelas!

Going down the list of racist police killings that have shaken the world, Marielle’s case, as painful as it has been, is unfortunately like adding an extra stripe on a tiger’s skin. Marielle lived and grew up hemmed in by fences of steel plates, she experienced the presence of the armed forces in the Maré favela, she condemned the UPPs. This sociologist who graduated from Pontifical Catholic University of Rio and held a master’s degree in public administration from the Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF), titled her dissertation “UPP: The Favela Reduced to Three Letters.”

Marielle was indeed right. The UPP “pacifying police posts” were machines for killing black and poor people, with the 41st Battalion, extending from Irajá to Acari, being only one of the offices to set up and prepare these murderous racist machines. However, it should be noted that her party comrade, **Marcelo Freixo, who was the PSOL’s candidate for mayor of Rio, at the time of the occupation of the Complexo do Alemão by the military, supported the UPPs and called to establish more!**

Without denying the particular murderous capacity of the Brazilian repressive organs, it should also be noted that similar slaughters have been carried out around Latin America under the domination of Yankee imperialism: witness the case of the 43 disappeared from Ayotzinapa in Mexico, or the genocidal repression against the indigenous peoples of Guatemala.

In the protests, demonstrators chant: “It’s not over, it has to stop. I want the end of the military police.” The reality is, in spite of all her valor, neither Marielle nor anyone else can advance their emancipatory ideals in a social-democratic party like PSOL, PT, PCdoB or any other similar parties that do

⁸ Rafael is a poor black young man who was arrested in June 2013 at the time of the protests against fare hikes that convulsed Rio, São Paulo and other Brazilian cities. Even though he had nothing to do with the protests, he has been subjected to relentless persecution and prosecution by the police on trumped-up charges ever since.

NYC Protest Against Racist Execution in Rio de Janeiro

Shortly after 9 p.m. Wednesday, March 14, Marielle Franco, a city councilwoman of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil was gunned down in her car by a team of assassins. The day before, she had denounced the police murder of a black man, asking: “How many more will have to die for this war to stop?”

Last month, Brazilian president Michel Temer ordered the army to take over the policing of Rio, supposedly to clamp down on violence in the impoverished *favela* neighborhoods. (Temer assumed office as the result of the impeachment in August 2016 of the elected president, Dilma Rousseff, by the deeply corrupt Brazilian Congress.) This militarization of the police has produced growing opposition. Marielle, the only black woman in the city council, was named to a council committee to conduct oversight of the army takeover. Last week Marielle denounced the 41st Battalion of the Military Police as a death squad killing black youth. Her murder in downtown Rio was the reprisal of these professional executioners.

On Friday, March 16, demonstrations protesting this racist murder were held around the world. In New York City’s Union Square over 200 people came out on less than 24 hours’ notice. The Internationalist Group, Trabajadores Internacionales Clásistas (Class Struggle International Workers) and the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth brought a contingent. Their signs proclaimed, in Portuguese and English, “Workers Revolution Will Avenge Marielle Franco,” charged the army with responsibility for the execution, and called to “Defeat Military/Police Occupation of Rio with Workers Power!” Specifically they demanded, “Military Out of Rio, UPPs

(military police posts) Out of the Favelas.”

An Internationalist spokesman spoke to the crowd emphasizing the need for workers mobilization against the military takeover but also against the attacks on the working class by the government that has legalized slavery and gutted hard-won union gains. He stressed the need for a revolutionary struggle against imperialism, which is behind the war on the poor and working people in Brazil and throughout the continent. The Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for Fourth International, has repeatedly called for union action against the Brazilian army’s mercenary occupation of Haiti on behalf of Washington, where it tries out “counterinsurgency” tactics that the paramilitary police then use in the Rio favelas and poor neighborhoods on the outskirts of São Paulo and other major cities.

In New York and around the world crowds cried out “*Marielle Franco, presente!*” But that is not enough, we must act to put an end to this plague. Police murder more than 1,000 people every year in Rio de Janeiro alone, overwhelmingly black and poor people. In the United States, police kill over 1,100 civilians a year. The racist killer cops are used to carrying out their criminal assassinations with impunity.

The cold-blooded execution of Marielle has set off an uproar. So did the infamous police “disappearance” of 43 teachers college students in Ayotzinapa, Mexico. But it will take nothing less than workers revolution to put an end to the murder of poor and black people by this racist capitalist system, from Brazil to the imperialist heartland of the U.S. That will be the homage that Marielle deserves. ■

no more than adapt to the bourgeois order. While these reformists support the “strikes” of the police, as do the Morenites of the PSTU and the CST (PSOL) led by the former Alderman Baba do, we of the LQB and CLC fight for (and put into practice, in the “Steel City” of Volta Redonda, in 1996): **Police of all types, out of the unions!.**

We repeat: **Army out of Rio, military police out of the favelas! Fight for a workers and peasants government that overthrows the capitalist dictatorship, expropriating the entire bourgeoisie and dissolving its racist repressive bodies as it begins the international socialist revolution that will liberate all the oppressed. ■**

Macerata...

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What is needed to actually stop the fascists, not just show moral indignation, is to bring out a superior power. A power strong enough to go up against the capitalist state, whose police enforcers stand behind (and often with) their fascist auxiliaries. That power is the organized working class, and it requires a revolutionary internationalist program to point the way.

In a small example of the kind of proletarian action that is needed to stop the fascists and racists, on 4 June 2017 the Internationalist Group (U.S. section of

our League for the Fourth International) brought out some 300 unionists and supporters from 14 unions in the Portland, Oregon area in the first significant labor anti-fascist action in the United States in decades. (The popular-front left instead blocked with the Democratic mayor – and the police – to prevent a direct confrontation with the fascists.) In August our comrades participated in the building of an anti-fascist mobilization based on the port workers of the ILWU union in San Francisco, California that forced the fascists to cancel their rally. And now in Los Angeles, the IG joined with transport workers as protesters blocked a van of the immigration police.

These actions show on a small scale what must be done massively. Today the struggle must be to bring out the power of the workers movement, and to begin the effort of building **workers defense guards**, as Trotsky advocated in the 1930s. But lasting victory over the fascists can only be achieved through international socialist revolution. To accomplish that requires the leadership of a revolutionary workers party, part of a reformed Fourth International, built on the program of Lenin and Trotsky, that tells the truth to the masses and calls them to action when the hour strikes. To stop the fascists, **that hour is now**, before it’s too late. ■



A “youth-led movement”? Where did the resources come from to stage nationwide megamarches? From billionaire Bloomberg and the Democratic Party, pushing racist gun control to strengthen the capitalist state.

Gun Control...

continued from page 1

the people to keep and bear arms,” a key part of the Bill of Rights, must be strongly opposed. Luckily, the U.S. population cannot be disarmed by anything short of a military/police dictatorship.

American capitalism has from the beginning been a violent racist system based first on chattel slavery and since the 1861-65 Civil War on what Karl Marx called “wage slavery,” enforced by the armed guardians of the ruling class, the police and army – those “special bodies of armed men” that Friedrich Engels identified as the core of the capitalist state – along with the courts and jails. Every year, police in the United States kill more than 1,100 civilians, compared to three or four a year in Britain and six to eight a year in Germany. The numbers of lives lost in killing sprees by lone gunmen are dwarfed by the numbers of lives routinely taken by the “forces of order” (2018 death toll as of April 1: 321 killed by cops, or 25 a week). And the marauding by U.S. troops, hit squads and “contractors” around the globe, along with the militarization of police “at home,” has spawned a layer of pathological racist murderers, such as the Parkland killer.

The media is full of glowing references to young people leading the “movement.” There have been numerous youthful speakers on the platforms, waging a Twitter and Facebook campaign on the internet, lobbying Congress, etc. But it takes nothing away from the authenticity of their voices to state the obvious fact that this “movement” for gun control is thoroughly orchestrated by the Democratic Party, just as it has done with the “women’s marches,” as an election ploy against the Republicans. There were ubiquitous voter registration tables at the demonstrations, Democratic Party bigwigs speaking, etc. The web page of March for Our Lives, sponsor of the March 24 marches around the country, is clear: its main call is to “be counted in November,” and to “vote for our lives.” Yet both parties are representatives of Wall Street and the Pentagon, of racist repression and imperialist war.

Voting for the Democrats will not save lives of young people. “Deporter-in-chief” Barack Obama and Hillary “Bomb Syria” Clinton are no less warmongers than Donald Trump and George Bush. Rampant police violence and wanton mass murder are byproducts of a decaying capitalist order, and it will take *international socialist revolution* to put an end to this plague on human-

ity. That is the concrete answer to the Parkland massacre. It is not an easy answer, but it is the truth, while talk of ending mass killings by gun control is a lie and a *setup for intensified racist repression*. Gun control? A killer cop yells “gun,” and seven bullets hit Stephon Clark in the back in Sacramento, or Alton Sterling is shot point-blank in the face in Baton Rouge, or Philando Castile is shot in the side in his car in St. Paul – all killed by cops. *That’s gun control.*

A Virulent, Kill-Crazed Racist

The media attention and political debate have been so focused on gun control and the mental state of the killer that there has hardly been any mention that the Parkland massacre was a racist and anti-Semitic crime. Six of the 17 victims were Jewish, along with two Hispanic students and an Asian student. Forty percent of the students at Marjorie Stoneham Douglas HS are Jewish, according to one report, and a similar portion of the city itself (“‘Gut-Wrenching’ School Shooting Strikes Deep In The Heart Of Jewish Florida,” *Forward*, 16 February). Parkland was a secular Jewish enclave. The sheriff of Broward County is Jewish. Meanwhile, Nikolas Cruz was a raving anti-Semite, white supremacist and all-round racist bigot.

The magazines holding the bullets Cruz had with him at the school had a swastika etched on them. A student told a social worker at the school that Cruz had inscribed a swastika on his book bag, along with the words “I hate n----rs.” The leader of the fascist Florida Republic group initially claimed Cruz as a member, then later backtracked. But in any case, Cruz vociferously espoused fascist views. On an Instagram chat group, he “wrote that he hated, ‘jews, ni**ers, immigrants.’ He talked about killing Mexicans, keeping black people in chains and cutting their necks.... Cruz said he hated black people simply because they were black; Cruz hated Jews because he believed they wanted

to destroy the world.” He called for shooting gay people in the back of the head, and labeled women in interracial relationships traitors (CNN, 18 February).

Cruz had been transferred between schools six times for behavioral problems. He had made threats against other students, and was banished from Stoneham Douglas High School in 2017 for disciplinary reasons. In 2016, the sheriff’s department received a tip that Cruz might shoot up the school; in November 2017, another said he might be a “school shooter in the making.” In September 2017 a person using his name posted a comment to a YouTube video saying he was “going to be a professional school shooter.” In January 2018 someone close to Cruz called the FBI and “provided information about Cruz’s gun ownership, desire to kill people, erratic behavior, and disturbing social media posts, as well as the potential of him conducting a school shooting” (FBI report, 16 February). There were plenty of “red flags” that he was a ticking time-bomb.

So the killer was not just someone who walked into a gun shop, bought a weapon and unexpectedly started shooting people at random. The potential danger was well-known: he was driven, a raging homicidal racist of the same ilk as Dylann Storm Roof, the 23-year-old white supremacist who shot nine parishioners to death at the Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, South Carolina in June 2015. Such pathological killers are not going to be stopped by a background check, waiting period or other gun control measure. Nor would the authorities stop him: police at every level received repeated tips about Cruz. Why no action? Trump supporters blame “bungling” by Broward County cops and the FBI. Yet police across the county routinely turn a blind eye to domestic ultra-rightists.

Since before 9/11, the U.S. “war on terror” has targeted Muslims. Although multiple government reports and other studies show that domestic white supremacist, ultra-right and fascist groups and individuals carry out three-quarters of all terror attacks in the U.S. (and cause three-quarters of the hundreds of deaths), far more than do violent Islamists, police and intelligence agencies systematically minimize and pass over the threat of ultra-rightist groups, and sometimes directly cooperate with and overlap with them. This was so even under liberal Democrat Obama. After the Department of Homeland Security issued an April 2009 report linking the growth of “right-wing extremism” to the economic crash and racist reaction against Obama, DHS chief Janet Napolitano disavowed the report and dissolved the team tracking domestic terrorists.

