

The

Winter 2020

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Internationalist



U.S. Incites Hong Kong “Democracy” Riots



Rioters at Hong Kong's Polytechnic University hurl gasoline bombs, November 2019.

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The Internationalist



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for the Reforging of the Fourth International

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Winter 2020

From Obama to Trump: Down with U.S. Murder, Inc.!

Defeat U.S. Imperialism, Defend Iran!

3 JANUARY 2020 – The January 2 assassination of Qassim Suleimani, commander of the Quds Force of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, by a U.S. drone strike was a blatant “act of war” – but more than that, it was the opening salvo of a U.S. imperialist war on Iran. In ordering the murder of the second most powerful leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, U.S. president Donald Trump left the regime no choice but to retaliate against the marauding superpower that threatens its very existence. In this war, class-conscious workers and revolutionaries everywhere have a side: the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call to *defeat U.S. imperialism and defend Iran*. We call in particular for *international workers action against Washington’s war*.

Saner minds among U.S. rulers question if Trump weighed the consequences his murderous strike entailed, suggesting that it was an “impulsive” act. The *New York Times* headlined that it was, “For Trump, a Risky Gamble to Deter Iran.” Nonsense. It was a brazen *provocation* to force Iran to escalate. *Times* analysts opine that “the possibility of an unintended slide to war is impossible to rule out.” Unintended? Slide to war? The Pentagon brass who carried out this act of state terrorism knew full well that they were starting a war. They figure that the U.S.’ “overwhelming military might” will prevail. But for all Trump’s talk of pulling out of the region, the U.S. will be bogged down in the quicksands of the Middle East for years to come. Already he is dispatching thousands more troops to the region.

Trump’s claim that his action was a response to an attack by a pro-Iranian Iraqi militia that killed a U.S. mercenary is ludicrous. The U.S. president clearly intends to use this war to divert attention from the impeachment process against him now in high gear. He may succeed in that, not because people “rally round the flag” – a huge majority are sick of Mideast wars – but because the rhetoric in Washington about Trump “betraying U.S.

interests” in Ukraine will be largely drowned out amidst a new bloodbath. Of course, the Republican in the White House isn’t the first to use this cynical ploy. When Democrat Bill Clinton was being impeached for an affair with an intern (“Monicagate”), he fired off missiles to hit targets in Iraq. Today, Trump’s action has far-reaching and ominous consequences.

Imperialist bully Trump also launched his war figuring it would put the Democratic Party over a barrel in the 2020 elections. The partner parties of U.S. imperialism have demonized the Iranian regime for years. “Moderate” Democrats like Biden are loath to stray too far from the Middle East policy of Zionist Israel, whose leaders have long wanted to “bomb, bomb Iran.” “Progressives” (Sanders, Warren) are warning of the dangers of war with Iran, even referring (accurately) to Trump’s drone strike as an “assassination.” But in the name of a “war on terror,” Democratic president Barack Obama carried out such terrorist murders on a far greater scale than Republican Trump, killing thousands of innocent civilians. And last July, Democratic votes greased the skids for giving the Pentagon its largest war budget ever. The U.S. Murder, Inc. is bipartisan.

The Democrats, one and all, hail Obama’s 2015 agreement with Iran (as well the European Union, Russia and China)



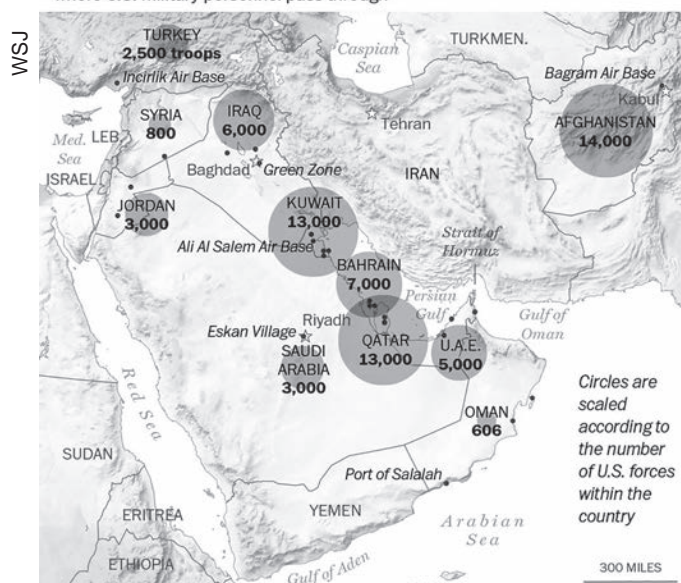
Internationalist photo

Internationalists at NYC protest against U.S. imperialist war provocation against Iran, January 4.

**For International Workers Action –
Drive the Imperialists Out of the Middle East**

The U.S. military footprint in the Middle East

• Bases, ports and other installations where U.S. troops are stationed or where U.S. military personnel pass through



Note: Troop numbers are approximate. They do not reflect deployments in recent days and may fluctuate.

Sources: Federation of American Scientists, International Crisis Group

AARON STECKELBERG/THE WASHINGTON POST

limiting Iran's nuclear program. Yet this pact subjects Iran to blackmail by U.S. imperialism and the militarist Zionist regime which has hundreds of nukes, and whose leaders are crazy enough to use them. The LFI defends Tehran's right to develop nuclear arms for its defense against these kill-crazy warmongers. How vital this is can be seen in the difference between the attack on Iran and Trump's negotiations with North Korea, a bureaucratically deformed workers state which despite diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions developed nuclear warheads and the long-range missiles to deliver them.

U.S. president George Bush declared Iran (along with North Korea) to be part of an "axis of evil." Former CIA and Iran/Afghanistan war chief David Petraeus, who slaughtered thousands and built death squads enforcing colonial occupation, called Major General Suleimani "the personification of evil." That label would be better applied to the U.S. murder machine that brought death and devastation from Central America to the Middle East. U.S. leaders accuse Iran of "destabilizing" the region. This takes a lot ofchutzpah coming from the imperialists who invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, and whose troops are still there well over a decade and a half later; who have bombed Syria since 2014, and who are supplying the weapons for the Saudi war of extermination against Yemen. The LFI calls to *drive the U.S. and its NATO imperialist allies out of the Middle East*.

Various opportunist leftists carefully avoid calling for defense of Iran, instead saying "hands off" and "no war on Iran." These pseudo-socialists advocate a more "peaceful" foreign policy for U.S. imperialism rather than calling for its defeat. They want to build a "peace movement," a "popular front" chaining opponents of the war to the Democratic imperialists. The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and Socialist Alternative (SA) lambaste "corporate Democrats" like New

York senator Schumer, while going all out for Bernie Sanders as he seeks the Democratic nomination. Yet Sanders voted for the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, called for Saudi Arabia to police the Middle East, and praised Trump for threatening North Korea.

Tailing the reformists and echoing their slogans on the U.S. attack ("hands off"/"no war") is Left Voice, part of the international media project of the grouping ("Trotskyist Faction") led by the Argentine Partido de Trabajadores Socialistas. Other reformist leftists such as the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) and its ANSWER antiwar front, as well as the Workers World Party (WWP) and its International Action Center, give political support to the Tehran regime. They pretend that bourgeois nationalists in neocolonial countries are "anti-imperialist." But the mullahs' regime was quite prepared to work with imperialism, and did so in the U.S. war against rival (Sunni) Islamists in Iraq and Syria. While the Pentagon bombed cities like Mosul from the air, Quds force chief Suleiman and pro-Iranian Iraqi militia leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis (also murdered in Trump's drone strike) coordinated the ground assault.

The League for the Fourth International stands for defense of Iran against the U.S. attack, while giving no political support to its capitalist government. The Islamic Republic, or the Zionist state of Israel, or self-described Christian states such as Franco's Spain or Pétain's France – all such theocratic and religiously based states are inherently anti-democratic against those who do not belong to the particular "chosen people," as exemplified by the brutal oppression of the Palestinian Arabs in the Occupied Territories and within Israel itself.

As George W. Bush's sinister vice president Dick Cheney said in advocating preemptive war against Saddam Hussein over his mythical "weapons of mass destruction," the U.S. is engaged in an endless war in the Middle East. Trump's attack on Iran presages a regional war, and it may not stop there. Remember that *World War I also started with an assassination* (of Archduke Ferdinand, the presumptive heir to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, in Sarajevo in June 1914). Recall, also, how that imperialist slaughter that took millions of lives ended: with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. But that required a revolutionary Marxist leadership with a program to defeat the imperialist war with socialist revolution.

As defenders of the proletarian internationalist program of Bolshevik leaders V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky, the LFI calls to bring out the power of the working class from Turkey and Egypt to Iran and Saudi Arabia, and Israel, to bring down the Islamist, monarchist, militarist and Zionist regimes, drive out the imperialists and establish a socialist federation of the Middle East. Here in the U.S., the May Day 2008 dock strike, that closed all West Coast ports in protest against the Iraq/Afghanistan war, pointed to the need for all-out workers struggle. This requires above all the formation of Leninist-Trotskyist workers parties, part of a reformed Fourth International, to lead the fight for socialist revolution extending from this region that has been under the imperialist heel since the dawn of the 20th century to the heartland of imperialism, from Europe to the United States.

Washington and Wall Street, the enemy is at home. Defeat imperialist war, defend Iran and fight for international socialist revolution. ■

Hail 75th Anniversary of Soviet Army Liberation of Auschwitz! Expel Zionist Occupiers from the West Bank – Defend Gaza, the New Warsaw Ghetto **No to the Trump/Israel West Bank Annexation Plan**

2 FEBRUARY 2020 – On January 28, U.S. president Donald Trump unveiled his phony Middle East “peace” plan in a joint appearance at the White House with Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. This is actually a plan to escalate the imperialist-backed Zionist war on the Palestinians by annexing the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The Zionist settlements and the entire Jordan River valley would formally become part of Israel, while the supposed Palestinian “state” would have no territorial contiguity but would instead consist of a series of disconnected areas separated from each other by highways and access roads to settlements under the control of the Israeli military. Also, hundreds of thousands of Israeli Arabs would lose their citizenship and be transferred to the Palestinian entity. Trump is selling this as the “deal of the century.” It would be better described as the rip-off of the century, a naked Zionist land grab to crush and humiliate the Palestinians.

All “two-state” plans that have been floated since the Israeli army’s conquest of the West Bank and Gaza in the 1967 war have been frauds to the extent that they made any pretense of



Raneen Sawatfa/Reuters

Palestinians protesting on January 29 against the Trump “peace” plan face off with Israeli soldiers in the Jordan Valley, which would be annexed by Israel under the plan.

fulfilling the rights of the Palestinian Arab population under the boot of Zionist occupation. Trump’s “vision” is the most cynical of all. Not only was the unilateral “deal” devised with no Palestinian participation whatsoever, it was designed to be rejected. Numerous clauses ensure that no Palestinian politician, no matter

how corrupt, could agree to it, including handing all of Jerusalem to Israel. The Palestinian entity – one could hardly call it a state – would amount to a series of giant concentration camps for the Arab population. The Palestinian Authority would function as a *Judenrat* (the puppet councils of Jewish authorities in Nazi-controlled ghettos and concentration camps in WWII), with the PA police acting as *kapos*.

Liberal media in the U.S. and elsewhere (including Israel) noted that this non-plan was essentially a propaganda ploy designed to distract attention from the impeachment trial of Trump and the criminal corruption indictment of Netanyahu. The promise of annexing the West Bank to Israel was also clearly an election tactic, appealing to the Israeli premier’s right-wing base and fascist settlers in the run-up to the March 2 Knesset (parliament) elections, and to further rev up the U.S. president’s evangelical Christian supporters to turn out in the November presidential vote in November. But while opposition politicians in both countries criticize its timing and ostentatiously one-sided nature, many of these same



Internationalist photo

Internationalists at protest outside New York City Hall against the West Bank annexation plan, January 31.

Democrats and “moderate” Zionists support the basic elements of the “deal” as the only “realistic” basis for a “two-state” solution.

That only highlights the fact that Zionism and imperialism, whether liberal or conservative, are mortal enemies of the oppressed Palestinian Arab population. The Trumpian “vision” is a total denial of Palestinians’ national rights, a continuation of their expulsion and expropriation on which the Zionist state of Israel was founded. The plan’s text makes this brutally explicit. “There shall be no right of return by, or absorption of, any Palestinian refugee into the State of Israel,” it says. And “Jerusalem will remain the sovereign capital of the State of Israel, and it should remain an undivided city.” A disjointed Palestinian “capital” would be well outside the walls of Jerusalem, relegated to the distant eastern suburbs of Kfar Aqab (next to the Qalandis refugee camp) and Abu Dis, and would be cynically rebranded Al Quds, the Arabic name for Jerusalem.

Moreover, in this grotesque real estate mogul’s vision of a “development plan,” in the guise of a “land swap,” it would expel 280,000 Arabs from Israel by “rezoning” their communities (in the area known as the Triangle) into the Palestinian entity. This “population exchange” was a key element of the infamous “Lieberman Plan” put forward a decade and a half ago by Avigdor Lieberman, leader of the racist, ultra-Zionist party Yisrael Beiteinu, aiming to sharply reduce the number of Arab citizens of Israel. Arab residents of the *nearly one-third of the West Bank to be annexed by Israel*, on the other hand, would have no citizenship rights in the land of their birth. Meanwhile, a “special tourist zone” is projected, from which Muslims can be taken by tour guides to visit holy sites. Would the “other tourism facilities” perhaps include a Trump Casino?

This caricature of a “Palestinian state” would have no seaport and no airport. Moreover, “the State of Israel will maintain overriding security responsibility for the State of Palestine,” meaning that even areas nominally governed by the Palestinian entity would be “demilitarized,” under the jackboot of Israel, one of the most highly militarized countries in the world. The Palestinian security forces would basically police the Arab population on behalf of Israel. But that is, in fact, the task that they have already been performing, financed, equipped and trained by the Pentagon until Trump canceled all U.S. “aid” to the Palestinian Authority a year ago. And as a condition for a “State of Palestine,” these forces would have to seize Gaza from Hamas and other Islamist groups, as the Israeli puppet PA has unsuccessfully tried to do for years.

This is all a Trumpian fantasy, with zero chance of being agreed to by anyone. But then it’s not supposed to be. Its actual purpose is to provide a façade for the formal annexation of the West Bank by Israel. On January 28, after the White House presentation, Netanyahu said that annexation would be presented to the Israeli cabinet on February 2. Since then, Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, long an admirer of the right-wing Israeli leader,¹ suggested that it might be a bit precipitous for

the caretaker government, which lacks a majority in the Knesset, to take such a step before the March elections. But when the annexation is formalized is just a formality. In reality, the West Bank was annexed to Israel after the 1967 war, and the charade of the Palestinian Authority under Yasir Arafat and now Mahmoud Abbas is only window dressing.

More consequentially, this is not just a Trump/Netanyahu “deal.” The leader of the Israeli opposition, Benjamin Gantz, signed off on the plan in an audience with Trump on January 27, saying only that there was no rush to proclaim annexation before the election. His party, Kahol Lavan (Blue and White, the colors of the Israeli flag), praised the plan as “historic,” saying that it is “entirely consistent” with the party’s “principles of state and security.” Gantz is a war criminal, who as chief of general staff of the Israeli army (2011-2015) repeatedly terror-bombed residential areas in Gaza, killing over 2,200 Palestinians, 70% of them civilians. Moreover, annexation of the Jordan River valley and one-third of the West Bank was key to the Allon Plan, drawn up right after the 1967 war by Ygal Allon, then a minister in the Labor Zionist cabinet.²

Even the “moderate” Zionist newspaper *Ha’aretz* (30 January) editorialized only that there was a “problem with imposing [Israeli] sovereignty *at this stage*” (our emphasis), while one of its columnists proclaimed Trump’s plan “not completely terrible” and “the possible basis for a negotiated settlement.” Former Labor prime minister Ehud Barak (another former Israeli Army chief of general staff) wrote that the White House plan is “the most favorable approach to Israel ever adopted by an American president” and “an important opportunity” (*Ha’aretz*, 28 January). In turn, the *New York Times* (31 January) editorialized that one couldn’t “dismiss any new initiative out of hand,” suggesting that it could be a “starting point.” In short, Zionists of all stripes and their imperialist patrons are for imposing indefinite Israeli control of the West Bank.

The Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International have from our inception called to *defend the Palestinian people* and to *drive the Israeli occupiers out of the territories conquered in the 1967 war*. That includes *expelling the Zionist settlements and settlers*, all of which – including the “bedroom communities” around Jerusalem – serve the purpose of military control over the Palestinian Arab population. The IG and LFI *defend the Palestinians’ right to return* to the lands from which they were expelled by the Zionist forces in 1948 and 1967, forcing millions into refugee camps where those driven from their homes and their descendants languish today. And we denounce both the Trump plan and earlier Democratic initiatives which would keep the Palestinians under Zionist/imperialist control.

Zionism arose in the late 19th century in reaction to increasing anti-Semitism in the Russian empire and Europe. Against the increasing popularity among Jewish workers and youth of revolutionary politics aimed at overthrowing the old order that bred murderous repression, Zionism promised to send Jews “back” to a biblical “promised land.” From the beginning it looked for

² Ygal Allon was a commander of the left-Zionist Palmach, the elite Zionist fighting force which carried out the first mass expulsions of Palestinian Arabs during the 1948 war; a founder of the Mapam party, which claimed to combine Marxism and Zionism; and later a leader of the left-Labor Ahdut HaAvoda party.

¹ Kushner’s father Charles is a real estate developer like Donald Trump and was a Democrat until 2016 (as was Trump until 2009), who went to jail for illegal campaign contributions to Democratic campaigns. He is also a right-wing Zionist and more than once invited Benjamin Netanyahu to his home in New Jersey, where the Israeli leader slept in the bedroom of teenager Jared (“Kushner and Israel: A Personal Bond,” *New York Times*, 17 April 2017).



Internationalistische Gruppe in Berlin: “For an Arab/Hebrew Workers State in a Socialist Federation of the Near East,” “Drive the Zionist Occupiers out of the West Bank - Defend Gaza, the New Warsaw Ghetto,” February 2.

imperialist patrons, notably Britain (which promoted Zionist colonization of Palestine with the 1917 Balfour Declaration as a point of support for British colonial control of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and the strategic Suez Canal) and, after World War II, the United States. The massive post-WWII Jewish immigration to Palestine was the result of U.S. imperialism’s refusal to admit Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazi holocaust.

Thus the 1948 founding of the Zionist state on lands stolen from the Palestinians was the result of the crimes of both sides in the second imperialist world war. U.S. Trotskyists at that time demanded “Admit the Refugees!” (Socialist Appeal, 26 November 1938).

The Russian Bolsheviks under V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky fought anti-Semitism tooth and nail under the tsarist empire, mobilizing to crush anti-Jewish pogroms. At the same time, the Bolsheviks opposed the Zionists, who rather than seeking to combat anti-Semitic terror, saw it as a spur to emigration, and sometimes tactically collaborated with the perpetrators.³ The founding of a self-proclaimed “Jewish state” was opposed by many Orthodox Jews at the time, and some still do today, as do many secular Jews who have played a prominent role in leftist parties. Nevertheless, a Hebrew-speaking nation was consolidated that occupies the same narrow strip of territory along the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea as the Palestinian Arab nation it has dominated since the foundation of Israel.⁴

³ See Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (1983).

⁴ See “Defend the Palestinian People! For an Arab Hebrew Workers Republic in a Socialist Federation of the Near East,” *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001, as well as several additional articles in the same issue, including “Arab/Hebrew Workers’ Struggles Before the Birth of Israel,” “Zionism, Imperialism and Anti-Semitism,” “Zionist Complicity in the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry,” and others.

So for the past seven decades there have been two nations – one the oppressor, the other the oppressed – existing on and laying claim to the same territory. Moreover, their populations always have been and still are deeply intertwined. *In this situation of interpenetrated peoples, the respective rights of national self-determination cannot be equitably resolved under capitalism (in which competing nationalisms will always result in the domination of one or the other), but only through a common internationalist struggle for socialist revolution.* The framework for such a struggle must extend throughout the region, with its myriad peoples, ethnic/linguistic and religious minorities, as well as powerful proletarian concentrations in Turkey, Egypt, Iran and elsewhere. For all of them, only revolutionary internationalism shows a way forward.

A “two-state” solution in Palestine under capitalism is inevitably discriminatory against the Palestinian Arabs, who will always be at a disadvantage compared to the stronger Israeli Zionist state when it comes to competing for scarce resources such as water and arable land. Thus we in the League for the Fourth International have denounced “The Oslo ‘Peace Process’ Hoax” and called for a binational *Arab/Hebrew workers revolution*. Unlike those who describe Israel as a “settler-colonial state,” we have pointed to the class contradictions between Hebrew-speaking workers and their Zionist capitalist rulers. But the poisonous nationalism of the oppressor nation can only be defeated through an international struggle of the toilers and oppressed populations against the Zionists, imperialists and Arab, Turkish and Persian military, monarchist, Islamist and authoritarian capitalist rulers who oppress them all.

It is particularly grotesque that today, as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Soviet Red Army which smashed the genocidal Nazi regime, Zionists and their imperialist godfathers cynically seek to use the memory of the Holocaust to justify destruction of the Palestinian Arab nation. Moreover, the plan for a “final solution” to the “Palestinian question” is accompanied by the international campaign of Trump, Netanyahu et al. outrageously equating opposition to Zionism with anti-Semitism, beating the drums for the U.S./Israeli war on Iran. Thus today, defense of the Palestinian people must go hand in hand with defense of Iran, even under its despotic Islamic Republic, against imperialism. This includes defending Iran’s right to nuclear weapons, faced as it is with the constant threat of annihilation by the far stronger nuclear-armed Zionist and imperialist warmongers.

The League for the Fourth International says:

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

Defeat U.S. Imperialism – Defend Iran and its Right to Nuclear Arms!

From Turkey to Egypt and Iran – For Workers Revolution Against the Capitalist Regimes

For International Workers Action to Drive U.S./NATO Imperialists Out of the Middle East

Republican/Democrat Imperialists Support Zionist Israel – Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!

To Drive Out Macron & Co., Fight for Workers to Power



Martin Noda/Photothèque Rouge

French Strikers Challenge Attack on Pensions

CGT contingent at mass march in Paris on December 5, at the start of the strikes against the pension reform of President Emmanuel Macron, which threatens millions with old-age poverty.

Build a Workers Party Based on the Revolutionary Program of Lenin and Trotsky

Note: The unlimited strikes in the transport sector ended in late January, but union “days of action” are continuing.

JANUARY 6 – The battle over the French government’s assault on pensions has entered its decisive phase. After a month on strike, French workers have already surpassed the record of the December 1995 strike (22 days) that defeated an earlier pension “reform” and the 1986-87 rail strike (28 days) to be the longest since 1968. As President Emmanuel Macron plays for time, trying to wear down the strikers, it is crucial that the action spread to other sections of the working class, especially the private sector. Above all, it is vital to raise a program, establish forms of organization (mass strike committees and workers councils) and forge a leadership that go beyond defense of the status quo to a fight for workers power. This is not an ordinary union battle – it’s a showdown between labor and capital. At issue is which class shall rule.

The extent of the strikes, their staying power and continued public support for the workers took the “centrist” government

of investment banker Macron by surprise. When the strikes against the pension “reform” broke out on December 5, over a million and a half marchers took to the streets in union-led protests called by all five major labor federations (CGT, FO, CFDT, UNSA and SUD). Millions stopped work, including teachers, students and hospital workers. The country ground to a halt as air traffic controllers, port, rail and transit workers paralyzed long-distance and city travel. It was no one-day affair. Due to the determination of the rank-and-file, strikes in Paris transit (RATP) and railroads (SNCF) hung tough through the end-of-year holidays – a heavy travel time – defying calls by some union leaders for a Christmas “truce.”

From the beginning, participation in protests and walkouts has been huge. A one-day subway work stoppage in Paris on September 13 completely shut down all but two completely automated lines. Union officials reported that a mobilization on December 17 was even larger (1.8 million marchers) than on December 5. Dancers from the Paris Opera performed “Swan Lake” outside in the winter cold to support and dramatize the

Getty Images



1.5 million workers hit the streets in Paris (above) and around France December 5. The strikes, by far the longest since 1968, give the lie to the claim that the workers movement is dead or moribund. Needed: revolutionary leadership.

strike. Right before Christmas, workers at the Lavéra refinery in the south voted a total shutdown, followed by the Grandpuits refinery in the north the next day. In Vienne, electricity workers turned power back on for families who had been cut off for non-payment of bills. And while the media claim the metro is functioning, for 12 out of 14 lines there is only very limited service during rush hours, and none the rest of the day.

Now is make-or-break time for this crucial struggle. In his New Year's greetings, the insufferably arrogant Macron vowed to "carry through to the end" his anti-worker "reform," including refusing to back down on raising the age for a full pension to 64 (up from 62 today). Philippe Martinez, head of the CGT (General Confederation of Labor), responded with a "call on all French people to go on strike" (*L'Humanité*, 2 January). Today teachers, Air France pilots and liberal professions are scheduled to go out. Tomorrow workers at all eight oil refineries in France are set to strike for four days. On January 9, a day of action has been called by the CGT, FO and SUD. On January 11, the CFDT will join in. But in going all out in these actions, strike militants must know that they are mainly pressure tactics to influence talks with the government.