Meanwhile, the way in which U.S. militarism internationally feeds the proliferation of domestic racist and fascist killers

was underscored by the fact that Cruz was a cadet in the huge Army Junior ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) club that included 350 students at Stoneham Douglas High. In fact, he was wearing a maroon JROTC t-shirt with the motto “Whatever It Takes” during his February 14 shooting rampage. “Cruz talked of wanting to join the Army after graduation and become an elite special forces soldier,” another cadet told the Associated Press (16 February). The National Rifle Association had given a grant to the varsity marksmanship team of which Cruz was also a member, but at bottom it was the culture of U.S. imperialist world domination that produced this murderous racist, and many others like him.

The Internationalist Group calls for JROTC programs to be thrown out of the high schools, just as we demand that ROTC be driven out of the universities. Beyond that, a country that glorifies “American Sniper” Christopher Kyle with numerous military medals for gunning down Iraqis fighting against U.S. occupation of their country, along with a blockbuster Clint Eastwood-directed biopic movie, inevitably produces a Nikolas Cruz, and many more like him. What else did you expect? It’s the social pathology of Trump’s America ... and Obama’s and the Clintons’.

Gun Control Campaign: Democrats Push to Increase Police Power

Following Chicago mayor (and former top Obama aide) Rahm Emanuel’s motto to “never let a good crisis go to waste,” the Democratic Party immediately started promoting the protests calling for more gun control in the wake of the Parkland mass shooting. So did the main gun control lobby, Everytown for Gun Safety. This phony grassroots (“astroturf”) outfit is the creation of, and largely funded by, Wall Street multibillionaire Michael Bloomberg. Of course he’s for gun control. Back in 2011 when he was mayor of New York City, Bloomberg bragged that “I have my own army in the NYPD, which is the seventh biggest army in the world,” currently numbering over 40,000 officers and another 15,000 police personnel. His army – *their* army – that enforces the interests of the exploiters against the exploited and oppressed.

The campaign for gun control built up to the March 24 “March for Our Lives” which had a million-plus participants in some 800 events nationwide (an estimated 200,000 in Washington, D.C., 180,000 in New York City, 85,000 in Chicago, 80,000 in Boston, 40,000 in Los Angeles, 30,000 in Atlanta, 20,000 in Parkland, Florida). Earlier, on March 14, there was a national school walkout under the hashtag #Enough that drew an estimated 1 million students from some 3,000 schools. Now another “National Day of Action Against Gun Violence in Schools” is being planned for April 20, on the anniversary of the Columbine High School massacre in Colorado. Playing on understandable fears after a horrendous slaughter, these are in fact *reactionary mobilizations for greater police power which revolutionary Marxists do not support*.

Liberal Democrats and Bloomberg similarly tried to whip up sentiment for gun control after the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Newtown, Connecticut in 2012, calling for a universal background check system and bans on certain kinds of semi-automatic arms and on magazines with more than ten rounds



New York’s Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo and NYC’s Democratic mayor Bill de Blasio in March 24 “March for Our Lives” protest demanding gun control.



Getty Images



Houston police chief Art Acevedo (center) and Houston Democratic mayor Sylvester Turner (right) in “March for Our Lives” protest for gun control.

of ammunition. Today the same demands are being raised. Since it is quite clear that, with Republicans in control of both houses of Congress as well as the White House, there isn't a chance in hell that such legislation would pass, these demonstrations quickly became campaign events pushing to elect Democratic candidates in November (#Votethemout). Students were told that if they were too young to vote, they could still ring doorbells and phone-bank.

In San Francisco, demonstrators on March 24 were addressed by Senator Diane Feinstein. Feinstein was the leading Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee and as such repeatedly received briefings about the CIA's use of waterboarding and other torture techniques and for seven years was silent about (covered up) these war crimes. In NYC, Democratic mayor Bill de Blasio, the boss of the NYPD, and Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo marched (separately) in the front rows. In Boston, liberal Democratic senator Elizabeth Warren spoke before the March 24 march, declaring: “This is what democracy looks like.” And at the March 14 National Student Walkout “socialist” senator and former contender for the Democratic presidential nomination Bernie Sanders showed up to declare that “You, the young people, are leading the nation.”

Such smarmy references to idealistic teenagers leading a movement for change are everywhere. A typical example was a *New York Times* (5 March) piece on “7 Times in History When Students Turned to Activism,” making comparisons to the 1960 Greensboro lunch counter sit-in and the civil rights movement, the 1968 student revolts on campuses around the U.S., the 1976 student revolt in Soweto, South Africa and the 2014 Black Lives Matter protests, among others. But there is a huge difference that goes unmentioned in these comparisons: those were anti-government protests in one form or another, whereas the current movement for gun control aims to *increase control by the murderous, racist capitalist state power of U.S. imperialism* that sows death and destruction the world over.

If there is any doubt about this, you only have to look at the petition circulated by marchforourlives.com which demands a ban on the sale of automatic rifles like the AR-15 used in the Parkland shooting, emphasizing that “these weapons of war ... should be restricted for use by our military and law enforcement only.” However, it is not *our* military and law enforcement but *their* – the capitalist ruling class’ – apparatus of racist repression. If civilians had no access to such arms, cops

and troops would be entirely free to run rough-shod over the population like the Israeli military does on the occupied West Bank and U.S. occupation troops do from Afghanistan to Syria. A ban on assault weapons is a green light to indiscriminate terror by a tyrannical state, such as that of present-day U.S. imperialism.

The reference to “our” military and police is not accidental, nor is it something that was imposed by “adults” or others opportunistically trying to latch onto and divert the movement. One of the student survivors and leaders of the anti-gun protest movement who has been lionized in the media, David Hogg, denounced Trump for criticizing the FBI over the shooting. (His father is a retired FBI agent.) Another of the student leaders, Emma Gonzalez, whose father left Cuba in 1968, also praised the FBI (CNN, 19 February). The fact that this movement is not in any way against the police and capitalist politicians was underscored by the fact that in the “March for Our Lives” demonstration in Houston, Texas the mayor, a Democratic congresswoman and the police chief prominently joined the marchers.

The favorable media coverage and promotion by liberal Democrats of the March for Our Lives is precisely because this was a mobilization of white middle-class suburban students and parents to bolster police power, not a protest by inner-city African American and Latino youth against cop violence. The BLM marches were met by a wall of cops brandishing the assault weapons that gun control activists want to limit to “our law enforcement.” There were attempts by some black students to add demands against cop harassment, but these were at best tolerated by the official sponsors. No demand in the March for Our Lives petition addresses cop attacks on black and brown youth.

So who is actually behind this “youth-led movement”? Where do the resources come from to provide the logistics for the Washington, D.C. March for Our Lives which had 20 Jumbotrons (giant LED screens to show the speakers, costing up to \$5,000 each), and 2,000 portajohns? The overall price tag nationally was reportedly \$5 million. Even with \$3.5 million raised in a crowdfunding campaign, someone has to manage all that money. After the hoopla about “Students Lead Huge Rallies for Gun Control Across the U.S.” (*New York Times*, 25 March), the next day we read “Behind Gun Control Marches, Youthful Energy and Adults With Clout” (*New York Times*, 26 March). It seems – big surprise! – that “many protests simul-

taneously benefited from groups with more financial resources and organizational skills than the teenagers had on their own.”

Among those groups is billionaire “everyman” Bloomberg’s Everytown subsidiary, which provided the logo that suddenly appeared on t-shirts and banners coast-to-coast and from Tokyo to Berlin, plus media and gobs of cash. There were the donations by liberal celebrities: actor George Clooney (and his wife Amal), director Steven Spielberg, producer Jeffrey Katzenberg and talk show multibillionaire Oprah Winfrey (\$500 grand each). Organizational muscle was provided by a host of interlocking foundation-funded NGOs (non-governmental organizations) tied to the Democratic Party. Leading youth speakers were from High School Democrats, marches overseas were organized by Democrats Abroad. Like the Women’s Marches of 2017 and 2018, the gun control “movement” is part of the Democratic Party’s “resistance” to Trump.

As for the March 14 student walkout, this was organized in cooperation with school officials and Democratic mayors. In New York, de Blasio promoted it and his Department of Education said high-school students could cut classes (but were supposed to come back after the march). At the launch of #Enough/National School Walkout, CNN (18 February) reported that “The event is the brainchild of EMPOWER, the Woman’s March youth branch.” EMPOWER is described by www.womensmarch.com as “an initiative of Women’s March Youth” in coalition outfits like Rise To Run (for a Hillary Clinton-style “female political revolution”), Teen Vogue and The Justice League NYC (and its Gathering For Justice subsidiary, which “partnered” with NYC mayor de Blasio in calling off marches against NYPD racist cop murders in December 2014).

Meanwhile, womensmarch.com, which organized the January 21 marches in 2017 (the day after Trump’s inauguration) and 2018, is led by a Board of Directors consisting of Democratic women, although more Bernieite than Hillaryite.

It’s no big surprise or revelation. The starting point of the present gun control campaign, Parkland, is in Broward County, which voted overwhelmingly (67%) for Hillary Clinton in 2016. Broward is Florida’s most Democratic county and the home of the “hanging chad.” The county was targeted by a squad of high-priced, high-power, take-no-prisoners Republican lawyers (including the new National Security Advisor John Bolton) that essentially stole the 2000 U.S. presidential election from Democrat Al Gore by, among other ploys, getting ballots declared invalid where punched holes (chads) were left dangling. Broward Democrats have been smarting ever since, and after the hideous slaughter of their daughters and sons, their fellow classmates and teachers, for many families the watchword “never again” has a particular resonance.

The sentiment is heart-felt, but the program of this movement will increase the power of the state over the population, and will bring more death and suffering, particularly in run-down inner cities where “gun control” means racist police terror. Since classes resumed, Stoneman Douglas is being patrolled by sheriff’s deputies with AR-15 assault rifles. Does that make students feel safer? And which students? An extremely wealthy Florida

suburb like Parkland (median household income \$131,000, 84% white, “known for its zoning laws ... to protect the ‘park-like’ character of the city”) is surely awash with guns, but the gun control police won’t be targeting white upscale suburbs. Or Newtown, Connecticut (median annual household income \$132,000, 95% white). Instead, the cops will be rampaging in places like Brooklyn, New York (median annual family income \$32,000, 66% African American, Latino and Asian).

What that means in the concrete was seen on April 4, when New York City police gunned down a 34-year-old black man, Saheed Vassell, in Crown Heights because they “believed” he had a gun. (It was a metal pipe.) Saheed was widely known on the block, including by beat cops, to be mentally ill. But that didn’t stop the police hit squad (three plainclothes, one in uniform) from the NYPD Strategic Response Group who charged out of their car with guns blazing, pumping ten bullets into him. In response to community outrage over this wanton murder, the NYPD brass said it didn’t matter whether Vassell was bipolar, or that he didn’t have a gun, or that the cops may not have said “drop it,” anyone pointing something at a cop would justify blowing them away. This is the “shoot first, ask questions later” New York model of “gun control.”

Gun Control Kills Blacks

In the wake of the Parkland massacre, the media have whipped up a hysteria over school shootings. Young people carry signs saying “Am I Next?” “Keep Your Kids Safe” and “Protect Children, Not Guns.” The use of kids as “poster children” for political and fundraising campaigns is a longstanding publicity device, from Anita Bryant’s 1980s “Save Our Children” anti-gay rights campaign or Sally Struthers’ TV ads with impoverished African children that raised hundreds of millions of dollars for the Christian Children’s Fund, to the tweets of seven-year-old Bana al Abed (written by her mother) to garner sympathy for Turkey-backed jihadists in East Aleppo, Syria, and the grooming and exploitation of Malala Yousafzai by the BBC and *New York Times* as an anti-Taliban spokesperson in Pakistan.

The same marketing techniques have been used in the current gun control campaign by the likes of Avaaz, the NGO set up by George Soros which claims to be the biggest “activist network” in the world. While sponsoring climate “protests” to back the U.S. Avaaz agitated for the NATO “no fly zone” in Libya and pressured Obama to bomb Syria over the August 2013 chemical weapons frame-up (see “The Great ‘People’s Climate March’ Scam,” *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014). In the lead-up to the recent March for Our Lives, Avaaz choreographed a March 13 happening that went viral and was covered by major media, placing 7,000 pairs of empty shoes on the U.S. Capitol lawn supposedly honoring children killed by guns. March “for kids’ lives,” save the bees and carpet-bomb Syria: that is the program of these cynical manipulators of public opinion.

Along with this there is a deliberate inflation of pseudo-statistics to make it appear that there is a wave of school shootings. Bloomberg’s Everytown gun control lobby claims that as of mid-February there were 17 school shootings in 2018 alone. Yet an analysis of those figures by *Time* magazine (22 February) showed that only four inci-



Who has the guns? St. Louis County Police with assault rifles confront demonstrators protesting cop murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, 13 August 2014.

dents involved a student or teacher injured or killed on school property. The *New York Times* (15 February) published an analysis saying that there had been 239 school shootings since 2014 with 138 deaths. Yet *Time* looked at both the Everytown and Gun Violence Archive statistics and counted 24 killed in addition to the 43 who died at Sandy Hook and Stoneman Douglas. That in itself is a horrendous indictment of putrefying U.S. capitalism, but the statistical exaggeration serves a political purpose.

The normally staid *New York Times* (17 February) published an article, “‘Code Red!’ Mass Shooting Generation Raises Voices for Change.” The purpose is to drum up support for gun control. The reality is certainly distressing for young people growing up in a climate of fear. In the 1950s, grade-schoolers were told to hide under their desks from a Soviet atomic bomb (!). Now, ever since the 1999 Columbine High School massacre, schools across the country regularly practice “active shooter” drills. NYC schools distinguish between a “soft” lockdown in which sweep teams gather kids in designated locations (like hallways) and a “hard” lockdown in which everyone stays in place (out of sight in a locked classroom with lights out). This goes together with the post-9/11 “anti-terrorism” climate with cops in tactical gear with heavy weapons patrolling public places.

The fact is that gun control in the United States has from the beginning had a racist character and purpose. Following Nat Turner’s Rebellion in 1831, influenced by the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 when slaves overthrew their colonial masters, states of the U.S. slave South passed laws that made possession of arms completely illegal for free blacks. An 1834 amendment to the Tennessee Constitution stated that only “free white men of this State have a right to keep and to bear arms.” Along with the Emancipation Proclamation declaring the end of slavery, the arming of 186,000 black soldiers and officers was key to the Union victory in the Civil War. Although that abolished slavery, some Southern states still legally banned freedmen from possessing firearms. Shortly after the Confederate surrender in 1865, Frederick Douglass wrote:

“Now, while the black man can be

denied a vote, while the Legislatures of the South can take from him the right to keep and bear arms ... the work of the Abolitionists is not finished.”

—“In What New Skin Will the Old Snake Come Forth?” *The Liberator*, 26 May 1865

The Civil Rights Acts of 1868 and 1870 and the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution declared that the Second Amendment applied to the states and all persons had equal rights of self-defense. As KKK night-riders sought to terrorize the former slaves, many blacks shot back. But with the end of Radical Reconstruction with the Compromise of 1877, gun control laws were passed to disarm African Americans. As a Florida Supreme Court justice wrote in 1941 about one such law: “The original Act of 1893 was passed when there was a great influx of negro laborers in this State drawn here for the purpose of working in turpentine and lumber camps. The ... Act was passed for the purpose of disarming the negro laborers.... The statute was never intended to be applied to the white population and in practice has never been so applied.”

As lynching spread under Jim Crow segregation, African American journalist Ida B. Wells in her pamphlet *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (1892) documented instances in Kentucky and Florida in which black men took up arms and held off attackers. She concluded: “The lesson this teaches is that a Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home.” In the face of a racist mob attack in Atlanta in 1906, armed black people were able to “fight back successfully when the mobs invaded their neighborhoods” (see box).¹ In the Chicago “race riots” of 1919, 23 black people were killed but blacks used rifles to repel attackers, killing 15. During the 1921 racist attack in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with over 300 dead, the pro-Communist African Blood Brotherhood reported how 50 black former soldiers repelled a white mob attacking a church.²

Armed self-defense was key to defending black neighborhoods in the South dur-

¹ John Dittmer, *Black Georgia in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (University of Illinois Press, 1980).

² The federal government responded by bombing black Tulsa from the air. See “Black Self-Defense Against ‘Ethnic Cleansing’: Racist Hell in Tulsa, 1921,” *The Internationalist* No. 22 September-October 2005.

ing the 1950s and ’60s. Ex-Marine Robert F. Williams, head of the Monroe, North Carolina NAACP, “organized a black armed guard, with a charter from the NRA, that in a 1957 campaign to integrate a public swimming pool held off a KKK motorcade with sandbag fortifications and gunfire.”³ We have reported how in 1958 hundreds of members of the Lumbee tribe of Native Americans in North Carolina showed up armed and smashed a planned Ku Klux Klan rally, sending the Kluxers scurrying.⁴ In 1965 black trade unionists formed the Deacons for Defense and Justice in the paper mill town of Bogalusa, Louisiana to

guard civil rights marches and protect black neighborhoods against the KKK and other racist vigilantes, at a time when civil rights workers were being killed there and next door in Mississippi.⁵

Most notable is the history of gun control in California in relation to the Black Panther Party (BPP) for Self-Defense. The Panthers were founded by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton in 1966, forming armed patrols to monitor the actions of the Oakland, California police and fight against racist cop brutality. At the time, it was legal in California to openly carry a loaded shotgun or rifle. But in response to the BPP’s courageous actions to “police the police,” the California legislature drew up a bill to outlaw the public carrying of loaded firearms. Knowing that they were targeted, on 2 May 1967, two dozen Panthers demonstrated on the capitol steps and entered the State Assembly with their weapons. The “Mulford Act” for gun control was quickly passed and signed into law by Ronald Reagan, with the support of the National Rifle Association.

As we and many others have noted, present-day gun control laws derive from the backlash against Malcolm X, the Black Panthers and other advocates of armed black self-defense.

Gun Control: A Cover for Police Terror

In reality, both gun control advocates and many opponents on the right support racist police terror against African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans. Today, many of those calling for outlawing assault weapons cite the ten-year ban enacted under Democrat Bill Clinton in 1994. They seldom mention that this was part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act which created 60 new federal death penalty crimes, made gang membership a federal crime, included “three strikes” pro-

³ See “No to Gun Control: Racist Ruling-Class Ploy to Disarm the Population – Who Controls the Guns?” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March April 2013.

⁴ See “Imperialist Social Democracy vs. Black Liberation,” in *The Internationalist* No. 50, Winter 2017. This article is part of an *Internationalist* pamphlet on *Democratic Socialism in the Service of U.S. Imperialism* (February 2018).

⁵ See “Bogalusa 1965: Deacons for Defense,” in *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013.

visions for mandatory life sentences and provided billions to build prisons. This led to a huge (50%) increase in the imprisoned population, part of the quadrupling of the numbers of people behind bars since 1980 (from half a million to well over 2 million), giving the U.S. the world’s highest incarceration rate, by far. Under this *mass incarceration*, blacks are nearly *six times* as likely to be jailed as whites.

The Clinton administration also carried out the 1993 Waco, Texas massacre of the Branch Davidian Christian sect. The pretext was a search by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) for “illegal weapons,” even though the local sheriff had inspected and declared legal all of their arms. Portrayed in the media as right-wing “gun nuts,” it was an interracial religious group, including a number of black members from the Caribbean. In an initial attack followed by a 51-day siege and then a fiery assault by the feds, 82 Branch Davidians were killed. To justify sending in an FBI hostage rescue team and the final gas attack, Clinton’s attorney general, Janet Reno, added the charges of child abuse and statutory rape. There never was any evidence of child abuse, and 25 children died in the assault. *Like gun control? Then you must love Waco.* This was “gun control” and “save the children,” Clinton-style.⁶

Moreover, there is no clear-cut evidence that the 1994 assault weapons ban reduced gun violence.⁷ The government’s final report concluded: “we cannot clearly credit the ban with any of the nation’s recent drop in gun violence. And, indeed, there has been no discernible reduction in the lethality and injuriousness of gun violence.” For one thing, such firearms were only used in 2 percent of gun crimes before the ban.⁸ Nor is there evidence that stricter gun control laws lead to less mass killings. After a gunman killed nine people at a community college in Oregon in October 2015, President Obama declared, “We know that states with the most gun laws tend to have the fewest gun deaths.” Fact checkers disputed this, and a few weeks later two attackers killed 14 people in San Bernardino, California, the state with the most restrictive gun laws in the U.S.

The various gun control measures all serve to increase police power, and further endanger the oppressed. How about universal “*background checks*” to exclude “dangerous people who shouldn’t be allowed to buy guns,” as the March for Our Lives petition calls for? Who decides who is dangerous, and by what criteria? Ask yourself, would Black Panther Party members in California under Ronald Reagan’s governorship have been allowed to purchase arms for self-defense? And if the police knew that the Panthers were unarmed, they would have more often gone in with guns blazing. But in the 1969 raid on BPP headquarters in Los Angeles, well-armed Panthers managed to hold off the LAPD kill squad for five hours, “long enough

⁶ See “Waco Holocaust: Clinton and FBI Mass Murderers!” in *Workers Vanguard* No. 574 (23 April 1993). At the time, WV was the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism. For the definitive account of the murderous siege, see Dick Reavis, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation* (Simon and Schuster, 1995).

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice, “An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003.”

⁸ Robert Farley, “Did the 1994 Assault Weapons Ban Work?” FactCheck.org (1 February 2013).



“Gun control” in practice: Democrat Bill Clinton sent FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to besiege commune of Branch Davidian religious group, supposedly looking for illegal weapons and to prevent child abuse. After 51 days, the feds took the compound by storm, bringing in tanks, ramming the buildings with combat engineering vehicles and pouring in tear gas that set off fire. 82 people were killed, including 25 children.

for a crowd to gather and thwarting police plans for a cold-blooded massacre.”⁹

A *universal gun registry*? Think what that would have meant in Mississippi or Louisiana in the mid-1960s. That would have allowed local police (KKK nightriders in their day jobs) looking for “illegal weapons” to barge into the homes of African Americans who kept shotguns for self-defense, and who used them to defend civil rights workers. **Bans on guns in schools, churches or medical facilities?** The Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990 didn’t stop a shooter from attacking the Sandy Hook school in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012. Many black churches, which have often been the targets of fire bombings (more than 800 between 1995 and 1999, after which the government stopped counting),¹⁰ wisely keep some firearms handy for self-protection. So do many abortion providers in states where they are under constant attack.

But what about “weapons of war” like *assault weapons*? Why should civilians have them? It comes down to the nature of the state. Those who want to ban such firearms trust the police and military to have overwhelming firepower. The ruling class wants to enforce a monopoly on armed force for *their state*. But for those who are on the receiving end of the violence of the capitalist state, such a monopoly is a mortal threat. Workers facing attacks on their picket lines by police and strikebreakers, black people threatened with lynching and racist mob attacks, immigrants deprived of democratic rights know that they cannot rely on and may be targeted by the police. The exploited and oppressed are at risk if the exploiters and oppressors have a monopoly on instruments of violence. And that is exactly what the liberal Democrats seek.

On the other side, what about Donald Trump’s call to *arm teachers*? We defend the *right to have firearms*, including for educa-

tors. But in present circumstances, Trump’s call is obviously promoting *racist vigilantism* and further *militarization of education*. What happens when an enraged white teacher pulls a trigger on an “unruly” (but unarmed) black male student? Moreover, many right-wingers pushing for this on talk radio couple it with police firearms training and even calls to deputize teachers. Again, such an increase in police power is a threat to those who are the usual targets of “law enforcement.” And then there is the inevitable problem: as a custodian at a New York City school remarked: “I can just see it now. A teacher calls down to me saying, ‘Hey Joe, can you come open the seventh-floor bathroom? I think maybe I left my Glock in there.’”