Yet those "negotiations" between the unions and Prime Minister Edouard Philippe are a charade. Macron has made clear that he has turned a deaf ear to the strikes and marches, and *Le Parisien* (6 January) reports that the pension "reform" bill has already been drawn up and sent to the Council of State. A Coordinating Committee of SNCF and RATP workers in the Parisian region (Île de France) issued an appeal on January 2 calling to "Generalize the Strike to Win." But beyond spreading the strike, what's urgent is to shut down the Paris mass transit system tight, with no trains or buses circulating. The same for the rail system. It's necessary that truckers join the strike, that the refinery workers strike continues, that the ports are shut, that students and teachers walk out of schools and universities indefinitely. In short, *prepare a general strike*.

When the "Yellow Vest" movement erupted a little more than a year ago, there was a lot of talk about how not only the trade unions, but even "traditional" forms of working-class struggle like strikes were supposedly outdated (see "France: 'Yellow Vest' Revolt and the Struggle for Socialist Revolution," *The Internationalist*, No. 56, May-June 2019). The current struggle is a dramatic refutation of that. Even using a fraction of the potential power of their class, strikers have shown the way towards defeating the



Reuters

Railroad workers (above) have been the backbone of the strike against investment banker/president Macron's anti-worker pension "reforms."

capitalist offensive led by Macron. Transportation workers have rejected the union bureaucrats' token one-day walkouts and stop-and-go strike tactics which are designed to fail. Strikes renewed in daily union assemblies are more militant, but organization of the struggle by elected strike committees remains embryonic.

Macron has staked his career on being able to inflict a decisive defeat on the working class that would lame it for a generation. He not only has a secure parliamentary majority but the support of Le Pen's fascist Rassemblement National (RN) in this confrontation. Negotiations are a dead-end, it will take relentless class struggle to stop him. There is a burning need to expand and centralize strike committees, to build mass pickets to extend and defend the strike against bourgeois repression, while drawing in all the exploited and oppressed, from petty-bourgeois yellow vests to youth and immigrants. In fact, this would mean a real general strike – in which, as the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky put it, “the proletariat assembles itself as a class against its class enemy.” This, of course, requires the building of a revolutionary leadership.

The working class has suffered many defeats since the 1989-92 counterrevolutions that destroyed the Stalinist-ruled, bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states of the Soviet Union and East Europe. Today the big hope of the union bureaucrats and most of the left is to repeat the outcome of the 1995 December strike, when the government of Jacques Chirac and his prime minister Alain Juppé had to abandon its pension “reform.” As putrefying capitalism rips up social programs and workers' livelihoods, these reformists look at most to preserve past gains, or to dismantle them more slowly. But that is a program for defeat. It's not just a question of “neoliberalism,” i.e., a policy, or of a particularly retrograde president, Macron (or Sarkozy, or Chirac, or social democrats like Lionel Jospin, for example). The mobilization required to break Macron's offensive must necessarily take on the capitalist system itself.

Rather than bemoaning the lack of socialist consciousness in the working class – a reflection of the abandonment by its leaders of any pretense of fighting for socialism, much less communism – what's needed is a fight by a genuine Trotskyist vanguard against the present misleaders and their defeatist program, in order to bring revolutionary consciousness to the workers in the course of the class struggle. Now is the time. As the future Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote in “On Strikes” (1899), “socialists call strikes ‘a school of war’” – class war – but “strikes can only be successful where workers are sufficiently class-conscious,” and “only a socialist workers' party can carry on this struggle” to bring to the workers the understanding of the need to fight “for the emancipation of all working people from the yoke of capital.”

The Macron Plan: Impoverish Retirees and Enrich Banks

Macron's pension reform is part of an overall effort to dismantle the French “welfare state” in order to slash state expenditures and, by cutting taxes on business and the wealthy, to increase the profitability of French capitalism. This would supposedly improve its “competitiveness” in the face of rivals who have already drastically slashed social programs. He al-



Rafael Yaghobzadeh/AP

Riot police in Paris huddle in face of strikers' resistance in December 5 general strike.

ready rammed through a labor law “reform” in 2017 making it easier for employers to lay off or fire workers. In 2018 he defeated a rail strike against his plan to “liberalize” (privatize) the rail system. Last summer Macron legislated sharp cuts to unemployment insurance, sharply reducing payments to workers on short-term (precarious) contracts. And as of this January 1, the SNCF has been turned into a joint stock company, so that rail workers are no longer public employees.

In fact, France spends considerably more on pensions (14% of the gross domestic product) compared to Germany (10% of GDP) or the average (8% of GDP) of advanced capitalist countries in the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development). Moreover, French retirees receive on average 61% of their previous income, compared to 38% in Germany (*Economist*, 12 September 2019). As a result, only 7% of French pensioners are officially at risk of poverty, according to a Eurostat analysis, compared to 19% for Britain and Germany. An OECD study showed that the poverty rate among seniors (age 66 and older) in France was one-third that in Germany, one-fifth that in Britain and one-seventh that in the U.S. (“French workers cherish their welfare state. That's why they're striking,” London *Guardian*, 4 December 2019).

In short, Macron's pension “reform” emulating Britain and Germany would push millions into poverty. Also, by raising the age for a full pension to 64, it would force many older workers to work longer, thus making it harder for young people to get a steady job. And since many workers over the age of 60 find it hard to find employment, they could be forced into retirement with a much lower partial pension. Workers in France, young and old, have no choice but to fight tooth and nail against this anti-labor “reform.” Defeat by Macron and the Eurobankers behind him would mean a drastic worsening of the living standards of the vast majority of the French population. The terrible ordeal that the working people of Greece are enduring shows what's in store if the capitalist offensive prevails.

The bourgeoisie, its government and its media repeat *ad nauseum* that consolidation of the pension system – getting

rid of the 42 “special regimes” for sectors ranging from rail workers and miners to the Paris Opera ballet troupe and members of parliament – is needed to keep the system viable faced with an aging population. The premise that the system is in financial trouble is itself questionable: when previous studies showed relatively small future deficits, Macron ordered a new study, by the high commissioner for pension reform Jean-Paul Delevoye, to show a ballooning deficit as early as 2022. Moreover, given that a manual worker has a life expectancy seven years shorter than a white-collar worker, for example, there are very good reasons for multiple pension regimes.

At the same time, the different regimes represent in part the results of hard-fought struggles rather than arbitrary “privileges.” It is no accident that the government is focusing its attack on the railroad and Paris metro workers, who have been in the forefront of every major class struggle in France over the last several decades. (While the overall pension system goes back to 1945, when it was set up by the post-World War II popular front government, the special regime for rail workers dates from 1907.) Despite Macron’s talk of having a “universal” pension system, his government has been agreeing to recognize the special status not only of police, but also firemen, EDF (electricity and gas) and other sectors. The obvious intent is to isolate the hard core of the resistance, in order to deal them a devastating defeat.

Actually, these special regimes concern a very small part of the working population, but millions of people understand that this is only a pretext for a much wider attack. The change from calculating pensions based on the best years’ salaries to a point system in which each euro earned in wages will be equal to a point will automatically mean a fall in the pension level. Many teachers, for example, stand to lose around 500 € (US\$550) per month from their pensions as a result. And despite all the criticisms of rail and metro workers retiring at age 52 or 57, it should be remembered that they must have worked at the SNCF or RATP for 40+ years to be eligible for the full pension. Plus the arduous working conditions faced by many of these workers take a very real toll: the life span of port workers is eight years less than the national average.

The systemic reform will be a disaster for those workers subjected to longer periods of precarious work or unemployment. This means women in particular will be penalized, and younger workers. As we noted in our article on the Yellow Vests: “Today short-term labor contracts of less than a month duration outnumber unlimited contracts by 4.5 million to 1 million. Only half of those ‘disposable’ workers on short-



Strikers shut down the Louvre, the most visited museum in the world, on January 17 as French parliament opens debate on pension “reform.”

Christophe Petit Tesson/EPA

term contracts are even eligible for unemployment benefits.” In addition, under the “parametric reform” outlined by the prime minister Edouard Philippe in a provocative speech on December 11, people born before 1974 would be exempted from the requirement to work until age 64 to qualify for the full pension. This cynical ploy to set old and young against each other was angrily rejected by all the protesting sectors.

Ultimately, Macron’s plan points toward the replacement of “defined benefit” pensions (*retraite par répartition*), in which the government guarantees a definite monthly income to retirees, by a “defined contribution” retirement savings program (*retraite par capitalization*), in which retirees will have individual accounts, administered by investment banks, and only receive amounts based on what they have contributed. This lets the government off the hook and would provide a bonanza for bankers. The present “reform” would exempt earnings above 120,000 € a year from the 28% social security tax on incomes. This will channel billions of euros into private insurance plans, while the mass of working people will receive a pittance and thus become yet another pool of cheap labor.

Not coincidentally, the first place this system of “capitalization pensions” was introduced was under the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile, where the “Chicago Boys” economists led by free-marketeer Milton Friedman privatized the social security. This is the system that Chilean working people rose up against last year because it doesn’t even come close to providing enough income for retirees to live on. That this is the logic of Macron’s “reform” was confirmed when his first pension czar, Delevoye, had to resign in disgrace over unreported income, including from a consultancy for a private insurance company. Yet only a couple of weeks later, Macron awarded the Legion of Honor to the head of the French branch of the BlackRock investment firm, the biggest manager of pension funds in the world.

Divide and Rule

So, contrary to the government's expectations, the labor actions have been widely and even enthusiastically supported by the bulk of the population, who see their basic social security net threatened. According to an opinion poll of the right-wing *Le Figaro* (4 January), 61% support the strike and 74% say Macron's "reform" should be fundamentally changed or rejected outright. Even the most "moderate" labor federations – the CFDT (Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail) and UNSA (Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes) – balked. The CFDT, after spewing New Left rhetoric about "self-management" after 1968, signed on with François Mitterrand's popular-front government in 1981 and became the lapdogs of every capitalist government since. But the CFDT drew the line at pushing back the retirement age.

The trade-union bureaucracy is particular uneasy because Macron's "reforms" are eroding its existence. These labor traitors are heavily integrated into the state administration through a myriad of class-collaborationist bodies which help administer the French social service system that combines health benefits, unemployment benefits, pensions, etc. This includes the social-democratic Force Ouvrière (FO) federation, long a champion of Cold War anti-Communism, which is concentrated among public employees, and also the CGT, once tied to the Communist Party (PCF). But now by cutting back on the various institutions that are the source of the bureaucrats' privileges Macron is pushing them into each other's arms.

Unity in action of the French working class, which is split into different union confederations along political lines, is, of course a necessity. This can take the form of "intersyndicales," committees at a local level (such as the Paris rail/metro coordination) that bring together the most combative elements and could be a first step towards elected strike committees. But bureaucratic "unity" can just as well be a device to bury struggle. For several generations of ostensible, abstract calls for unity – endlessly repeating "*tous ensemble*" (all together) – have served to subordinate struggles to the social-democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies. For the followers of the late Pierre Lambert, such calls for "unity" were a cover for their deep integration into the apparatus of the anti-Communist FO, and later promoting a "labor party" of bureaucrats.

For its part, the NPA (New Anticapitalist Party, heirs of the tendency led by the late Ernest Mandel) has been thrilled by the "unity" of the CFDT's half-hearted dissent from Macron's plan. The front-page headline for the NPA's paper *l'Anticapitaliste* (26 December) is "All together we can make them give in." One-time NPA presidential candidate and media star Olivier Besancenot declared in a December 16 TV interview that "a general strike could sweep away this reform within a few days." An actual general strike would be a hard-fought struggle for power, but Besancenot and his party are not seriously proposing anything of the sort. Who would organize such a general strike, and how? This is just a cynical way of disguising the fake-Trotskyists' policy of pressuring the pro-capitalist bureaucrats to adopt a more militant posture.

The real danger is that the government will succeed in isolating and then exhausting the most militant sectors by making a few promises, however specious, to the trade-union bureaucracies. Simply demanding withdrawal of the pension "reform" – at

best a return to the status quo, and then the whole battle would begin all over again – does not provide any way of holding the bureaucracy to this. To really fight to win means taking control of the strike out of the hands of the venal bureaucrats. It means going beyond local initiatives to form *elected strike committees* to unite not only all union members, but also non-union workers, some of them exemplary strike militants; *mass picket lines* to spread the strike and defend strikers; and *national coordinating committees* to link Paris with mobilizations in the provinces, which have received some industrial support.