The reality is that there is no easy answer to school shootings in this violent, racist society. Mass shootings of innocent people are pathological and/or ideological actions, and restricting one particular kind of potential weapon won’t end them. Why not ban matches, or cigarette lighters? Or gasoline? When box cutters can reportedly be used to bring down the World Trade Center, determined attackers will find another way. Having firearms widely distributed among the population does not mean there will be more killings. But the goal of a completely unarmed populace under capitalism could open the door to bonapartist dictatorship, which is the only way that could be achieved. The underlying pathology, whether psychological or social, is rooted in a system based on systematic exploitation and oppression.

The Internationalist Group has from its inception *opposed gun control* and upheld the right of self-defense, and in particular the *right of black armed self-defense*. As we explained in an extensive 2013 article on the issue:

“In the wake of the horrific Newtown school shooting and a shooting spree at a shopping center in Clackamas, Oregon this past December, President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party have joined with Republicans like New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg and the liberal media in launching a drive to tighten gun control laws. The main opposition comes from the National Rifle Association (NRA) and right-wing Re-

publicans, as well as some conservative Midwestern Democrats. But while there is a division among the capitalist rulers over gun laws, they all agree on intensified police repression across the board – as well as U.S. imperialist war in Afghanistan and murderous drone strikes in half a dozen countries.”

As for mass school killings, we wrote:

“With the intense media focus on the shooting of 20 children and six adult staff at the Sandy Hook elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, people have rightly begun to question what kind of a society could cause such shocking and brutal violence. But the grief and fear are being used by the White House for a dual campaign of limiting civilian access to guns and increasing the number of police inside of schools. This blatant fear-mongering in order to turn the schools into jails is disgusting, and dangerous. Rather than aiding school safety, it leads to unwarranted and often traumatic arrests of children, including handcuffing and jailing seven-year-olds, as well as imprisoning high school youths for minor infractions. We demand *cops out of the schools*.”

–“Who Controls the Guns?” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013

We also noted the striking parallels between the Gun Control Act of 1968 and the 1938 weapons law of Nazi Germany, which restricted gun ownership to “trustworthy” citizens and, in a clause added the day after the Kristallnacht pogrom, barred Jews from owning any weapons.

The issue of the right to “keep and bear arms” is not limited to schools. Bourgeois liberals call for gun control at every opportunity. When a Colorado abortion clinic was murderously attacked in November 2015, Obama called for gun control while we emphasized “the need for defenders of women and all oppressed groups to have adequate means of protecting themselves, exercising their right to *organized armed self-defense*, and for *mass clinic defense to sweep away the anti-abortion thugs*” (“After Colorado Attack: Defend Abortion Clinics!” *The Internationalist* No. 42, January-February 2016). When a gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida was attacked in June 2016, we wrote: “Marxists uphold the right of self-defense – notably for black people, and most definitely for gay and lesbian people in a violently homophobic society” (“Horrific Anti-Gay Massacre in Orlando,” *The Internationalist* No. 45, September-October 2016).

Moreover, the Internationalist Group has insisted, since the day after the election of Donald Trump, that “Class-conscious workers should begin the work now of building workers defense guards, based on the mass organizations of the working class and oppressed,” to counter the threat of violent racist and outright fascist forces. We looked to the example of the Minneapolis Trotskyists who led a Teamsters local union that waged a successful general strike in 1934 and formed a union defense guard that ran the fascist Silver Shirts out of town in 1938. With this perspective, Class Struggle Workers – Portland, a tendency of labor militants fraternally allied with the IG, sparked the first major working-class action against fascists in decades that drew several hundred union members and supporters from at least 14 area unions last June 4 (see “Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation,” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017).

One of the main appeals of “progressive” advocates of gun control is to cite the



Internationalists at July 2014 protest in New York City against the acquittal of the racist vigilante George Zimmerman who murdered Trayvon Martin. Revolutionaries called for the right of black armed self-defense.

large number of African American and Latino youth who fall victim to gun violence in the impoverished ghettos and barrios. At an April 5 protest against the NYPD killing of Saheed Vasell in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, there were evocative signs by Save Our Streets (SOS) saying, “Don’t Shoot. I want to grow up.” SOS is an initiative in Chicago, Baltimore and Crown Heights that has been credited with reducing fatalities through conflict mediation. But just listing the locations shows how little such programs can do in the face of a murderous racist state. Chicago? It didn’t stop Laquan McDonald from being assassinated by 16 bullets from a cop’s gun in 2014. Baltimore? It didn’t save Freddie Gray from being murdered in the back of a police van in 2015. And Crown Heights?

Frequently protesters have singled out particularly trigger-happy police units to demand that they be abolished. That will have no more effect than banning a particular weapon. A couple of years after the notorious 1999 NYPD murder of Amadou Diallo by the Street Crimes Unit on the doorstep of his Bronx home, the SCU was formally abolished. But in doing so New York City police chief Ray Kelly emphasized: “There is not a change in function. It is a change in title because we no longer have anything called Street Crime. We are very much concerned about guns. It doesn’t mean that we don’t want proactive programs to take guns off the street” (*New York Times*, 10 April 2002). So today instead of the Street Crimes Unit we have the Strategic Response Group, the same unit that harasses protest marches.

Peaceful conflict resolution programs or not, with New York City having some of the most restrictive gun control laws in the United States (banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, with universal firearm registry and background checks), the forces of official racist repression keep on killing with impunity. As for the shootings that beset many black and Latino inner-city neighborhoods, this is the result of massive poverty and lack of jobs, as well as lack of adequate mental health facilities and, above all, the U.S. government’s murderous “war on drugs.” The Internationalist Group opposes all laws criminalizing or regulating drugs (as well as alcohol, tobacco or other substances). *Repealing drug laws is the single measure that would do the most to end urban gun violence*. The symptoms of this sick racist society will not go away unless and until the workers and oppressed overturn it. In the meantime, as we wrote in 2013, “The problem in U.S. society today isn’t gun control, it’s who controls the guns.” ■

Class Struggle International Workers

The TLC and the Rulers of New York Are Destroying Taxi Workers

New York Taxi Drivers Rebellion

For a Single Union of New York Taxi Drivers, And a Solid Strike of the Taxi Industry

The following March 2018 article by *Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas/Class Struggle International Workers*, has been widely distributed, in English and Spanish, among taxi drivers in New York City. The TIC is an organization of immigrant workers fraternally allied with the Internationalist Group.

A rebellion is brewing among taxi drivers in New York. They are numerous: well over 100,000-strong, one of the largest sectors of the city's workforce. The overwhelming majority are immigrants, more than 85%. They work long hours and nights, from 10 to 12 hours a day, when they are not pulling a double shift. Almost none have health insurance. They earn a pittance – on average about \$25,000 a year, tips included – and this miserable pay is sharply falling year after year while the number of new drivers is shooting up due to the flood of “ride-sharing” cars from Uber, Lyft and other companies. The taxi drivers are terrorized by inspectors of the vindictive Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) that is dedicated to entrapping them and imposing tickets and outlandish fines of hundreds and thousands of dollars, and removal of their hack license.

The taxi drivers of the Big Apple are tormented, ground down ... but also fed up and enraged, all at the same time. If the public is even minimally aware of their desperate situation, it is only because of the number of taxi drivers' suicides (four in the last four months) directly linked to their ruinous economic conditions. For now, city rulers have been able to set one sector against the other, yellow taxis against black cars against green taxis against Uber and Lyft. The Roman emperors called this tactic *divide et impera* (divide and conquer). But enough is enough, taxi drivers can't take it any more, their backs are to the wall. There's an explosion coming.

The key thing at this critical juncture is not to let ourselves be divided. We must fight for unity among all workers in the industry, along with the powerful public transport union (which represents subway and bus workers) and other unions, on the basis of a class-struggle program. And it is urgent to forge a leadership with the tenacity and programmatic firmness to hold fast and not be hoodwinked. Class Struggle International Workers calls to cohere **a single union of New York taxi drivers**, and to prepare **a solid strike of the taxi industry**. We call for a **minimum guaranteed wage of \$20 or more per hour** for all the men and the growing number of women toiling behind the steering wheel, for **health insurance for all under the municipal system** paid by the owners, and **abolition of the TLC**.

Revolt Against the TLC

On the night of January 25 in the Bronx, a couple of TLC agents were surrounded by

dozens of taxi drivers without medallions (livery cabs) and were stopped from carrying out their usual routine of persecuting and imposing heavy fines on taxi drivers. To shouts of “We are taxi drivers, we are not terrorists!” and “No more TLC!” the drivers demanded a halt to the constant harassment of the TLC. The usual tactics of the TLC against non-medallion taxis is to disguise themselves by posing as passengers. Because only green and yellow taxis have permission to pick up passengers on the street, the driver of a non-medallion taxi is victimized for having picked up the undercover agent of the hated TLC on a street hail.

The next week, on January 31, in the predominantly Dominican neighborhood of Washington Heights, a large protest by the livery drivers demonstrated against these draconian and brazen attacks by the TLC, at the same time as they demanded that the Democratic mayor, Bill de Blasio, intervene. But begging de Blasio, the Democrats or any bourgeois politician is like beseeching the executioner for help in not being hanged. A newspaper from Santo Domingo reported the complaints of the taxi drivers: “In Upper Manhattan if they pick up on the street [the fines] fluctuate between \$500, \$1,000 and \$1,500 dollars. In lower Manhattan the fines are \$2,000, \$4,000 and \$10,000, in addition to suspending the license on the third ticket, drivers say” (*El Nacional*, January 31).

The overwhelming majority of drivers throughout the industry have to pay for their own gasoline, maintenance and repair of their cars; The exorbitant fines and constant harassment by the police make it impossible for taxi drivers to work and leave them in terrible economic conditions. But now the entry of almost 90,000 taxi drivers from companies using smart phone apps such as Uber and Lyft has had a devastating effect on the income of drivers of non-medallion taxis as well as yellow and green taxi drivers to the point that several taxi drivers have recently committed suicide in despair. In December taxi driver Danilo Castillo took his own life, writing a suicide note on the back of a summons of the TLC.

On the morning of Monday, February 5, Douglas Schifter, 61, a veteran taxi driver with almost four decades in the industry and a prolific writer on social networks and for the *Black Car News*, committed suicide with a shotgun at the gate to City Hall. In a note posted on the Internet a few hours earlier, Schifter exclaimed: “This is SLAVERY NOW!” Even working 120 hours a week he was about to lose his house and be left without a car. He pinned the responsibility for the desperate situation of taxi drivers on the harassment of the TLC and the rules imposed by the mayor and the governor. The New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA) reacted swiftly to the



A vigil was held outside City Hall for Douglas Schifter, 6 February 2018.

tragedy by calling a vigil for Doug Schifter for Tuesday, February 6. Mayor de Blasio, on the other hand, cynically dismissed taxi drivers' travails, saying that to have committed suicide, Schifter obviously had a “mental health challenge.”

Bahiravi Desai, the main leader of the NYTWA, noted in her speech at the vigil and then spelled out in an op-ed in the *Daily News* (19 February) that the “race to the bottom” has led other taxi drivers as well to take their lives. She cited in particular the impact of Uber and Lyft. In fact the streets have been flooded with cars in the last three years: in **January 2015** there were about 13,500 yellow taxis, 25,000 black cars and livery vehicles, and 10,000 Uber cars. **Total: 48,500.** In **January 2018** there are the same numbers of yellow and black taxis, but also about 18,000 green taxis, 30,000 Lyft cars and almost 60,000 Uber cars. **Total: 146,500.** In other words, **a 200% increase** in the number of taxis on the road. In the same period, the number of rides in yellow cabs fell from over 400,000 a day to less than 300,000, while Uber and Lyft total more than 500,000 daily. (See Todd W. Schneider at: <http://toddwschneider.com/posts/taxi-uber-lyft-usage-new-york-city/>.)