The CGT has tolerated the existence of "renewable" strikes (*grèves reconductibles*) whose continuation is voted on each day in union membership assemblies (*assemblées générales*, or AGs) in transport, where this is a deeply-felt need. But the union tops have not encouraged them elsewhere – for example, at the airports where the mobilization has hung fire – and they have no real strategy other than "stop-and-go" days of action. However militant, the tactic of renewable strikes is no substitute for the wider mobilization bringing in other working-class and oppressed sectors that is needed in a class confrontation of this magnitude, as well as the need for actual strike committees across the different union federations that could provide a framework to fight for a class-struggle program and leadership.

A Lesson About the Police, the Strike and Defense of Immigrants

On December 5, as over a million people poured into the streets to protest Macron's "reform", his bloodhound, Interior Minister Christophe Castaner, was quick to reassure the police (but also the army and even ... parliamentary deputies) that they would be exempted from the pension attack. This of course makes a mockery of the government's propaganda about "universality" to replace the "42 special regimes." Although the government also made some promises in the direction of the firefighters in Paris and Marseille, who have paramilitary status, firefighters in the provinces were left hanging. Some of them have been camping out in Paris, where they have been savagely attacked by riot police. In the December 17 march, the cops charged peacefully marching firefighters and lobbed stun grenades at them.

Particularly after a year of vicious attacks on the Yellow Vest protests, in which thousands were injured and which cost quite a few protesters a hand or an eye, it should not be necessary to insist that police are not "fellow workers." Yet every trade-union federation continues to organize cops. This includes the SUD (Solidaires) federation, which poses as to the left of the CGT and in which the NPA is heavily involved. Naturally, the bourgeois nationalist-populist movement La France Insoumise (LFI – France Unbowed) of Jean-Luc Mélenchon wants to hire more cops. And last year Besancenot and the PCF published a statement saying that "escalated repression" would "end up endangering the police and gendarmes themselves" (*Le Monde*, 18 January 2019). A reformist program demands pledges of allegiance to the "republican" police.

But it is rather brazen for Lutte Ouvrière (LO – Workers Struggle), the other main ostensibly Trotskyist organization in France, to lecture the yellow vests about their initial illusions

Guardian [London]



Police attack firemen in Paris strike demo, January 28.

in the police, as it did in a report on the domestic situation adopted at LO's 49th congress in December. LO has in the past called for a police force "closer to the population," while commiserating over the "difficult conditions" faced by "rank and file" cops. LO actually tried to theoretically defend this grotesque capitulation in its monthly journal *Lutte de Classe* (May-June 2017), where it went on about "a dual role" for the police: "sometimes intervening to protect the population" and sometimes acting as "guard dog of the social order." It talks of the "two natures of the police, both repressive and useful." And again: "part of the work of police officers is in fact useful."

While Lenin in the very first chapter of *State and Revolution* (1917) called the police together with the army the "chief instruments of state power" of the bourgeoisie, for LO this is all relative, "varying according to the place, time and situation." Actually, no. In the capitalist world, the police are everywhere and always the armed fist of capital, whose job is to repress the exploited and oppressed, and which must be smashed by workers revolution. Any illusions or ambiguity about this, any support for a "movement" of the police to defend their "special regime," could prove fatal to the struggle, particularly in this hard-fought strike, where cops have brutally attacked strikers and their supporters while protecting strikebreakers.

While LO prattles about defense against fascists – someday, somewhere, somehow (rather like the German social democrats before 1933) – there is an immediate need to organize worker-immigrant defense guards to protect against scabs, cops and racist attacks. As Trotsky declared in the Transitional Program (1938), the founding document of the Fourth International: "Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers groups for self-defense. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions."

With Macron plagiarizing Le Pen's speeches to describe how problematic immigration is for the "lower classes," his government launched yet another campaign this fall against

Muslim women wearing headscarves, seeking to drive them out of public life – this time by barring them from school trips with their children! As in 1995, when the strike movement was limited to the public sector, a key element in extending the strikes to the private sector will be addressing such attacks on the immigrant section of the working class. This time, the public sector will not be enough to win a victory for other workers "by proxy." It is necessary to fight for *full citizenship for immigrants and their families* – particularly since the right of family regroupment is also under attack.

Meanwhile, Mélenchon and his LFI are busy campaigning against privatization of the Parisian airports. Such privatizations always involve attacks on the wages and living standards of the workers, and must be opposed, but for Mélenchon and his cohorts it is a matter of national sovereignty. So over the airports we see meetings that "unite" the left-populist LFI not only with the CGT but also with the conservative Les Républicains under the tricolor, since as PCF deputy Stéphane Peu hammers home, "the national interest" is involved (*Libération*, 20 June 2019). While Macron & Co. invoke the European Union as an external force, the fact is that France and Germany call the shots in this imperialist alliance. The privatizations, attacks on the pensions, etc. are dictated by the needs of the French bourgeoisie vis-à-vis its imperialist competitors.

Internationalist communists call to bring down the imperialist EU through sharp class struggle leading to international socialist revolution. The main enemy is at home!

"Far Left" Seeks to Pressure or Bypass the Bureaucracy Rather than Fight It

As the question of the police underlines, the so-called "far left" is just part and parcel of the reformist left. This was illustrated at a December 11 meeting in St.-Denis organized by the PCF around the slogan "Against the Macron Retirement Plan: Another Reform Is Possible." The various groups on the podium, ranging from LO to the NPA to France Insoumise and the ecologists, who are both not even part of the workers movement, politely agreed to disagree, with remnants of the Socialists and the ecologists accepting the points system. As for the strike, the "far left" only suggests a few slightly more militant tactical steps packaged with simple-simon slogans – "all together," "the workers must discover their own strength," etc. – while leaving actual control of the struggle in the hands of the labor bureaucracies.

This is a deliberate refusal to propose and to fight for a program that provides a revolutionary answer to the reformist bureaucrats' eternal search for a compromise with the bourgeoisie. For decades the French pseudo-Trotskyists have played a role as left critics in the unions without contesting for power. A more recent entry in the opportunist lottery is the misnamed "Trotskyist Fraction" (FT), represented in France by a faction inside the NPA, the Revolutionary Communist Current (CCR) and its Internet publication, *Révolution Permanente*. A year ago the FT contrived to puff up the Yellow Vest movement into a full-blown revolutionary threat to French capitalism, while proposing that the program of this movement

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Both “Populist” and “Neoliberal” Governments Target Workers, Immigrants

Italy: Reformist “Anti-Capitalist Front” No Answer to Capitalist Attack

The following article was published as a leaflet by our comrades of the Nucleo Internazionale d'Italia on September 28.

After the “populist” Lega/Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S – Five Star Movement)¹ government under Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte escalated anti-immigrant and anti-worker repression, now the “neoliberal” Conte-2 government of the Democratic Party (PD)² and M5S will continue the attacks on workers, immigrants and youth. As the parliamentary maneuvering and game of ministerial seats continue in the Palazzo Montecitorio [the seat of the Chamber of Deputies], the European Union bureaucrats and bankers in Brussels breathed a sigh of relief over the departure of the loose cannon Matteo Salvini.³ But whether anti-EU or pro-EU bourgeois governments are in office in Rome, the capitalist offensive against working people continues full force. To fight it requires forging a *revolutionary* leadership.

The situation is all the more ominous as now the fascistic Lega and its openly fascist allies are the principal opposition force feeding off popular discontent. The main “confederal” union federations are once again openly supporting the government, while much of the “far left” is trying to cobble together an “anti-capitalist front” on a platform of reformist demands. But the idea that it would be possible to ban layoffs, provide housing for the homeless, good jobs for youth, decent retirement for the elderly and democratic rights for immigrants and everyone under this decaying capitalist system is pure illusion. It will take a revolution. Nor will they be secured by mass demonstrations or ritual

¹ The Lega (formally Lega Nord) is a far-right anti-immigrant and originally anti-Southern party going back to the early 1990s that has become fascistic, allied with (and including) fascist squads; the Five Star Movement (Movimento Cinque Stelle) arose in 2009 as a bourgeois populist protest party against governmental corruption.

² The Partito Democratico is a bourgeois “center” party that was formed in 2007 out of remnants of the former Italian Communist Party and the Christian Democracy.

³ Leader of the Lega and interior minister in the Lega/M5S government. For more on Matteo Salvini and the Lega, see “Italy: Block the Racist Salvini ‘Security and Immigration’ Decree,” *The Internationalist* No. 55, Winter 2019.

For a Proletarian Counteroffensive, Led by a Leninist-Trotskyist Revolutionary Party



Contingent of SI Cobas union in October 25-26 “general strike” calls on Italian and immigrant workers to unite against “security” decree.

one- or two-day “general strikes” (work stoppages + a parade).

What is urgently necessary at this crucial juncture is to mobilize the power of the working class in sharp and ongoing class struggle to defend immigrants’ and workers’ rights. This includes *smashing the Salvini decrees* (I and II) with the kind of militant social struggles they sought to outlaw, *overturning the anti-immigrant Minniti decree*⁴ with workers action to stop deportations and let refugees in, and *shredding the Jobs Act* with strike action to require full-time positions for all. An example of what’s needed is the audacious action of port workers in Genoa (following the lead of French dockers in Le Havre) this past June that blocked the loading of military cargo bound for the Saudi war on Yemen.⁵

⁴ Marco Minniti was interior minister in the previous PD government; the April 2017 decree bearing his name accelerated and simplified deportations through summary proceedings without debate or appeal. See “Italy: Anti-Immigrant Election Hysteria,” in *The Internationalist* No. 51, March-April 2018.

⁵ See “Port Workers Boycott Saudi Military Cargo Bound for War in Yemen,” *The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019.

Conte I and Conte II Governments: Racist Anti-Worker Repression

The new-old PD/M5S/LEU⁶ government will be just as viciously anti-worker, anti-youth, anti-woman, racist and repressive as the PD governments of 2014-18 under Matteo Renzi and Paolo Gentiloni. The “Jobs Act” condemned most youth to a life of precarious low-paid, short-term jobs without benefits while the repeal of Article 18 allowed bosses to fire workers at will. The “reform” of the Fornero law drastically cut pensions while making it impossible for many to ever have a pension. There were the limits to university matriculation, “job training” that condemns students to work for free, and the Minniti decree that stepped up deportations and incarceration of immigrants. Plus killer cuts in health care, schools, transport and other services.

The new government proclaims it will respect its “international obligations” and its “friendship” with U.S. imperialism and Donald Trump, vowing to increase military spending. The PD and M5S are now declaring how “responsible” they will be respecting the Eurobankers’ budget guidelines. In other words, they are preparing more “blood and tears” austerity for the 2020 budget and beyond. The appointment of tested and “reliable” PD bourgeois politicians like Gentiloni as EU commissioner and Roberto Gualtieri as economy minister was much appreciated by spokesmen for capital. With the new government, the stock market went up and the dreaded “spread” (difference between German and Italian 10-year bonds) has significantly gone down.

The PD has been busy trying to clean up its badly tattered image after inflicting four years of pain on workers, immigrants and youth by presenting itself as being anti-racist. This consists mainly of opposing some aspects of the prosecution of crews in NGO (non-governmental organization) ships that save refugee lives at sea. It is also partly opposing the criminalization of the mayor of Riace in Calabria, Mimmo Lucano, who tried to save his small town from depopulation by inviting and integrating immigrants to settle there. But these are only gestures.

The Renzi-Gentiloni-Minniti (PD) government made agreements with governments and tribal leaders in Libya, Chad and Niger to control immigration, constructing detention centers far from the Mediterranean in exchange for millions of euros. There have been well-documented and widespread beatings, rape and torture in these detention centers, as well as the selling of some refugees to the slave trade. This is the real face of the PD. When Salvini demagogically calls the PD “communist” and says that they want to turn Italy into a “giant refugee camp,” the PD replies by saying that they were “more effective” in carrying out deportations and keeping refugees out of Italy, citing figures to support their case.

Meanwhile, the bourgeois populist M5S has become completely incoherent and made itself a laughing stock. Cinque Stelle became popular shouting invectives at the PD-Renzi government, saying it was an odious parasitic corrupt “caste” that is only in politics for the money. Now they are in the government with the same PD, after ruling with the fascistic Lega for 14 months. Karl Marx famously described parliamentary democracy: “The
⁶ Liberi e Uguali (LEU, Free and Equal) is a smaller left-wing parliamentary group in the current government.

oppressed are allowed once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them.” In Italy voters don’t even get to pick their oppressor, as most recent governments, including this one, were the result of ministerial reshuffles, which are lucky if they last a year.