In recent years, due to the decaying capitalist system, many workers have entered the app-based taxi industry not because it is a profitable trade, but because there are almost no other job opportunities. After Uber, Lyft appeared and then Curb, Via and Gett. They particularly attract young people, who often have a better command of technology (and in many cases of language) than older drivers, among whom many are from South Asia and Latin America. Due to the fact that they spend long hours behind the wheel, many of the older drivers are prone to diseases such as high blood pressure, diabetes, rheumatism, varicose veins and muscle atrophy. There is also a high level of anxiety about the constant harassment by the NYPD and the TLC.

There is a lot of talk of a “gig econo-

my,” of changing from one short-term job to another. But for the older generation it is more difficult to change occupations and start from scratch. Some yellow taxi drivers who ventured to buy their own medallion have been inundated with sky-high debts. A couple of years ago, a medallion cost an average of \$1,200,000, financed by banks; today they are selling for \$200,000, and taxi drivers are left drowning in debt. There is a feeling of hatred among the yellow, green, black and livery taxi drivers who see Uber as the main enemy, and also the drivers of that company. But a large proportion of taxi drivers in these app-based companies earn less than the minimum wage. They, too, are victimized.

Despite the fact that app-based companies have saturated the taxi industry, the responsibility for the super-exploitation in the taxi industry really lies with the TLC, the rulers of New York City and the bourgeois politicians, Democrats and Republicans alike, who year-in and year-out have been harassing and persecuting taxi drivers. Doug Schifter, in his suicide note on his Facebook page, pointed to Bloomberg, de Blasio and Cuomo, and the laws they have pushed. The “zero vision” law was introduced by de Blasio in order to reduce pedestrian deaths and car accidents in the city (which has not been accomplished). But placing cameras throughout the city and reducing speed limits to 25 miles per hour have been mainly used against taxi drivers.

Currently, the rock star councilman for Washington Heights, Democrat Ydanis Rodriguez, who also chairs the transport committee of the Municipal Council, supports the proposal of the employers' coalition MoveNY to charge tolls on the bridges to enter Manhattan over the East River under the pretext of reducing traffic. The only thing that this law would accomplish would be to create massive bottlenecks at the bridge entrances and turn the island of Manhattan into a hell during peak

hours, as *Gothamist* (4 June 2017) noted. The persecution against the taxi drivers by the TLC and the police also has to do with the racist and oppressive policies that the bourgeois parties have implemented against workers and immigrants.

Taxi drivers know it well. Just as Trump put his Muslim ban into effect in January 2017, the NYTWA responded immediately by appealing to its members to refuse to pick up passengers at JFK International Airport. Taxi drivers, themselves immigrants, can have a huge impact if they use their joint power to defend other migrants who are in the crosshairs of the hated *migra* (I.C.E.). A mobilization of taxi drivers along with other sectors of the working class to *stop raids and deportations* would have an electrifying effect on the entire city and country, and would benefit the struggle of taxi drivers to seek unity of all workers. We demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*.

For a Single Union of NYC Taxi Drivers, and a Class-Struggle Leadership

The existing taxi drivers’ organizations only focus on a particular sector of taxi drivers and not on the organizing the industry as a whole. There is the NYTWA which for several years only organized yellow taxis (it is now changing). A newly formed Independent Drivers Guild, or IDG, sponsored by the IAM (Machinists union) District 15, says it is fighting for better conditions for the app-based taxi drivers. However, the IDG is *not* a union and is *not* fighting for a pay increase, it only asks for “a seat at the table” in order to collaborate with Uber. In reality, the purpose of its contract with the company is to prevent the formation of a fighting taxi workers union.

Then, among the black cars, there is the New York State Taxi Drivers Federation led by Fernando Mateo, which is an employers organization of the owners of bases, not a workers union. Mateo has played a nefarious role over the years, for example in 2005 during the combative strike of the Transport Workers Union (TWU Local 100) when he organized scab caravans of taxis to transport passengers during the three days of the strike. In contrast to this brazen strikebreaking, the NYTWA made a gesture of solidarity, urging its members not to pick up additional passengers. But, as we wrote on the eve of the strike, “This is not enough”:

“Organizations of taxi, livery cab and van drivers should declare a strike to shut down all forms of public transport in New York in support of the TWU, and for their own demands. Among those should be repeal of the ‘Real ID’ [for drivers licenses] the immigrant-bashing law which threatens the livelihoods of thousands of taxi drivers in New York.” –“Strike to Shut Down All New York City Transport!” (19 December 2005), reproduced in *The Internationalist* No. 23, April-May 2006

Mayors, governors and other capitalist politicians have caused *chaos on the streets of New York*, clogged with traffic, while causing the *collapse of the deteriorated subway system*. Overcrowded and delayed trains, constant accidents and deaths of workers on the rails – all due to decades of inadequate investment in the basic maintenance of the system. The bosses blame the workers when those on top are responsible for the misery of passengers. Public transport workers can organize an *effective public transportation system* by *abolishing the TLC and MTA*

(Metropolitan Transit Authority) and imposing *workers control*. And while we’re at it, *make it free: rip out the turnstiles!*

For taxi drivers, the only way to stop the onslaught of the police and the TLC and defeat the assault on their livelihoods is by uniting drivers from all branches of the industry – yellow, green, black cars, livery and the app-based taxis – in a *powerful union of ALL NYC taxi drivers*. To land a blow against the Wall Street sharks who are the real owners of companies like Uber and Lyft, as well as the banks that make a fortune off of the industry, we have to fight side by side with the TWU Local 100 subway workers and bus drivers – and with the support of UPS drivers and Teamsters truck drivers – along with the entire union movement in a *solid strike of the taxi industry*.

Instead of hostility toward Uber drivers, who are even more over-exploited by capital, it’s necessary to elaborate a series of demands that can win their support. There should be a call to *abolish debts to the banks* that finance the cars and auto insurance, to *fight for a guaranteed wage* sufficient to make ends meet, for *free medical insurance*, for a sensible control of the number of vehicles so that everyone can earn a decent salary. To lay the basis for this, a *mass assembly of taxi drivers from New York should be organized, covering all branches of the industry* to discuss such a platform of struggle and lay the foundations for a single union.

In that framework there are various alternatives that could be considered: to attract those who own their cars (although the real owners are the banks that issue the loans), a *cooperative linked to the taxi drivers union* could be organized. One could impose *union control of the dispatchers* in the bases, and *union control of hiring of drivers and other workers*. But to do all this, it’s necessary to forge a leadership based on a class-struggle program, not on class collaboration with the bosses.

While the taxi industry has been typified as one of small owners (“cockroach capitalists”), in reality powerful capitalist forces are involved. The infusion of app-based taxis on a large scale came out of a feud between the billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg and the owner of a fleet of almost 1,000 yellow cabs, Gene Friedman, in 2013, when the mayor swore that, after leaving office, “I’m going to destroy your fucking industry.” (The yellow cab owners had blocked the mayor’s “taxi of tomorrow” program.) The next year it came out that the venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz LLC, in which Bloomberg LP is a mayor investor, had invested some \$60 million in Lyft, while the legal advisor for Uber in New York is Bloomberg’s former top aid (*New York Post*, 22 May 2013 and 20 April 2014).

Now, to top it off, Governor Cuomo has imposed a \$2.50 surcharge on yellow cab rides south of 96th Street in Manhattan, which for many drivers will spell ruin.

Based on a technological innovation (use of GPS), tax breaks (exemption from the special tax imposed on black cars) and tolerance from the TLC (which exempts their drivers from having to pass an exam), the avalanche of app-based taxis is an offensive by Wall Street vultures, who have invested billions in Uber, etc., to “open the market” and monopolize it. To that end, they have plenty of official government

Calculations of monthly expenses of a taxi driver who rents a taxi, lives in a rented room with no family to support	
Expense	Monthly total
Rental of taxi	\$1,600
Payment to the base	480
Gasoline	600
EZ Pass	150
Work tools	120
Room rental	550
Food	700
Cell phone and tablet	100
Remainder	500

support. In fact, the recruitment offices of Uber and Lyft are located in the same building as the TLC in Long Island City.

It all resembles the treatment of truckers, pharmacists and taxi drivers in Greece by the European Central Bank, intent on removing any “shackles” that would hobble savage free-market capitalism. In Greece, as well, the result has been a worrisome rise in suicides, *due to the absence of a hard-hitting offensive of class struggle*.

Ultimately, the struggle for a decent life for public transport workers must focus on the real cause of their current nightmare: decaying capitalism. In his last message, Douglas Schifter rightly wrote that “this is SLAVERY NOW,” and not even wage slavery but one in which workers lack all rights. We must fight for the *expropriation of the monopolists of the taxi industry*, both predatory companies such as Uber and Lyft as well as the owners of the bases of black cars and fleets of yellow cabs. And that necessarily points to the struggle to *overthrow the dictatorship of capital*.

It is a political struggle, as are all real class struggles, against all the capitalist parties and politicians, which have only worsened the lives of taxi drivers. A class-struggle leadership would base itself on the struggle for the complete independence of the workers with respect to capitalism and forging a *workers party to fight for a workers government*. That is the route to victory. ■

Siham Byah...
continued from page 11

The CSEL organized carpools from New Hampshire and Lowell, Mass. to stand in solidarity with Byah, Ravi Ragbir, Jean Montrevil, the Justicia Migrante farm workers in Vermont and all others caught in the meshes of the Obama/Trump deportation machine. These modern-day slave-catchers have made it clear that they are absolutely bereft of humanity. Tearing mothers from sons, wives from husbands (for example, Karah de Oliveira, a Beverly, Mass. woman being deported to Brazil), fathers from children (such as Lexius Saint Martin, a Maine resident being held at a detention center in New Hampshire facing deportation to Haiti) – like the slave owners of the 19th century, there is no familial bond that the I.C.E. kidnappers respect.

A CSEL spokesperson addressed the crowd drawing attention to the case of a Haverhill, Massachusetts laborer, husband, father of two, and respected member of the New England Pentecostal Church facing deportation to Saint Lucia in early February. Bearing a sign reading “Hands Off Jacob Leonce! Drive I.C.E. Jails Out of Massachusetts!” the CSEL speaker drew

analogies between Leonce’s case, which has involved criminally incompetent and unscrupulous lawyers fleecing him dry, and a proviso of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act that financially rewarded judges for returning runaways to bondage.

The Fugitive Slave Act turned Boston into a battleground between slave-catchers and abolitionists, with many successful attempts to hide and spirit away escaped bondsmen. This culminated in a May 1854 abolitionist assault on a courthouse to free Anthony Burns, a 19-year-old runaway from Richmond, Virginia. A federal marshal was killed in the affray, and, although the attempt was unsuccessful, such was public opinion at the time that none of the rescuers were ever convicted of a crime, and Burns was later ransomed from slavery by Boston sympathizers, educated at Oberlin College, became a Baptist preacher and expatriated to Canada.

Making clear the similarities between the victims of I.C.E. and fugitive slaves, the CSEL contingent distributed fliers for our Second Annual Black History forum In Honor of Ona Judge this coming February 17. Judge had run away from her “owner,” President George Washington, and fled to Portsmouth, New Hampshire where she was protected by abolitionists and free black longshoremen. The dockers used their position as workers in control of the ports and shipyards to thwart the slave-catchers that Washington sent to bring her back. Judge evaded repeated efforts to recapture her and died a free woman in New Hampshire.

The CSEL contingent also distributed the Internationalist Group’s 19 January statement “Let Haitians Stay! For Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!” to the crowd and displayed signs honoring Toussaint L’Ouverture and the Haitian Revolution, the most successful slave revolt in human history.

At the rally, the CSEL contingent pointed to the power of mass labor/immigrant mobilizations to thwart I.C.E. actions. Calling on the unions to take up the cause of Byah and Leonce,¹ the CSEL speaker pointed to the participation of Roofers Local 36 in Los Angeles in the successful defense of a 7-Eleven store slated for an I.C.E. audit following the recent nationwide raids on the chain, as well as the successful efforts of the Durham Educators Association in North Carolina to prevent the deportation of a student there. In conversations at the rally, we also brought up the example of the Lufthansa pilots in Germany who have stopped over 200 deportations, as well as the September resolution of Teamsters Joint Council 16 in New York to declare itself a “sanctuary union.”