Salvini, whose Lega is scoring well above the PD and M5S in the polls, is taking its opposition to the streets. The Lega and Fratelli d’Italia⁷ of Giorgia Meloni organized a protest against the new government’s inauguration on September 5 which was full of fascist salutes. Salvini and Meloni are now mobilizing for a full-scale national “march on Rome” on October 19. These mobilizations of the fascist-infested far right are an ominous threat to the entire workers movement and the oppressed. With the PD/M5S/LEU government promising more anti-worker austerity, Salvini’s ludicrous denunciation of it as the “most left-wing government of all times,” which is supposedly “selling out Italians and Italy” by acting as “servants of the bureaucrats in Brussels,” could attract a following.

This once again shows that appeals to “fight the right” with bourgeois liberalism, “leftist” bourgeois populism (like Potere al Popolo [Power to the People] in Italy, SYRIZA in Greece or Podemos in Spain), or popular-front reformism (like Lula’s Partido dos Trabalhadores [PT] in Brazil) disarm the workers movement and often result in the growth of racist terror and fascist forces. The workers movement and oppressed have been under an all-sided attack for a long time. To beat back the capitalist offensive, carried out both by right-wing and “center-left” governments, it’s necessary to undertake class-struggle methods pointing to socialist revolution.

For Class-Struggle Actions, Not Reformist/Popular-Front Coalitions

It is necessary to fight to mobilize the workers movement to act as a tribune of the people in defense of women, minorities, immigrants and all the oppressed. This means, first of all, fighting to bring out large contingents of the working class to defy the draconian Salvini decrees. The Nucleo Internationalist d’Italia calls to form ***workers defense guards against racist terror and fascist attacks. Housing, jobs and a union are the right of everyone!***

The bourgeoisie attempts to divide the workers movement with xenophobic poison, to turn the South into a kind of “free enterprise zone” for super-exploitation in the name of “regional autonomy,” with poverty wages and short-term hiring by cooperatives, which divide and weakens the entire workers movement. We in the NI d’I fight for ***equal pay for equal work***, for ***jobs for all at full union-scale wages***, to ***turn all short-term contracts into permanent ones*** and for ***full citizenship rights for all immigrants***.

Most of the left groups and political formations opposed to the present government are calling instead for an “anti-capitalist front,” an “anti-capitalist united front,” for “unity of all revolutionary forces,” for a “class front” or similar formulations. These are all calls for a political bloc on the

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⁷ Brothers of Italy is a fascist party, the political continuity of the National Alliance (AN) and before that the Italian Social Movement (MSI), the political heirs of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.

Hong Kong “Democracy” Riots: Pro-Imperialist, Anti-Communist, Fascist-Infested



Miguel Candela / EPA-EFE



Marco Rubio/twitter



Screen shot video/SCMP

Left: December 1 “March of Gratitude to the U.S.” near U.S. consulate in Hong Kong. Middle: Sign held at march reading “God Damn Commies, CCP go to Hell.” Right: Construction worker being doused with flammable liquid and set afire by masked protesters for objecting to their destruction of the Metro system, November 11.

The following article is based on a presentation at a forum of the Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the League for the Fourth International, held in Berlin on December 15.

For the past eight months, the territory of Hong Kong, a former British colony and since 1997 a Special Autonomous Region (SAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), has been wracked by demonstrations and riots that have been almost universally hailed in the West. The protests are described as a “pro-democracy” movement, with “radicalized youth” in the lead, just as the Occupy Central or “Umbrella movement” of 2014 was portrayed. In reality, the mass marches led by middle-class

professionals are seeking to preserve the special legal status of this capitalist enclave, while the black-clad offspring of Hong Kong’s bourgeois elite have launched violent attacks aimed at the working class (e.g., torching subway stations) and mainland Chinese. Many leaders call for separation from the PRC. Ultimately, they and their imperialist patrons are looking to spark counterrevolution in the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state.

As we have stressed:

“The Hong Kong protests, trumpeted by the imperialist media marching in lockstep, have brought together an anti-communist unholy alliance extending from outright fascists and right-wing conservatives to bourgeois liberals and most



Nicolas Asfour / AFP



Kelly Ho / South China Morning Post



Kacey Wong

Yearning for colonialism: protesters outside British consulate sing “God Save the Queen,” September 15. Anti-communism and appeals for Hong Kong independence, July 1. “The shield,” September 29.

For Workers Mobilization to Defend China

37-year-old man reportedly from Wuhan
mobbed and assaulted by rioters in Mong Kok

By Dimsum Daily Hong Kong · 12:13PM Hk on January 27, 2020



Photos: (left) Dimsum Daily; (center) Vincent Yu / Associated Press; (right) South China Morning Post

Hong Kong rioters exploit coronavirus hysteria, beating man from Wuhan, China (left), firebombing a planned quarantine center (center) and bombing hospital in Kowloon.

of what remains of an ostensibly socialist left. The League for the Fourth International, in contrast, warns that these protests are a threat to the remaining gains of the Chinese Revolution. They must be countered with a working-class mobilization on a revolutionary program to drive out the imperialists, expropriate the Hong Kong bourgeoisie and end Hong Kong's "autonomous" status as a capitalist enclave." —"Hong Kong: Defeat Pro-Imperialist Riots With Revolutionary Workers Mobilization," *The Internationalist* No. 57 (September-October 2019)

Our aim here is to graphically show the ugly counterrevolutionary reality behind the curtain of misinformation spread by the capitalist politicians, bourgeois media and their "left" tails.

The opportunist left has desperately sought to cover up the blatantly pro-imperialist politics of this movement, which is a little hard to do when the protesters are waving U.S. and British colonial flags. In early December, Hong Kong protest leaders held a "March of Gratitude to the U.S." (top left photo on facing page) following Trump's signing of a resolution calling for increased sanctions on pro-China Hong Kong leaders, approved almost unanimously by Republicans and Democrats. Earlier, protestors sang "God Save the Queen" and waved Union Jack flags outside the UK consulate in Hong Kong. Whether nostalgic for their former colonial masters or appealing to today's hegemonic power, U.S. imperialism, the protestors have one thing in common: their allegiance to the

capitalist "free world" against communism.

The original target of the protests is long gone. The bill in the Hong Kong legislative council to permit the extradition of criminal suspects was shelved on June 15 and formally withdrawn on September 4. But instead of dissipating, the demonstrations grew increasingly violent, culminating in a pitched battle around the universities in mid-late November on the eve of elections for the district councils. In that vote, under the electoral system inherited from colonial rule, the "pro-democracy" (anti-China) bloc won 57% of the votes and 86% of the seats, while pro-Beijing candidates won 42% of the votes, but only 14% of the seats. The turnout for anti-China candidates in what was portrayed as a referendum on the protests reflects the economic and social reality of this territory, which has been a capitalist refuge ever since the 1949 Chinese Revolution.

In the new year, protests have resumed. On January 1, a mass march dotted with U.S. and UK flags and banners calling to "liberate Hong Kong" turned into arson attacks, including firebombing a bus and a subway train with passengers on board; 400 were arrested as the police cracked down. On January 19, at a demo billed as a "Universal Siege on Communists" — which the "mainstream" bourgeois media tried to pass off as a "rally for universal suffrage" — two police liaison officers were beaten bloody with metal batons by protesters right after speaking with the rally organizer. On January 26, amid the hysteria over the Wuhan coronavirus, rioters commemorating earlier clashes in the Mong Kok district brutally beat and stabbed a man in the neck when they saw that his identity card showed his residential address as Wuhan.

That same night, masked, black-clad protesters firebombed an unoccupied housing project near the border with mainland China that had been designated for quarantining people who did not show symptoms but had been in close contact with individuals who may have contracted the virus. The next morning, an improvised explosive device went off in a toilet at a public hospital in Kowloon. A posting on the encrypted messaging app Telegram used by protesters warned that the attack was "just a warning" and "there will be more real bombs to come" if Hong Kong authorities didn't close the border. And on February 3, a strike by a minority "union" of health workers raised the same demand, which Hong Kong "localists" have called for long before the outbreak. The majority union of health workers condemned the strike as endangering patients.

Duoweineews



Hong Kong "pro-democracy" protest in 2015 waved the British colonial flag on anniversary of return to China.

Anti-Communist Symbolism

Much of the reactionary symbolism in this year's protests has been around for a while. In 2016 there was a scandal and angry counterprotest when two Hong Kong nativist legislators in their oaths of office referred to China by the derogatory term "Shina" (支那) that was used by Japanese imperialism during its invasion of China. (One of the disqualified legislators referred to the People's Republic of China as the "re-fucking of Shina.") This is a term so offensive against the Chinese people that it is even banned in Japan. Yet now this derogatory slur is to be seen in common protest graffiti all over Hong Kong, for example defacing plaques of Chinese government offices and state-owned banks.

A more recent addition to the anti-communist symbolism was the adoption of Pepe the Frog as the movement's mascot. This character has been a favored symbol of the racist alt-right in the U.S. But it's not just the symbol: when the well-known fascist celebrity Joey Gibson (whose Patriot Prayer group has staged numerous provocations in Portland, Oregon) showed



Meme against Yao Wai-ching's use of the offensive anti-China slur "Shina" (支那) in place of "China" in her oath of office (October 2016).



Japanese imperialist propaganda using the derogatory slur "Shina" (支那) to justify invasion of China (bottom left). Today rioters use this slur to deface Bank of China branch (top, reads "happy collapse of Shina") and China's Liaison Office (bottom right).



Protesters with their alt-right mascot Pepe the Frog, September 30, on the eve of 70th anniversary of the Chinese Revolution.

up at the protests, he was enthusiastically greeted with chants of "U.S.A., U.S.A." Gibson was also welcomed to join in the storming of the Legislative Council building. Inside the Legco chamber, the podium was covered with a British colonial flag.

Among the graffiti all over the wall (see photo on facing page) is a reference the anti-China Sunflower movement in Taiwan. This points to the close links between counterrevolutionary movements in Hong Kong and Taiwan. While PRC flags are repeatedly burned or thrown in the harbor, Taiwanese flags (that is, the flag of Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang) are welcomed in the protests.

According to the *New York Times* (15 August), Edward Leung is "the closest thing Hong Kong's tumultuous and leaderless protest movement has to a guiding light." Leung was the spokesman of the Hong Kong Indigenous party, which is known for its xenophobic campaign of "retake" actions – publicly attacking random mainland shoppers and



Taiwanese flags fly at Hong Kong protest, December 8. Falun Gong banner (left) calls to "exterminate the CCP," calling them "locusts" while waving the British colonial flag. In 2016, Leung and two other members of his group were photographed meeting U.S. diplomats after Leung led a riot where he admitted to attacking a police officer. Leung now serves as the "inspiration and guidance" of the protests from behind bars. Protesters carry his portrait and his election slogan has become the central slogan of the protests: "Retake Hong Kong! Revolution of our times!" (光復香港，時代革命).

The Chinese term for "retake" (光復, *guangfu*) refers to retaking lost territory. Sharing the perspective of their imperialist

Facebook



Fascist organizer Joey Gibson waving U.S. flag at Hong Kong protest, 1 July 2019.

Winson Wong



Protestors storm Legco chamber, 1 July 2019.

sponsors, Hong Kong “localists” consider the territory to have been “lost” when it returned to China in 1997. So “retake Hong Kong” means returning Hong Kong back to the “good old days” under the boot of imperialism, “to recover the freedoms and impartial system of justice that they believe have been steadily eroded” (*New York Times*). In case anyone harbors any doubt about it, the meaning of this slogan is made entirely clear with the accompanying British colonial flags and cozy relations with U.S. imperialism. *Guangfu* also has a significant political history in capitalist Taiwan, where following their defeat in 1949, the main slogan of the Guomindang regime was to “Retake the Mainland” (光复大陆, *guangfu dalu*).

Twitter



Protesters holding photos of their alt-right “guiding light” Edward Leung, July 2019

The Ukrainian Connection

As we noted in *The Internationalist* No. 57, the Hong Kong protests have been “quite literally inspired by the fascist/Ukrainian nationalist uprising of 2014, copied the title of its anthem and adopted its violent tactics.” It was Edward Leung who “first pointed people towards the Ukraine example,” according to *1843* (15 October 2019), a magazine published by the London *Economist*.



Ukrainian Society of Hong Kong

Hong Kong screening of film *Winter on Fire* glorifying 2014 fascist/nationalist coup in Ukraine, August 2019.

During August thousands of Hong Kong protesters watched showings of a film celebrating the “Euromaidan” movement, *Winter on Fire*. Ukrainian fascists have also been showing up in Hong Kong in person, where they have been embraced by protestors.

Details on the Ukrainian connection have been exposed in an informative article in *The Grayzone* (4 December). Describing the background of the fascists who traveled to Hong Kong, the article notes: “These extremists previously fought in a notoriously brutal neo-Nazi militia called the Azov Battalion, in Ukraine’s war against pro-Russian militants.” The Azov Battalion is a neo-Nazi paramilitary group whose symbol is the Wolfsangel, taken from the German SS tank division Das Reich in World War II. After the Western-backed 2014 coup against Ukraine’s government, Azov was incorporated into the Ukrainian National Guard. It has received support from the U.S. government, which armed and advised the neo-Nazi outfit.

Also spotted in Hong Kong was Serhii Sternenko,



Duowei News

Ukrainian fascist group at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, site of pitched battle with police.

a former leader of the Ukrainian fascist Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), which burned down the trade-union headquarters in Odessa (see “Fascist Pogrom in Odessa, And the Aftermath,” *The Internationalist* No. 37, May-June 2014). In early December, these Ukrainian fascists posted photos of themselves at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University campus-turned-military-base-camp. After days of firebomb attacks launched by masked rioters, when police retook the campus “a total of 3,989 petrol bombs, 1,339 pieces of explosives, and 601 bottles of corrosive liquid were found,” according to the *South China Morning Post* (2 December 2019). Belying talk of supposed cop brutality against “peaceful demonstrators” in Hong Kong, the pitched battle at PolyU underscores that the pro-imperialist riots constitute a military threat which the Hong Kong police are right to repress.

Like the Ukrainian nationalist/fascist uprising of 2014, the so-called “pro-democracy” movement in Hong Kong is financed by the U.S. government, to the tune of many millions of dollars, funneled through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and other anti-Communist conduits like Freedom House. The NED has been heavily focused on Hong Kong since the “one country, two systems” agreement allowed them the freedom to use Hong Kong as an organizing base for counterrevolution on Chinese soil. The major political



Protesters hurl firebombs at police during battle at PolyU. After campus was retaken, a huge arsenal of incendiary weapons was found. So much for the imperialist media story of police wantonly attacking peaceful demonstrators.

parties that are mobilizing in support of these protests today all have sordid histories of working together with the NED, its subsidiaries, or participating in its counterrevolutionary political projects (see “Washington’s Hand Behind Anti-China Riots in Hong Kong” on page 23 of this issue).

Social-Democratic Accomplices of U.S. Imperialism

There are also self-proclaimed socialists in Hong Kong who have long worked together with this imperialist-sponsored “democracy” camp and serve to give a left cover to the current counterrevolutionary riots. Socialist Action (SA) was until recently the Hong Kong group of the Committee for a Workers International (CWI), and is now affiliated with International Socialist Alternative (ISA) following a split in the CWI last July. In the photo to the left we see Socialist Action standing together with a Taiwanese flag and their banner saying “Down with the CCP Dictatorship.” The CWI/ISA and other fake socialists have a purely (bourgeois) “democratic” rather than a proletarian class program, and thus end up echoing the imperialists and siding with counterrevolution – as they also did in East Europe and the Soviet Union 30 years ago.

SA’s critique of bourgeois “pan-democratic” figures like Benny Tai is that they are too “timid and compromising” to the CCP. Tai has a long history of collaboration with U.S. agencies (see “Washington’s Hand...” on page 23 for details), and with fellow anti-communists in Taiwan. In 2018, Tai spoke at a meeting of the Taiwan Youth Anti-Communist Corps where he fantasized about their common dream of “retaking” all of China for capitalist exploitation, calling for a break-up of China: “We could consider going independent, being part of a federal system or a confederation system similar to that of the European Union.” When pro-Beijing politicians and media



Fake-left “Socialist Action” (part of ISA split from CWI) joins bourgeois anti-communist chorus with banner reading “Down with the CCP Dictatorship” alongside reactionaries waving the blood-drenched Guomindang flag and CIA-funded “democratic” parties at April 28 Hong Kong protest.



Benny Tai speaking at Taiwan Youth Anti-Communist Corps event, March 2018.

called for measures against Benny Tai for this explicit counter-revolutionary activity, the pan-democrats, joined by Socialist Action, all came out to support Benny Tai's "free speech."

The Hong Kong political scene has not always been so reactionary. In 1967, pro-communist workers mobilized strike actions and leftist protests that almost took down the British colonial regime. They carried portraits of Mao and clearly wanted to extend the gains of the Chinese Revolution to Hong Kong. A faction of the People's Liberation Army made plans to cross the border to assist the workers in sweeping out their colonial oppressors. However, this plan was called off by a late-night order to the local army commander on instructions from Premier Zhou Enlai. The capitulatory policy of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucrats, which has always sought to keep the status of Hong Kong as a capitalist opening to the world, meant that they refused to take the side of the workers in struggle, leaving them to be brutally crushed by British imperialism.



The "good old days" of British rule. Colonial police beat Hong Kong workers in 1967.

The Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy again betrayed the Hong Kong working class by agreeing to the 1997 "one country, two systems" deal with Britain, which would continue to subject Hong Kong workers to the existing capitalist economic and political system for another half century. Today, the Beijing regime perpetuates this betrayal in upholding the policy of "two systems" – which is why Hong Kong protesters can continue to run riot. Contrary to frauds like Socialist Action, which allies with pro-imperialist "democrats" and seeks to export counterrevolutionary Hong Kong protests to mainland China, authentic Trotskyists say: *Extend the liberating gains of the Chinese Revolution to Hong Kong! Expropriate the capitalists, drive out the imperialists!*

"One Country, Two Systems" = Stalinist Betrayal of the Revolution

The policy of "one country, two systems" is an extension of the Stalinist dogma of building "socialism in one country," which is based on the illusion of maintaining "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. This is reflected in the effort by the Beijing Stalinists leadership to recruit local capitalist politicians to run Hong Kong. Just before the handover to China, the British put Anson Chan in as No. 2 in the Hong Kong government, who was then confirmed by PRC leaders to "ensure government continuity." Since joining the colonial administration in 1962 until today, Chan has never stopped being a loyal agent of imperialism. The Heritage Foundation praises the fact that under Anson Chan, the counterrevolutionary sect Falun Gong was "allowed to use Hong Kong's city hall for a large gathering" as "a striking example of freedom in a Chinese-ruled territory."

The imperialists have sought to "retake" China ever since the 1949 revolution, when the capitalist state was smashed and replaced with a workers state based on collectivized property. This laid the basis for a centrally planned economy, the necessary foundation for building socialism, a classless society. But because political power has throughout been in the hands of the Stalinists at the head of a conservative nationalist



Pro-China strikes and demos in 1967 almost brought down colonial rule, but Beijing called them off.

bureaucratic caste, the enormous potential of this revolutionary conquest has not been fully realized. Today, even those gains are under assault with the expansion of “special economic zones” of capitalist exploitation by overseas companies, by the growth of a domestic Chinese capitalist class, and by the counterrevolutionary mobilizations in Hong Kong, in 2014 and today.

Nevertheless, despite bureaucratic mismanagement, the Chinese planned economy has made remarkable achievements in improving the lives of working people who had previously been hideously oppressed by imperialist plunder.

Since the revolution, the population of China has seen an unprecedented increase in life expectancy, from 35 years in 1949 to 77 years in 2018, and now enjoys a higher healthy life expectancy than the U.S. population. Moreover, from 1998 to 2018, workers’ wages increased by ten times (1,000%), tripling over the last decade, and are now higher than the newest members of the European Union. (U.S. workers’ real wages have stagnated for the last 40 years.) And contrary to the expectations of bourgeois economists and fake leftists who claim that China is capitalist, the state sector has grown greatly since the 2007-09 world capitalist crisis.

In the trade war, Wall Street and Washington bellyache about how “unfair” it is that China’s economy is governed by a plan rather than being at the mercy of the capitalist market. Democrats in Congress in particular demand that the PRC stop supporting state-owned enterprises. The capitalists are thirsting to shut down – or buy up – state-owned steel and cement industries, the largest in the world, which are described as woefully “inefficient” even as they have driven Western firms out of business. They want to get their hands on the banks, that they claim are hopelessly “burdened with debt,” yet don’t



June 30 rally in Hong Kong in opposition to the counterrevolutionary riots.

act as “normal” capitalist banks, since they are not driven by profit or loss. They want to control the oil and gas sectors, to gain a stranglehold over the economy, as they have in Japan. They want to privatize and loot China’s economy.

It’s not surprising that the U.S. government has been spending billions in its Cold War against China, just as it did, unfortunately successfully, against the former Soviet Union in 1991-92. The result of capitalist restoration there in the name of “democracy” was massive impoverishment and a drastic fall in life expectancy. Just as we Trotskyists fought to the end to defend the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc against the imperialist military/economic onslaught, we stand today for unconditional defense of China and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states (North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba) against the threat of counterrevolution from within and without. Today, the Hong Kong riots are the spearhead of the imperialist offensive aiming to undo the Chinese Revolution.

Yet in response to the Hong Kong riots, the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy is narrowly appealing to nationalism, opposing interference by “foreign nations,” rather than opposing the *class* interests the movement represents, namely the interests of capital against the working class. The reason is quite basic: the Stalinist dogma of building “socialism in one country” has always been based on the policy of class collaboration with sections of the bourgeoisie. That is the road to defeat. As we wrote in *The Internationalist* No. 57:

“What is required is the forging of a genuinely communist, Trotskyist vanguard to lead the struggle to expropriate the entire Hong Kong bourgeoisie, including its pro-Beijing components, and to join with class-conscious workers and communists throughout China in defending the revolutionary gains. Authentic Trotskyists have always stood for uprooting the heritage of Britain’s colonial theft of Hong Kong, while calling for workers political revolution throughout China to oust the privileged bureaucracy, smash the encroaching capitalists, establish the proletarian democracy of workers councils (soviets), and unite with the world’s workers to open the road to socialism.” ■



Martin Lee and Anson Chan at National Endowment for Democracy panel on Hong Kong, 2 April 2014.

Washington's Hand Behind Anti-China Riots in Hong Kong

The escalating and increasingly violent protests in Hong Kong, a capitalist enclave in southern China, are routinely referred to in Western media as a “democracy movement.” In fact, from the outset, the protests have been instigated, advised and funded by U.S. imperialism, fueled by virulent anti-communism and directed against the People’s Republic of China (PRC), of which Hong Kong is a special autonomous region (SAR). See “Hong Kong: Defeat Pro-Imperialist Riots With Revolutionary Workers Mobilization,” in *The Internationalist* No. 57, September-October 2019; and “Hong Kong ‘Democracy’ Riots: Pro-Imperialist, Anti-Communist, Fascist-Infested” in this issue for further information and analysis. Here we detail how this “astroturf” (fake grassroots) movement has been remote-controlled from Washington.

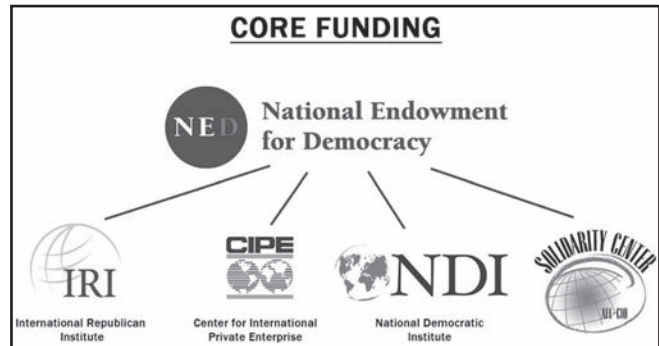
U.S. imperialism has sought to “take back” China ever since the 1949 revolution led by the Communist Party that threw out the imperialist puppet Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party (Guomindang, or GMD). Hong Kong has been a pivot for imperialist subversion, both under British colonial rule up to 1997, and since then exploiting its “one country, two systems” autonomous status within China. A key conduit has been the **National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**, a U.S. government agency set up in 1983 by Ronald Reagan to fund “non-governmental organizations” (NGOs) and other opposition groups after the covert financing of political parties and pro-imperialist trade unions by the Central Intelligence Agency was exposed in the mid-1970s. The NED has pumped millions of dollars into Hong Kong-based anti-China “civic society” groups over the years.

The leaders of this vehicle for imperialist subversion and mayhem are fairly candid about their role. The NED’s first chairman, Allen Weinstein, told David Ignatius of the *Washington Post* (22 September 1991), “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by the CIA.”¹ Ignatius called the NED the “sugar daddy of overt operations.” Working through these “overt operatives” the NED has, according to its own accounting, funneled over US\$27 million into China just in the last five years, much of it through Hong Kong, for such things as “strengthen grassroots NGOs.” In 2019, this agency of U.S. penetration budgeted US\$448,000 for Hong Kong-specific operations, along with US\$3.8 million for China general projects, \$515,000 for Tibet, and \$1.2 million for Xinjiang and other Uighur operations.²

The current protests began over the pretext of a bill introduced in the Hong Kong Legislative Council last March by the pro-Beijing Hong Kong government of chief executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor that would have permitted the

¹ *Washington Post*, 22 September 1991, quoted in Bill Blum, “Trojan Horse: The National Endowment for Democracy,” in Blum, *Rogue State: A Guide to the World’s Only Superpower* (2005).