But declarations are not enough: mobilization of the labor movement in defense of immigrant rights and against the deportation machine is key. Many area unions now have vital immigrant concentrations, and these members understand the inextricable link between their persecution as immigrants and their exploitation as workers. For example, the Service Employees International Union has a large number of immigrant members throughout the area – including many Kenyan health care workers around Lowell who have successfully struck over

¹ After the January 27 rally, Jacob Leonce was ordered to leave the country by February 5, and he has decided to take a “voluntary departure.” CSEL is outraged by the impossible “choice” forced on him and his family, destroying their lives in the U.S., and vows to redouble our efforts to mobilize the labor movement to smash the deportation machine.



Imperialist “Murder & Torture Inc.” Targets Baruch: A Threat to Us All CIA Out of CUNY Now!

The following is a leaflet distributed by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth at Baruch College and other CUNY campuses, following the revelation that the Baruch administration signed on to the CIA's Signature Schools Program, which aims to recruit would-be spies from colleges with “diverse” student bodies.

The Central Intelligence Agency – U.S. imperialism's infamous “Murder & Torture Inc.” – has made an agreement with the City University of New York's Baruch College to implant agents and recruiters on campus. This is a huge national issue sharply escalating the drive to militarize the university and subjugate it to the dictates of the government. The CIA's website (cia.gov) states that “as part of CIA's recruitment strategy,” Baruch has been included in the spy agency's Signature Schools Program. This would use CUNY's diverse student body to further the CIA's “mission” here and around the world.

Since mass opposition and revulsion against CIA crimes and infiltration pushed the murderous spy agency off campuses during the Vietnam War, the CIA was forced to hide in the shadows at universities coast to coast – but now it seeks to come back with a vengeance. Baruch (together with the University of Illinois-Chicago and University of New Mexico) is to serve as a “pilot” campus for this new CIA program targeting universities across the country.

Let's be clear: the drive to make CUNY students, faculty and staff cogs in the imperialist war machine is an attack on us all. The CUNY Internationalist Clubs and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth call for **massive protest and exposure to stop the CIA from making our university a base for the torture, terror and mass murder it carries out around the world. CIA OUT OF BARUCH AND OUT OF CUNY, NOW!**

The letters “CIA” are synonymous worldwide with racist, imperialist terror – from the assassination of African independence leader Patrice Lumumba to genocidal counterinsurgency in Vietnam and Central America; the overthrow of elected leaders Arbenz in Guatemala, Mossadegh in Iran, Allende in Chile; “extraordinary

rendition” and “enhanced interrogation” at CIA “black sites,” dungeons and prison camps from Abu Ghraib to Guantánamo under Democrats and Republicans alike. Today under Donald Trump, CIA drone strikes continue to rain death from the sky, after becoming a signature program of Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. In Pakistan alone, these “targeted killings” have killed over 200 children.

How does the CIA describe its pact with the Baruch administration? The spy agency's website quotes CIA Director Mike Pompeo, now slated to become arch-racist Trump's Secretary of State, cynically spouting off about “diversity,” using this to promote the CIA-Baruch deal. What does this mean? It means using CUNY students' different national and ethnic backgrounds to more effectively infiltrate, spy on and destroy those that racist U.S. imperialism puts on its hit list here and around the world.

The CIA site quotes Baruch president Mitchel Wallerstein touting the “exciting career options” that “the CIA-Baruch” program will provide “both in the US and abroad.” What do “careers” in the CIA mean? Just take a look at who Trump has named to take Pompeo's place as head of the agency: career agent Gina Haspel, who, as reported in *New York Times* (13 March), has played a key role in the CIA's “torture program.”

And the Baruch administration? It promises to “coordinate with CIA on all communications related to the program prior to its dissemination to the student body.” So the Baruch tops are volunteering (or are they getting paid?) to serve as a blatant PR agency for the CIA. Their “memorandum of understanding” with the CIA states that the program will use CIA agents as “Campus Ambassadors,” promote “networking activities with student organizations,” “build sustainable relationships with key university staff and personnel,” hold events on “the business of intelligence” and carry out a “campus advertising campaign.” These and other details from the August 2017 CIA-Baruch memorandum were leaked to a group based out of the City University's Graduate Center, CUNY Struggle, which quotes excerpts in a March 15 posting to its website (cunystruggle.org).

of whom are in the United States under the Temporary Protected Status program recently cancelled by the Trump administration. Furthermore, Teamsters Local 25 has over the past five years brought into the union over a thousand workers in the car valet parking industry, many of whom hail from Somalia and Ethiopia.

The connection between the attacks on labor and the attacks on immigrants are crystal clear to these union members, and their experience in union organizing drives and contract battles must be brought to bear in the fight against deportations. Many Mo-

So the Signature Schools Program would embed CIA agents on campus to present a shiny image of this bloodstained Murder Inc., rope students in, make student organizations complicit in its dirty work, and doubtless develop a network of professional snitches and finks. There was widespread outrage when the NYPD's spying on Muslim students and campus clubs was exposed. The CIA openly setting up shop at CUNY should be met with an outpouring of opposition. **All cops, spy agencies and military recruiters, from the CIA, NSA and FBI to the NYPD, I.C.E. and ROTC: out of CUNY!**

The memorandum states that along with workshops and other “activities,” the CIA would carry out “simulations” on the Baruch campus. What will they simulate? Waterboarding? Other torture and interrogation techniques? Setting up a “black site” secret prison? More prosaically, will your classmates be spying on you and reporting? This recalls the “Homeland Security” course the CUNY tops tried to establish at Borough of Manhattan Community College in 2004, which was slated to include “interrogation techniques” and “technology for surveillance.” This sinister program was spiked by a protest campaign initiated by the CUNY Internationalist Clubs (see “Militant Protest Sinks BMCC ‘Homeland Security’ Program,” March 2005, at internationalist.org).

In November 2011, the CUNY tops showed what they really think of students at Baruch and all CUNY when they had campus security and the NYPD carry out a cop riot inside the main entrance to the Baruch campus. The CUNY and city cops violently attacked students who were there to protest tuition hikes outside a Board of Trustees meeting, pushing them up against plate glass windows, beating them and dragging women students across the floor by the hair.

In 2013, the CUNY administration made the provocative political decision to hire war criminal David Petraeus, former CIA chief and ex-commander of the Iraq/Afghanistan wars, to “teach” at CUNY's Macaulay Honors College. Like returning the Reserve Officers Training Corps to CUNY, bringing in “warrior scholars” like Petraeus was urged by the right-wing

American Enterprise Institute. A campaign demanding “David ‘Death Squad’ Petraeus, Out of CUNY Now!” was launched by CUNY Internationalists and included a series of united-front protests. Attempts at intimidation, and the CUNY tops unleashing a brutal NYPD attack on student demonstrators, failed to silence those determined to defend the university against the drive for militarization, as the campaign drew widespread support.

Now those who want to subjugate CUNY to the CIA are at it again, and seek to up the stakes. The leaked memorandum excerpts bring out some important information. However, much is still hidden by the university administration, and needs to be dragged into the light. The CIA-Baruch memorandum boasts that the CIA already has a “track record of onboarding [sic] quality talent from Baruch College.” **We demand that all the files on their recruitment activities at CUNY be opened up and published now.**

Teach-ins, resolutions by faculty and student bodies, rallies and demonstrations – these will be crucial in building widespread opposition to the threat posed by this CIA incursion. The faculty/staff union (Professional Staff Congress) must take a stand and bring out its members. Large-scale student involvement is crucial. Today, with immigration cops threatening ever-increasing deportations, and the menace of ever new wars hanging over us all, thousands of CUNY students have a vital stake in opposing the drive to make CUNY a staging ground for CIA terror.

In line with the Democratic/Republican war party's endless colonial carnage abroad, “The Company” (as the CIA is known) is in the forefront of those seeking to shred the most basic civil liberties here at home. The CUNY administration and Board of Trustees have shown yet again that they are eager partners in the dirty work of trying to turn CUNY into one big “war college.” In defense of our sisters and brothers around the world, and our rights here as well, bring out mass protest demanding **CIA Out of CUNY Now!**

CUNY Internationalist Clubs
Revolutionary Internationalist Youth
18 March 2018

the past few years – and they have seen their members come under attack.

One 32BJ/SEIU member, Francisco Rodriguez, a Salvadoran immigrant and janitor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was detained by I.C.E. for months while his wife went through a complicated pregnancy. We are happy to say that, due to the union and other supporters' efforts, Rodriguez was released on December 21, although he is still under threat of deportation. Boston school bus drivers are organized into United Steel Workers Local 8751 and are over 90% Haitian, hundreds

roccan workers are employed at the various companies doing business at Boston's Logan Airport. Some are affiliated with the International Association of Machinists, but most are unorganized. The labor movement must understand that the fight for union rights and the fight for immigrant and black rights go hand in hand – they will either advance together or fall back separately. **Organize immigrant workers!**

As of this writing, Teamster 25 members are on strike in Chelsea and Everett, Mass. against Carmin Cargo and AMSPEC,

respectively.² The Class Struggle Education League is bringing the cases of Siham Byah and Jacob Leonce, and the fight to declare themselves a sanctuary union, to these striking workers, many of them Latino, locked in a bitter contract battle and they have received our literature with enthusiasm. The unions must come to the understanding that, as Karl Marx said over a century and a half ago, the proletariat has no fatherland. Workers of the world, unite! ■

² Update: Since this writing, the strike at AMSPEC has been successfully won; the strike at Carmin Cargo, however continues.

Free All Catalan Nationalist Prisoners

The following statement is translated from Permanente Revolution No. 2, Summer 2018, the newspaper of the Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the League for the Fourth International.

On 1 October 2017, more than two million people braved the violence of the Spanish state in order to vote in a referendum on independence for Catalonia. Nearly 900 people were injured as thousands of riot police brought in from around Spain even dragged pensioners out of voting lines and beat them bloody.

It recalled the days of the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, and was a clear attempt to intimidate and demoralize the population. Two days later there were work stoppages throughout Catalonia as hundreds of thousands demonstrated against the brutal repression. The League for the Fourth International immediately organized a protest in New York City against the repression and joined in demonstrations in Berlin. While not at the present time calling for independence for Catalonia, the LFI emphatically defends its right of self-determination (see our article, “Defend the Right to Self-Determination and Independence for Catalonia,” in *The Internationalist* No. 49, September-October 2017).

Three weeks later, as the Catalan government, the Generalitat, symbolically proclaimed the “Republic of Catalonia,” only to suspend it seconds later, Spanish prime minister Mariano Roy dissolved the Catalan parliament and its executive council while ordering regional snap elections. (However, the December 21 vote once again produced a Catalan nationalist majority.) On October 30, Spain’s attorney general charged Catalonia’s regional president Carles Puigdemont and 13 Catalan nationalists and ex-ministers with rebellion, stirring up national hatred and misuse of public funds (to pay for the referendum). Puigdemont and five other ministers departed for Brussels, and in doing so highlighted their hopes of receiving



Janis Garnet

Internationalistische Gruppe at April 1 demonstration in Berlin demanding freedom for Catalan president Carles Puigdemont and all imprisoned Catalan independence activists.

support from the European Union.

Rajoy’s minority government, which is maintained in office with the votes of the social-democratic betrayers of the proletariat in the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party), has gone all out with attacks on pensioners, African immigrants and others. In April, some 50,000 people demonstrated in Iruña demanding freedom for Basque youths accused of “terrorism,” which could mean up to 62 years in prison, for beating up two off-duty police of the Guardia Civil in a bar.

On March 25, Puigdemont was arrested in the German state of Schleswig-Holstein as he was returning to Brussels from a trip to Finland. The arrest demonstrated the ominous cooperation between Spanish and German secret police, as well as their surveillance capacity. Many expected a quick extradition, since German imperialism is supporting Spain’s central government. The Internationalistische Gruppe demanded freedom for Puigdemont and all Catalan independence activists at a demonstration in Berlin on April 1.

In a surprising move, the Schleswig-Holstein state superior court released Puigdemont on bail on April 5, on the condition that he not leave Germany. This is likely a result of the flimsiness of the Spanish charges. We continue to demand that the extradition case against him and other Catalan exiles be dropped. ■

Defender a Siria...