² This is roughly the same as for 2018, except for a doubling of the funding last year of Uighur organizations. See <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/themes/ned/search/grant-search.php>.



Foreign Policy Research Institute

U.S. funding is often channeled through conduits.

extradition of criminal suspects to mainland China and elsewhere. Immediately, there was tumult in the LegCo by various opposition legislators from parties referred to locally as “pan-democratic.”³ Chief among them are the **Democratic Party** founded by Martin Lee Chu-ming and the **Civic Party** of Alan Leong Kah-kit, along with the **Labor Party** of Lee Cheuk-yan. All three have long been backed by the U.S., both directly by the NED and through its affiliates, notably the **National Democratic Institute (NDI)**, run by the U.S. Democratic Party, **Freedom House**,⁴ and the AFL-CIO “**Solidarity Center**.”⁵

- **Martin Lee** of the Hong Kong Democratic Party received a 1997 NED “Democracy Award.” In June 2001, Lee met with Nancy Pelosi in her first term as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, seeking support from the U.S.

³ “Havoc in Hong Kong Legislature Over Extradition Bill,” *New York Times*, 12 May 2019.

⁴ Freedom House is a U.S. government-funded “NGO” set up in 1941, which ever since the end of World War II has been a prime purveyor of Cold War anti-communism. In the 1960s it supported the U.S. war on Vietnam under Democrat Lyndon Johnson while criticizing Martin Luther King Jr. for his opposition to the war. In the 1970s it highlighted “Soviet dissidents,” notably the U.S. collaborator Andrei Sakharov, and apologized for the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. In the 1980s Freedom House was a main propagandist for the anti-Soviet, Polish nationalist Solidarnosc pseudo-union and was central to the U.S.-backed contra war on Sandinista Nicaragua. Since the 1989-92 counterrevolution in the Soviet bloc, Freedom House has been a key piece in U.S. machinations in Ukraine and Venezuela, while particularly targeting Cuba and China.

⁵ Also known as the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS), the Solidarity Center is the international operations arm of the main U.S. labor federation. While inside the U.S., the AFL-CIO acts as a normal union (i.e., with a sellout leadership that politically subordinates the workers to the capitalist Democratic Party), internationally it is nothing but an arm of U.S. imperialism. It continues the work of the infamous American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD) in funding “labor” opposition to leftist and populist regimes at odds with Washington. It is overwhelmingly funded by the U.S. government via the NED, and its representatives work closely with (or frequently are) CIA agents.



Alan Weinstein, founder of the NED, spills the beans.

Congress and the Clinton administration.⁶ In late 2014 he was prominent in the Occupy Central protests or “Umbrella movement” in Hong Kong. Shortly before that, Lee spoke at an April 2014 NED forum in Washington on “Why Democracy in Hong Kong Matters,” laying out the agenda of the movement that broke out a few months later.⁷ Lee is the son of a GMD general who fled to Hong Kong after the 1949 Chinese Revolution.

- **Alan Leong**, chairman of the Civic Party, was one of the main speakers at conferences in January 2010 and November 2010 on “Hong Kong Political Reform” co-sponsored by the NDI as part of its “Developing Political Parties” program.⁸ Together with former party leader **Audrey Eu** Yuet-mee and current party leader **Alvin Yeung** Ngok-kiu, the three Civic Party chiefs are leading lights of the Hong Kong Bar Association and intimately involved in the Centre for Comparative and Public Law (CCPL) at Hong Kong University, whose projects (including “Design Democracy Hong Kong”) have been funded by the NDI and NED.
- **Lee Cheuk-yan**, the founder and perennial leader of the Hong Kong Labor Party, is also head of the anti-communist **Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)**, which has received millions of dollars from U.S. conduits. In response to charges that Washington was funding key actors in the 2014 Umbrella movement, the U.S. government broadcaster Voice of America (23 October 2014) brazenly reported: “HKCTU released a statement ... saying it has received \$540,000 in financial support from Solidarity Center, another NED core grantee, over the past seven years.”⁹ In 2018, the NED reported that it granted \$200,000 to the Solidarity Center and \$155,000 to the NDI for work in Hong Kong.¹⁰

The NED has received a good deal of attention, but its publicly announced grants of \$6 million annually are only the tip of the iceberg. According to a Congressional Research Service bulletin, *U.S. Assistance Programs in China* (January 2016), the U.S. spent another \$13.5 million on China “democracy” and “rule of law” projects in 2015 alone, while the State Department reports that this yearly funding rose to \$23 million in 2018. The CRS notes, that

⁶ https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09HONGKONG985_a.html

⁷ <https://www.ned.org/events/why-democracy-in-hong-kong-matters/>

⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/HongKongPoliticalReformSeries/?fref=nf>

⁹ <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/voa-exclusive-us-democracy-group-rebuts-hong-kong-meddling-allegations>

¹⁰ <https://www.ned.org/region/asia/hong-kong-china-2018/> Quoted in “American Gov’t, NGOs Fuel and Fund Hong Kong Anti-Extradition Protests,” *Mint Press*, 13 June 2019.

“due to political sensitivities in China,” for these programs, the U.S. “does not openly disclose the names of its grant recipients.” And these are only the publicly announced figures.

U.S. sponsorship of anti-China organizations isn’t just something in the past. Shortly before the pandemonium in the Hong Kong legislative council last May, the “United States-China Economic and Security Review Commission,” issued a statement denouncing the extradition bill, saying it “could create serious risks for U.S. national security and economic interests” and “increase the territory’s susceptibility to Beijing’s political coercion and further erode Hong Kong’s autonomy.”¹¹ The USCESRC is a bipartisan (Democrat and Republican) Congressional body set up in 2000 as China was in the process of joining the World Trade Organization to investigate “national security implications” of U.S.-China economic relations. Every year it issues a huge report pushing for confrontation with China. The 2018 report states:¹²

“China’s state-led, market-distorting economic model presents a challenge to U.S. economic and national security interests... “In light of China’s increasing reach into Hong Kong, some observers argue the territory is losing the unique characteristics and legal protections that make it important to U.S. interests... “Members of Congress, the Administration, and the business community have already begun taking bipartisan steps to address China’s subversion of international order.”

Following the May 7 USCESRC denunciation of the Hong Kong extradition bill, the NED invited several Hong Kong leaders to Washington where on May 14 it held an event on “New Threats to Civil Society and the Rule of Law in Hong Kong.”¹³ The delegation included U.S.-financed “democrats” Martin Lee and Lee Cheuk-yan (see above) as well as **Nathan Law** Kwun-chung, the former secretary general of the Hong Kong Federation of Students. Law was a top leader of the 2014 Occupy Central protests and that year met in Washington with Nancy Pelosi and U.S. vice president Joe Biden. Law was also the founding chairman of Demosistō, a “localist” Hong Kong party that was formed in 2016 on a program calling for “self-determination” and “sovereignty” for the territory, meaning separation from China.

In early June, protest against the extradition law moved into the streets. Initially it was fairly tame, led by lawyers from the Progressive Lawyers Group, Law Society and Hong Kong Bar Association, all of them closely associated with the NED-funded CCPL. But by mid-June, a decision was made to escalate the movement, with a mass march of reportedly up to 2 million people. This demonstration was called by the **Civil Human Rights Front** (CHRF), a coalition of various groups aided by the NED. In addition to the Democratic, Civic and Labor parties and the HKCTU, all NED-financed, one of the main components of the Front is the **Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor**, which according to the 2014 VOA article cited above receives a direct subsidy of US\$150,000 a year from the NED.

The CHRF’s former convenor was **Johnson Yeung** Ching-

¹¹ https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/USCC%20Issue%20Brief_HK%20Extradition%20Bill.pdf

¹² <https://www.uscc.gov/files/000895>

¹³ <https://www.ned.org/events/new-threats-to-civil-society-and-the-rule-of-law-in-hong-kong/>



At May 2019 National Endowment for Democracy forum in Washington, Democratic Party leader Martin Lee (second from left), Labor Party leader Lee Cheuk-yan (second from right) and Nathan Law (right) call for U.S. support to protests.

yin, who was deputy secretary general of the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) during the 2014 “Umbrella” protests and was also a Hurford youth fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy, which described the HKFS as “a platform for youth engagement in social action.” The current convenor of the CHRF is a member of the League of Social Democrats (LSD), a bourgeois populist party whose most prominent spokesman is **Leung Kwok-hung**, known as “Long Hair,” who has a penchant for Che Guevara t-shirts and is often falsely labeled a Trotskyist (see box page 26).

In November 2018, Leung (along with Nathan Law) attended a conference in Taiwan sponsored by the **Taiwan Foundation for Democracy**, which was set up in partnership with the NED and its president Carl Gershman, of the Cold War anti-communist Social Democrats USA.¹⁴ At the conference, “Long Hair” denounced China as a “new imperial power” and declared that neither the GMD nor the other major Taiwanese party could adequately fight the Chinese Communist Party. And last summer, Leung Kwok-hung was the lead speaker at a rally promoting the reactionary, anti-communist Falun Gong sect. He was quoted in the *Epoch Times* (21 July 2019) praising the “steadfastness” of this this well-financed counterrevolutionary outfit.¹⁵

The Cultivation and Care of Imperialist Puppets

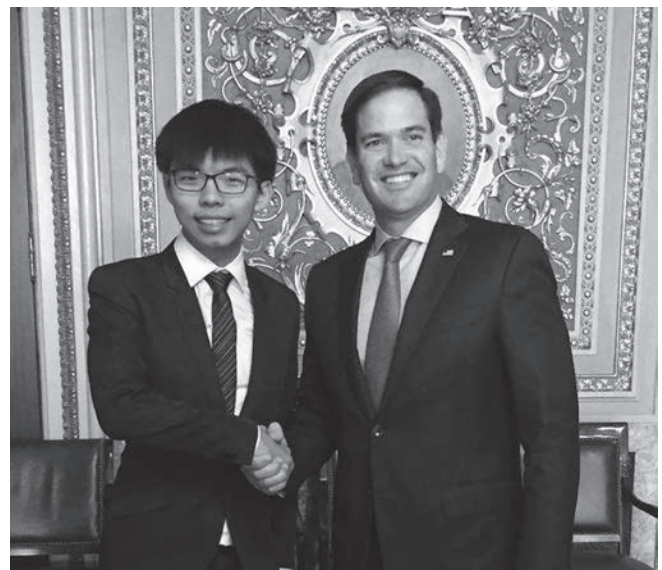
U.S. imperialism puts a great deal of effort and money into cultivating and training its bought-and-paid-for “democratic activists.” At the May 14 Washington event, Lynn Lee, the associate director of the NED’s Asia program, observed, “Hong

¹⁴ For more on these social-democratic Cold Warriors, see the article “‘Democratic Socialism’ in the Service of U.S. Imperialism,” in the Internationalist Group pamphlet, *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats* (February 2018).

¹⁵ https://www.theepochtimes.com/hundreds-of-falun-gong-practitioners-in-hong-kong-commemorate-20th-anniversary-of-chinas-persecution_3010365.html

Kong is a very strategic place for many of us.” Indeed. Nathan Law responded, “We need some more support in terms of the international level.... Hong Kong as an information hub, as a safe harbor, it’s the forefront of the clash of two values, of authoritarian values and liberal values.” He called on the “international community, the free world” to back the opposition to the extradition law. (Back in 2017, at a “World Movement for Democracy” Assembly held at NED headquarters in Washington, Law received a “Democracy Courage Tribute” from this NED front group.)

In early 2018, a group of U.S. congressmen led by right-wing Republican senator Marco Rubio nominated Nathan Law along with two other former student leaders of the Umbrella movement, **Joshua Wong** Chi-fung and **Alex Chow** Yong-kang, for the Nobel peace prize (named after the Swedish cannon manufacturer Alfred Nobel) for seeking to “bring political reform and self-determination to Hong Kong.” At age 17, Wong became the teenage poster child of the Occupy Central protests and was lionized by imperialist media and politicians. He was nominated for *Time* magazine’s Person of the Year in 2014, labeled one of the “world’s greatest leaders” by *Fortune* magazine in 2015 and is the star of a Netflix documentary, *continued on page 27*



Facebook / Joshua Wong

Joshua Wong with Republican senator Marco Rubio in November 2016. Immediately after election of Donald Trump, Wong was brought to Washington to lobby for China-bashing “Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act.”