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de 17 millones de muertos. Con frecuencia se dice que la Primera Guerra Mundial sucedió “por accidente”. En realidad, cada una de las principales potencias se estaba preparando para la guerra y creía tener una estrategia para hacerla breve y decisiva. El Plan Schlieffen de Alemania propició ataques relámpago; Francia confiaba en su Línea Maginot de fortificaciones. Hoy, los planificadores bélicos de Washington parecen imaginar que pueden realizar impunemente ataques en Corea o en Medio Oriente. Las cabezas nucleares de Corea del Norte la convierten en un teatro de operaciones más peligroso para realizar una prueba. Así, Trump ataca primero a Siria.

Los trotskistas hacemos un llamado a favor de la *defensa de Siria en contra de*

los ataques imperialistas, sin dar el menor apoyo político al régimen de Assad. Los revolucionarios proletarios toman partido también por la *defensa del estado obrero deformado de Corea del Norte* en contra de los rapaces imperialistas norteamericanos que devastaron ese país en la Guerra de Corea que comenzó en 1950 y que no ha concluido oficialmente aún. En particular, apoyamos el derecho de Corea del Norte a desarrollar y poseer armas nucleares, que son un elemento disuasivo fundamental en contra de un nuevo ataque imperialista.

El pretexto de las armas químicas: mentira imperialista

El ataque de ayer de EE.UU., Inglaterra y Francia en contra de Siria fue presentado como si fuera una represalia en contra de un supuesto ataque químico que habría sido perpetrado el 7 de abril en contra de

la población de un suburbio de Damasco, del que se responsabiliza al gobierno sirio. Se trata de una mentira imperialista, y muy probablemente, de una provocación orquestada desde el principio. Un día antes del ataque con misiles, el secretario de defensa (es decir, de guerra) de EE.UU. Mattis había dicho que EE.UU. aún buscaba evidencia de si se habían usado armas químicas y, en caso afirmativo, de quién las habría usado. Pero entonces, la Casa Blanca y la representante de EE.UU. ante las Naciones Unidas, Nikki Haley, alegaron tener pruebas, y con eso se lanzó los misiles. En realidad, el régimen de Bashar al Assad, tan brutal como es, *no* usó armas químicas en contra de civiles en Duma.

En primer lugar, no se ha presentado evidencia alguna de que hubo muertes causadas por armas químicas, aunque esto podría haber acontecido. Las fotografías presentadas por los Cascos Blancos (un supuesto grupo de defensa civil financiado por los gobiernos británico y norteamericano y ligado a los yihadistas de Al Qaeda) pretenden mostrar síntomas (espuma en la boca de las víctimas) inconsistentes con el agente químico supuestamente usado (gas cloro). Más tarde, los Cascos Blancos difundieron un video que mostraba un cohete con una supuesta cabeza química (sin explotar) encima de una cama. Dado que supuestamente el cohete atravesó el techo de la habitación (en el video se muestra el agujero), ¿cómo puede estar simplemente colocado (horizontalmente) sobre una cama que no tiene ningún daño? Se trata de una obvia fabricación.

Dos días después de que se reportara el ataque, expertos en química militar del Centro para la Reconciliación en Siria, un organismo ruso, visitaron el sitio donde habría ocurrido en ataque en Duma y no encontraron traza alguna de gas cloro ni de ningún otro químico tóxico. Posteriormente, el ejército ruso mostró un video de médicos del hospital de Duma que negaban haber atendido el 7 de abril pacientes que exhibieran signos de envenenamiento químico, y que mostraron cómo unos provocadores habían montado la escena que circuló ampliamente en video al irrumpir en el hospital, creando pánico.

En segundo lugar, Assad (a quien Trump califica de “animal”) no tenía ningún interés en lazar un ataque químico, que con toda certeza produciría la exigencia de intervención imperialista. El gobierno sirio iba ganando la guerra en los suburbios de Damasco, habiendo ya logrado limpiar tres cuartas partes del área bajo control de las bandas islamistas. Ya había evacuado a miles de personas de Duma hacia Idlib; y un día antes del incidente, había alcanzado un acuerdo preliminar con elementos de Jaish Islam (el Ejército del Islam), que dominaba el área, para realizar un cese al fuego y la

evacuación de los que aún seguían en el lugar. Yihadistas de línea dura que querían descarrilar dicha perspectiva tenían pleno interés en intentar provocar la intervención occidental, que habían pedido desde varios días antes.

Además, el ejército ruso había informado en varias ocasiones (26 de febrero, 3 de marzo, 13 de marzo) sobre el descubrimiento de laboratorios de armas químicas en los suburbios de Ghouta oriental, recientemente arrebatada a las bandas islamistas, advirtiendo que se estaba preparando una provocación. De manera nada sorprendente, las Naciones Unidas y la Organización para la Prohibición de Armas Químicas no hicieron nada. La OPAQ es un instrumento de los imperialistas. El jefe de la OPAQ es un funcionario turco que antes fue el embajador de su país en Israel, así como su representante ante la OTAN. A su vez, el “investigador” en jefe de la ONU para armas químicas en Siria es Edmond Mulet, quien mintió sobre el hecho de que soldados de la ONU llevaron el cólera a Haití e intentó encubrir el hecho cuando encabezaba la fuerza de ocupación en dicha nación insular. “Cólera Mulet” no es alguien en quien se pueda confiar para juzgar quién ha usado armas químicas en Siria.

El gobierno sirio tampoco usó armas químicas en Khan Shaykhun en abril de 2017, en lo que fue utilizado como pretexto para el ataque con misiles que Trump lanzó previamente contra Siria (véase “¡Defender a siria! ¡Echar a los imperialistas de Medio Oriente!” en *Revolución Permanente* No. 7, abril-mayo de 2017). Una investigación de Theodor Postol, científico del Massachusetts Institute of Technology y especialista en armas químicas, probó de manera concluyente que cualesquiera que hubieran sido los químicos usados, éstos fueron dispersados desde tierra y no mediante una bomba lanzada por aviones sirios. El “cráter” que supuestamente causó

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la bomba al chocar contra el suelo no era mayor que un bache de tamaño estándar en una calle de Chalco. Las fotografías publicadas por los Cascos Blancos muestran a “rescatistas” echando agua a los cadáveres sin ningún equipo de protección. Si se tratara de víctimas de gas sarín, esos “rescatistas” estarían muertos.

Tampoco fue el gobierno sirio el responsable del ataque con armas químicas de agosto de 2013 en Damasco, de cuya autoría fue acusado por los imperialistas occidentales, que entonces amenazaron con bombardear a Siria, reculando hasta el último momento. El régimen de Assad habría estado loco si hubiera lanzado dicho ataque justo en el momento en que expertos de la ONU llegaban a Damasco para investigar acusaciones de uso de armas químicas. El periodista investigativo Seymour Hersh reveló que la policía secreta turca (MIT) había proporcionado los químicos para manufacturar gas sarín a yihadistas sirios. El presidente ruso Vladimir Putin dio una explicación científica con respecto a las acusaciones de que el gobierno sirio ha perpetrado ataques con armas químicas, diciendo en términos técnicos que son una “vasija de mierda”.

Imperialistas amenazan con iniciar una guerra regional, o algo peor

Muchos grupos de izquierda pretenden apoyar una “revolución siria” encarnada en grupos supuestamente de la “sociedad civil” que se levantaron en 2011. No hay ninguna revolución en curso. La revuelta en contra del régimen de Assad se transformó rápidamente en un levantamiento islamista. Hay varias guerras que están ocurriendo simultáneamente en Siria, una encima de la otra, lo que explica las alianzas cambiantes y crea una situación muy compleja, especialmente para la población siria, que ha sufrido varios cientos de miles de muertes, *en su mayoría partidarios del gobierno asesinados por los yihadistas*.

Hay, por encima de todo, un *ataque imperialista contra Siria*, enfocado originalmente en contra del Estado Islámico (EI). Desde que el año pasado el EI fue diezmado (aunque no totalmente derrotado), EE.UU. ha dirigido su ataque cada vez más abiertamente en contra del gobierno sirio. El Grupo Internacionalista y la Liga por la IV Internacional han llamado desde el principio por la derrota de los imperialistas dirigidos por EE.UU. Decimos también que todo golpe militar asestado en contra del imperialismo norteamericano, incluso si proviene de islamistas reaccionarios como los del EI, es en beneficio de los trabajadores del mundo. El GI y la LIVI buscan echar de Medio Oriente a los imperialistas de EE.UU. y la OTAN, incluso mediante la movilización del poder de la clase obrera en las entrañas de la bestia imperialista (huelgas obreras contra la guerra, boicot sindical al transporte, carga y descarga del material bélico), como hicimos también desde el principio en contra de la invasión y ocupación norteamericana de Afganistán e Irak.¹

Simultáneamente, hay una *guerra civil sectaria entre comunidades* en la que islamistas sunitas han atacado a varias de las muchas minorías religiosas y étnicas en Siria, centralmente a los alauitas que dominan al gobierno sirio del presidente Bashar

¹ Véase “¡Acción obrera para derrotar la guerra de Barack Obama contra Irak y Siria!” (en inglés) en *The Internationalist* No. 38, octubre-noviembre de 2014.

al Assad; pero también a kurdos, drusos, chiitas ismaelitas o chiitas duodecimanos; cristianos griegos ortodoxos y cristianos maronitas en la parte occidental, cristianos armenios en el norte, cristianos siriacos en la parte oriental, yazidíes y otros. El régimen de Assad ha podido contener y a final revertir la marea de la guerra porque cuenta con un fuerte apoyo no sólo de parte de los alauitas (y sectores clave de la burguesía árabe sunita, así como de muchos musulmanes sunitas de las ciudades que no quieren vivir bajo el dominio islamista), sino también de prácticamente todas las demás minorías étnico/religiosas, que con razón temen que serían masacrados en caso de que los islamistas sunitas ganaran la guerra, igual que en Libia.

Nos pronunciamos a favor de la *derrota de todos los bandos en la guerra civil intercomunidades* en Siria, toda vez que la victoria de uno u otro de ellos normalmente desembocaría en un pogromo en contra de los otros, o en masivas transferencias forzadas de población. Al mismo tiempo, defendemos el *derecho a la autodefensa comunitaria* de todas las comunidades étnicas y religiosas que enfrentan una amenaza a su existencia.

Está también la lucha kurda para asegurar una región kurda autónoma (Rojava). Sin embargo, cuando lograron este objetivo a principios de 2015, las milicias kurdas del YPG en alianza con los imperialistas norteamericanos en lucha contra el Estado Islámico han expandido dicha área hasta abarcar regiones predominantemente árabes. El GI y la LIVI defienden el derecho de los kurdos a la autodeterminación y su lucha por el establecimiento de su propio país mientras llamamos por una república socialista unificada del Kurdistán. Sin embargo, cuando las milicias del YPG y las Fuerzas Democráticas Sirias (FDS) que dominan han actuado como tropas de infantería del imperialismo norteamericano en la conquista de regiones predominantemente árabes, estamos por su derrota y llamamos a defender dichas áreas (notablemente Raqqa, la otrora “capital” del Estado Islámico) en contra del ataque imperialista y kurdo.²

Con las bandas islamistas (y todos los “rebeldes” armados sirios son islamistas, de una forma u otra), se trata de una guerra a muerte: los islamistas harían una carnicería de comunistas, como hicieron en Afganistán (donde, como en Siria, también contaban con el respaldo del imperialismo norteamericano). Estas bandas representan una amenaza contra el secularismo y todo tipo de derechos democráticos. Una revolución proletaria las aplastaría no sólo militarmente, sino también mediante una lucha clasista que pueda ganar al lado de la clase obrera a los pobres del campo y la ciudad que con frecuencia se ven atraídos a los islamistas.

En los últimos dos años, ha habido una importante intervención rusa que ha cambiado exitosamente el rumbo de la guerra civil en favor del gobierno de Assad. No llamamos por la salida de los rusos, toda vez que esto ayudaría objetivamente a los imperialistas norteamericanos y de la OTAN así como a los grupos yihadistas que apoyan (igual que a los que se oponen, como el EI). Sin embargo, no apoyamos las acciones de las fuerzas rusas, que esencialmente apuntalan al régimen en la guerra civil étnico/comunitaria y que ma-

² Véase “¡Por la defensa de Raqqa! ¡Echar a los imperialistas de EE.UU. y la OTAN de Siria e Irak!” (en inglés) en *The Internationalist* No. 43, mayo-junio de 2016.

ñana podrían intentar imponer un gobierno de coalición con algunas bandas islamistas “moderadas”. Además, el presidente ruso Vladimir Putin ha ofrecido en repetidas ocasiones ser parte de una coalición con EE.UU. en la “guerra contra el terrorismo” de los imperialistas que está aterrorizando a la región.³

Encima de todo esto, desde principios de 2018, hay una invasión turca en la parte norte de Siria. Estamos por la *defensa de las áreas kurdas* (como Afrin) *en contra del ataque turco*, que es parte de la OTAN, una alianza imperialista, pero en áreas en las que las fuerzas kurdas someten a poblaciones árabes (como en Mambij o a lo largo de la orilla oriental del Éufrates), estamos por el *derrotismo en ambos lados* en un choque entre las milicias YPG/FDS y sus aliados norteamericanos de un lado, y las fuerzas turcas aliadas con los islamistas sirios, en el otro.

Aunque los campos de batalla en Siria tienen muchas aristas y son complejos, el GI y la LIVI luchan en todos los casos por el programa de la *revolución permanente* desarrollado por León Trotsky y encarnado en la Revolución Bolchevique de 1917. Llamamos a la revolución obrera en toda la región. Dado que la clase obrera siria ha sido destruida en buena medida por la guerra civil, la fuerza fundamental para realizar un programa revolucionario como éste es el proletariado egipcio y, especialmente, el turco. *Defendemos a los palestinos* en contra de opresor estado sionista y exigimos que se ponga fin al asesino sitio de Gaza, donde el ejército israelí masacró recientemente a decenas de personas que se manifestaban pacíficamente. Llamamos por un *estado obrero árabe/hebreo en Palestina*, mediante la lucha conjunta de los trabajadores de habla hebrea y árabes en contra de sus gobernantes burgueses, como parte de una *federación socialista de Medio Oriente*.

El ataque de EE.UU. y la OTAN en contra del régimen sirio forma parte de una ofensiva imperialista que pretende demonizar al gobierno sirio para derrocarlo. Una des las principales razones es que Siria ha sido parte, históricamente, de un “frente de


³ Véase “Flashpoint Syria: Russian Intervention and Imperialist Aggression” (30 de octubre de 2015, publicado en *The Internationalist* No. 42, enero-febrero de 2016.

la resistencia” opuesto a Israel y que, en particular, está aliado con Irán, país al que los sionistas consideran como su principal enemigo (como lo consideran también los sauditas). Mientras el republicano Trump amenaza con invalidar el acuerdo nuclear con Irán negociado por el demócrata Obama, fácilmente podría ocurrir un choque en Siria –por ejemplo, con otro bombardeo criminal israelí– que podría desembocar en un ataque conjunto de los imperialistas, sionistas y monarquistas árabes en contra de Irán. El GI y la LIVI *defienden el derecho de Irán a tener armas nucleares*, de las que Israel tiene cientos y EE.UU. miles.

Entretanto, todos los bandos están conscientes de que un ataque de los imperialistas y sus lacayos regionales en contra de las fuerzas rusas que apoyan al régimen de Assad podría desencadenar una guerra de mucho mayor amplitud, posiblemente a escala mundial –extendiéndose a Ucrania, el Báltico, Noruega y Corea. Sin embargo, puede que esta posibilidad no sea suficiente para contener a los enloquecidos sionistas y a los exaltados imperialistas en Washington (trátese lo mismo de los seguidores de Trump con su consigna de “America First”, que de los “multilateralistas” vinculados al Partido Demócrata y al Pentágono). Todos ellos comparten la creencia peligrosamente descabellada en su propio poder ilimitado y en su “derecho” a dominar el mundo. Entre estos guerreristas destaca la candidata demócrata en las elecciones de 2016, Hillary Clinton, quien llamara el año pasado a bombardear los aeródromos sirios, que es el mismo objetivo presentado por los duros en el régimen de Trump hoy en día.

EE.UU. está jugando un peligroso juego en Siria y en Medio Oriente que podría hacer peligrar el futuro de la humanidad. La única manera de poner alto a esto consiste en luchar para aplastar el imperialismo por medio de una revolución socialista internacional. Es por eso que la respuesta crucial a la más reciente aventura mortífera de Trump en Siria consiste en romper con demócratas, republicanos y todos los partidos capitalistas, y en construir partidos obreros revolucionarios que luchen por el programa de los bolcheviques de Lenin y Trotsky, tanto en EE.UU. como en el resto del mundo. ■

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¡Echar a los imperialistas de Medio Oriente!

EE.UU./OTAN: ¡saquen sus sangrientas garras de Siria!

Reproducimos a continuación la declaración del Internationalist Group, sección estadounidense de la Liga por la IV Internacional, en contra del ataque militar a Siria ordenado por el gobierno norteamericano.

15 de ABRIL – Alrededor de las 4 de la mañana del sábado 14 de abril, hora de Medio Oriente (viernes por la tarde en el continente americano), los Estados Unidos, Inglaterra y Francia realizaron un ataque con misiles en contra de Siria. El Internationalist Group, sección norteamericana de la Liga por la IV Internacional, respondió inmediatamente y menos de dos horas después de que se anunciara el bombardeo, miembros del IG y de la Juventud Internacionalista Revolucionaria estaban protestando afuera de la Torre Trump en Manhattan, base de operaciones del presidente norteamericano Donald Trump. Nuestras pancartas decían: “¡Defender a Siria! ¡Derrotar al imperialismo norteamericano!”, “Imperialistas de EE.UU./OTAN: ¡saquen sus sangrientas garras de Siria!” y “Trump y Clinton, imperialistas guerreristas – ¡Echar a EE.UU. y la OTAN de Siria!”

En los días posteriores, las manifestaciones contra la guerra han presentado exigencias como “EE.UU. fura manos de Siria”, “No a la guerra en Siria” y otras de carácter similar que evitan tomar bando en la batalla. Se trata de llamados liberales y reformistas a favor de una política exterior imperialista para EE.UU. que sea más “amante de la paz”, que contrastan con el llamado revolucionario a *defender* a Siria y a *derrotar* a los imperialistas occidentales. Ya desde la primera guerra mundial imperialista, ha sido un principio fundamental para los marxistas revolucionarios, siguiendo el ejemplo de los bolcheviques rusos de V.I. Lenin, el estar del lado de un país colonial o semicolonial bajo ataque, y



Manifestantes internacionalistas protestaron de inmediato frente a la Torre Trump en Nueva York contra el ataque con misiles de EE.UU. en contra de Siria. “¡Defender a Siria! ¡Derrotar al imperialismo EE.UU.!”

el luchar por la derrota de los agresores imperialistas. Todo golpe asestado en contra de los imperialistas de EE.UU., a OTAN y sus aliados en Siria beneficia a los trabajadores del mundo.

Después de una semana de tuits belicosos procedentes de la Casa Blanca, el ataque en sí pareció a muchos un tanto anticlimático. En muchos aspectos se trató de una reedición del ataque con misiles de abril de 2017 que lanzó EE.UU. en contra de una base aérea siria, inclusive en la fecha, sólo que esta vez se empleó más o menos el doble de misiles teledirigidos Tomahawk. El año pasado, EE.UU. logró causar daño a un hangar, pero pocos días después jets sirios estaban volando nuevamente desde la misma base. El resultado: 0. En esta ocasión, los misiles hicieron blanco en dos almacenes vacíos y en el Instituto de Investigación de las Industrias Química y

Farmacéutica de Siria, que se especializa en la producción de medicamentos contra el cáncer (que escasean debido a las sanciones imperialistas). Resultado: $2 \times 0 = 0$. Pero el peligro que representan este ataque y la arremetida imperialista contra Siria son mucho mayores.

El ataque también estuvo parcialmente motivado por la intención de Trump de desviar la atención de las dificultades que enfrenta en el terreno nacional, como la investigación del FBI en torno a supuestas influencias rusas en las elecciones presidenciales de 2016, hasta la investigación (que desembocó en una redada antes del amanecer realizada por el FBI en las oficinas de su abogado personal) de pagos durante la campaña electoral a mujeres que decían haber mantenido *affaires* con Trump. Esto hizo recordar a muchas personas la película de 1997 *Wag the Dog* (conocida en América Latina y España como *La cortina de humo*), en la que un asesor de medios fabrica una guerra para encubrir un escándalo sexual del presidente. Un año después, el presidente demócrata Bill Clinton bombardeó Serbia en medio de la campaña por su impeachment en torno al caso Monica Lewinsky. Esta vez, el ataque con misiles lanzado por Trump se da en medio de una controversia en torno a su relación con la actriz de películas para adultos Stormy Daniels, lo que hizo que un cómico lo llamara “Operation Desert Stormy”.

Independientemente de los factores personales que influyeron al notoriamente errático comandante en jefe imperialista de EE.UU., el ataque imperialista exacerba la ya de por sí extremadamente tensa situación que prevalece en Siria, donde múltiples potencias antagonistas mantienen a sus fuerzas militares en estrecha proximidad. Un paso en falso (o una provocación

deliberada) podría desembocar en una conflagración de mucho mayor envergadura. El Medio Oriente ya se encuentra al borde de una guerra regional en la que Israel, EE.UU. y Arabia Saudita (junto con otros países petroleros del Golfo) se han alineado en contra de Siria, Irán y Rusia. Entretanto, Turquía, integrante de la OTAN, ha invadido el norte de Siria. El secretario general de las Naciones Unidas, António Guterres, advirtió pocas horas antes del ataque del sábado: “la Guerra fría está de vuelta, intensificada, pero diferente”.

Una enorme diferencia con la situación actual es que la Guerra Fría que comenzó tras la Segunda Guerra Mundial y que dominó durante casi medio siglo la geopolítica mundial la libró un frente unido imperialista en contra de la Unión Soviética. Los marxistas revolucionarios (los trotskistas) y los trabajadores con conciencia de clase estuvieron por la defensa incondicional del estado obrero soviético burocráticamente degenerado. Hoy, tras la contrarrevolución de 1989-1992 en el bloque soviético, la Rusia capitalista, una potencia local, está bajo ataque de un frente dirigido por los imperialistas que dista de estar unido. Guterres el secretario de la ONU señaló: Los mecanismos y salvaguardias que existían para impedir la intensificación de las tensiones ya no parecen estar presentes”. Y la confrontación militar actual es caliente, y amenaza con calentarse mucho más.

Como señaló el *Guardian* de Londres (15 de abril), “Las tropas norteamericanas están a un granadazo de distancia de las tropas rusas e iraníes en Siria, y este fin de semana misiles y aviones de EE.UU., Inglaterra y Francia volaron contra el régimen sirio”. En comparación con las crisis de la Guerra Fría en el pasado, añadía el *Guardian*, “Hay menos comunicación entre Washington y Moscú, además de que ya no sólo hay dos contrincantes en el juego, sino una arremetida desordenada y apretada de potencias de primer orden en declive y potencias medianas en ascenso. Guiarse por los intereses nacionales en un campo de batalla tan atestado hace cada vez más difícil para los contrincantes evitar chocar entre sí”. Ahora, con las purgas en el régimen de Trump, halcones superguerristas como el nuevo Asesor de Seguridad Nacional John Bolton, parecen llevar la batuta.

Se han hecho muchas comparaciones entre la situación actual y las Guerras de los Balcanes en el sudeste europeo en vísperas de la Primera Guerra Mundial, en las que las principales potencias imperialistas estaban jodiéndose entre sí, y el asesinato en 1914 del archiduque austriaco Franz Ferdinand en Sarajevo dio inicio a una carnicería que tuvo un saldo estimado

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Tropas norteamericanas en Siria, abril de 2017. ¡Expulsar a los imperialistas de EE.UU. y la OTAN de Siria y el Medio Oriente!