Leung Kwok-hung (“Long Hair”) – Hong Kong Social Democrat in the Service of Imperialism

Hong Kong Free Press

Perhaps the best-known Hong Kong self-proclaimed “socialist” activist promoting anti-China “pro-democracy” protests is Leung Kwok-hung, frequently referred to by his nickname, “Long Hair.” Often falsely identified as a “Trotskyist,”¹ he is a former member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, was prominent in the 2014 Umbrella movement and is the main spokesman for the League of Social Democrats. “Longhair” is no socialist, much less a supporter of the revolutionary Marxist program of Lenin and Trotsky. His main role, in fact, has been to give a “left” cover to bourgeois anti-China movements, from the current “anti-extradition” protests to the sinister counterrevolutionary sect Falun Gong.

Falun Gong (a/k/a Falun Dafa) is a reactionary U.S.-based cult which sees evolution as a communist plot, calls for the execution of homosexuals, holds that “mixed-blood” children go to hell, and that women’s suffrage is a sign of societal decay. With the support of the imperialists, Falun Gong has amassed an extensive and influential media empire (its flagship paper is the *Epoch Times*) and entertainment operation (the Shen Yun dance company), spreading anti-communism in Hong Kong and the Chinese diaspora around the globe. Leung Kwok-hung has repeatedly spoken on Falun Gong platforms.

“Long Hair” is also enamored of Liu Xiaobo, who was jailed and awarded a Nobel Peace Prize for his role in writing the pro-imperialist anti-communist manifesto “Charter

¹ He was a founder and main leader of the Revolutionary Marxist League which from 1975 to its dissolution in the mid-late 1980s was affiliated with the United Secretariat led by Ernest Mandel.



Leung Kwok-hung (“Longhair”) speaking at event celebrating the pro-imperialist counterrevolutionary Liu Xiaobo.

08,” modeled on Charter 77 of anti-Soviet Czech dissidents. Charter 08 calls for an “economic system of free and fair markets,” and “the transfer of state-owned enterprises to private ownership” – i.e., to restore capitalism. Its signatories include leaders of the Hong Kong Democratic Party, the Civic Party and the League of Social Democrats, among others, and of course “Long Hair” himself.” Liu Xiaobo (who died in 2017) was an open supporter of colonialism, saying: “It took Hong Kong 100 years to become what it is. Given the size of China, certainly it would need 300 years of colonization for it to become like what Hong Kong is today. I even doubt whether 300 years would be enough.”

Liu’s perspective was summed up in his statement that “to choose Westernization is to choose to be human.” And his preferred means of “Westernizing” is also clear: “The free world led by the U.S. fought almost all regimes that trampled on human rights.... The major wars that the U.S. became involved in are all ethically defensible.” The love of U.S. imperialism displayed by Joshua Wong and other youthful Hong Kong protest leaders, promoted by U.S. rulers, reflects the views of their mentors, from the suit-and-tie bourgeois politicians like Martin Lee to Che Guevara t-shirt-wearing fake leftists like “Long Hair.” Leung who not only defends (in the name of “free speech”) Benny Tai’s call at a Taiwan anti-communist seminar for a breakup of China after a counterrevolution, but himself spoke at a Taiwan government-funded, imperialist sponsored anti-communist meeting.

So what else is new? That’s what social democrats do. ■



“Long Hair” at meeting of Taiwan government-funded, NED-sponsored “democracy” foundation.

Wikipedia



Jimmy Lai, publisher of *Apple Daily*, bankroller of 2014 “Umbrella Movement,” at neoconservative Foundation for Defense of Democracies during July 2019 visit to Washington to drum up support for Hong Kong “anti-extradition” protests.

continued from page 25

Joshua: Teenager vs. Superpower in 2017. All with ample backing from the top level of U.S. imperialism.

In September 2015, Joshua Wong was brought to Washington to receive an award from the NED subsidiary Freedom House, along with Martin Lee and **Benny Tai** Yiu-ting, hailing them as “three generations of Hong Kong democracy leaders.” Tai is an associate professor of law at Hong Kong University, who in 2013 wrote an article on “Civil Disobedience’s Deadliest Weapon” and a year later initiated the Occupy protests. He was for a number of years a board member of the NED-funded Centre for Comparative and Public Law and a regular speaker at NED-sponsored events. In 2018, Tai spoke at a seminar of the Taiwan Youth Anti-Communist Corps foreseeing Hong Kong “going independent” as part of a break-up of China following the end of the “dictatorship” (i.e., counterrevolution).¹⁶

Benny Tai’s specialty working with the U.S.-backed CCPL has been designing “democratic” strategies to increase the political leverage of anti-Beijing forces by combining street action with exploiting Hong Kong’s electoral laws inherited from British colonialism, which greatly distort voting results. In 2017, Tai launched Project Storm to win a majority of the District Council seats. He accomplished this last November when the main pro-Beijing party, DAB got 17% of the vote, the most of any party, and as much as the two main anti-Beijing parties combined, but the DAB got only 21 seats, while the Democratic and Civic parties together got 123 seats.¹⁷ No

¹⁶ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2139698/hong-kong-government-shocked-occupy-leader-benny-tai>

¹⁷ The pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) received 492,042 votes. Result: 21 seats. The anti-Beijing Democratic Party (“pro-democracy”), the second-largest party, won 362,275 votes. Result: 91 seats. The Civic Party, the third-largest, got 141,713 votes. Result: 32 seats.

doubt, along with NED cash, U.S. experts on election manipulation helped out in this exercise in “Design Democracy Hong Kong.”

The biggest single bankroller of protests in Hong Kong has been media mogul **Jimmy Lai** Chee-ying, the publisher of *Apple Daily*, the territory’s second-largest newspaper (and largest in Taiwan), and owner of Next Digital. His media offerings combine racy tabloid material and virulent anti-communism. Lai fancies himself the “head of opposition media” and is often described as the “Rupert Murdoch of Asia,” referring to the Australian media tycoon who owns the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Post* and Fox News in the U.S., the *Times* of London, *The Sun* and Sky TV in Britain, and hundreds of other media outlets. In 2014 Jimmy Lai financed, publicized and braintrusted Occupy Central, while pouring US\$1.2 million into the coffers of anti-China parties and politicians.¹⁸

This past summer Jimmy Lai was in close touch with the Trump administration to get backing for the Hong Kong protests. According to *Bloomberg News* (10 July), the Hong Kong media mogul “met with National Security Advisor John Bolton on Wednesday, after meetings earlier this week with Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Republican Senators Ted Cruz, Cory Gardner and Rick Scott.... The succession of meetings appeared calculated to send a message of support from the administration for protests that have wracked Hong Kong in recent weeks....” Lai has also

¹⁸ A well-researched article, “Behind a made-for-TV Hong Kong protest narrative, Washington is backing nativism and mob violence,” by Dan Cohen in the online magazine *The Gray Zone* (17 August 2019) cites leaked e-mails published by the *South China Morning Post* (22 July and 4 August 2014) showing that Lai gave US\$637,000 to the Democratic Party and US\$382,000 to the Civic Party, as well as US\$115,000 to the Hong Kong Civic Education Foundation and Hong Kong Democratic Development Network, both co-founded by Rev. Chu Yiu-ming, who in turn co-founded Occupy Central together with Benny Tai. Lai also spent US\$446,000 on Occupy Central’s 2014 unofficial referendum.



Democratic speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi with Joshua Wong at press conference, 19 September 2019, when the Hong Kong protest leader testified before Congress.

AP

financed **Anson Chan** Fang On-sang, the former Hong Kong chief secretary hand-picked by British imperialism, who in March of last year traveled to Washington to meet with Pelosi and Pence asking for U.S. intervention over the extradition bill.

Hands-on Management of Washington's Pawns

Beyond the funding, awards and junkets, the leaders of the recent Hong Kong protests have directly appealed to the U.S. to aid the “pro-democracy” (anti-China) camp. The U.S. flags that have been prominent in demonstrations and the call to “President Trump, Please Liberate Hong Kong” have gotten a lot of media attention. This was the work of the Hong Kong National Party, which has been banned by the Hong Kong government for advocating independence from China. But the focus of the direct appeal to U.S. imperialism has been to push for the “Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act,” to impose sanctions on pro-China Hong Kong officials. Barely a week after the election of Donald Trump as president in November 2016, Joshua Wong was brought to Washington by Republican senators Rubio and Tom Cotton to re-introduce this bill.

In May 2017, Wong was back in D.C. being shepherded around by Martin Lee, visiting the Heritage Foundation, the Washington offices of the *New York Times* and the *Financial Times*, and lobbying Congress for the bill. The main demand of the September 8 march to the U.S. Consulate in Hong Kong with dozens of stars and stripes flags flying was to pass the bill. And in October and November, the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate nearly unanimously passed this act, in what House speaker Pelosi called “day of great bipartisanship” in the Capitol. Despite the party-line divide over the impeachment of Donald Trump, both the partner parties of U.S. imperialism (including ostensible “democratic socialists” like Bernie Sanders and “The Squad” of freshmen Democrats in the House) can agree on bashing China.

And just in case anyone should seriously doubt that the Hong Kong protests are calling for U.S. intervention and that Washington is manipulating these puppets, officials of the U.S. consulate met privately with the leaders of the 2014 Umbrella movement and of the “anti-extradition” protests in 2019. In March 2016, Occupy Central leaders **Edward Leung** Tin-kei and **Ray Wong** Toi-yeung were photographed meeting with two consulate staffers in a Hong Kong restaurant,¹⁹ and in August 2019, Chinese media published a photo of Julie Eadeh, a “political officer” of the U.S. consulate, meeting with Joshua Wong and Nathan Law. Washington responded by denouncing Beijing as “thuggish” for publicizing this undeniable evidence of coordination between the protest leaders and the U.S. government.²⁰

Where Wong and Law were founders of Demosistō, which

called for Hong Kong “self-determination,” Leung and Ray Wong were leaders of Hong Kong Indigenous, a “localist” party which openly calls for independence from China. The *New York Times* (15 August 2019) noted that “Mr. Leung penned the slogan, ‘Retake Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Times,’ in 2016,” while running for a seat in the Hong Kong Legislative Council. That slogan became the watchword of the 2019 Hong Kong riots. The *Times* account also noted that Hong Kong Indigenous “began harassing mainland shoppers in what it called ‘retake’ actions. Hong Kong’s colonial-era flag became a banner of resistance in what at times became an ugly xenophobic campaign against mainlanders, with some Hong Kongers dehumanizing them as ‘locusts’.”

Liberate Hong Kong from Imperialism and Capitalist Exploitation

While the bourgeois media, Democratic and Republican politicians and almost the entire Western left have hailed the 2019 Hong Kong riots, what we have laid out here in considerable detail demonstrates conclusively that virtually every group and every leader of these anti-communist protests has been on the take from U.S. imperialism and/or up to their necks in Washington’s machinations promoting counterrevolution in China.

Western imperialists have long yearned to “take back” China, and Hong Kong is the focal point of U.S. intrigue. The PRC is the product of the 1949 Chinese Revolution, which by overthrowing capitalism in the most populous country on earth represents a historic gain for humankind. While the anti-communist Hong Kong protests in 2014 and 2019 have aimed at separating (“retaking”) Hong Kong and ultimately overturning the revolution, the League for the Fourth International defends the bureaucratically deformed Chinese workers state against counterrevolution from without and within, calling on the working class to oust the sell-out Stalinist bureaucracy that undermines the revolutionary gains and to replace it with genuine workers soviet democracy. Hong Kong’s autonomy under the watchword of “one country, two systems” is a betrayal, the embodiment of the vain search for “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism, which is now blowing up in Beijing’s face.

As revolutionary Marxists, defenders of the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky, the LFI denounces the counterrevolutionary Hong Kong protests and their imperialist sponsors. We call to end the special status of this capitalist outpost, to expropriate the entire bourgeoisie (not only the Jimmy Lais but also the Jack Mas and other pro-Beijing millionaires and billionaires, in Hong Kong and the rest of China) and to fully integrate Hong Kong into the PRC. We seek to build a Chinese Trotskyist party on an internationalist program to defend the gains of the 1949 revolution and to extend them, fighting for the revolutionary reunification of China through socialist revolution in Taiwan, and taking forward the fight for international socialist revolution across the globe to put an end to the oppressive system of capitalist imperialism once and for all. ■

¹⁹ <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/1922922/not-some-kind-secret-meeting-hong-kong-indigenous-leaders>

²⁰ <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/section-news/section/21/210436/Joshua-laughs-at-collusion-claims>

For Workers Resistance Against Rightist Bolivian Coup

11 NOVEMBER 2019—Yesterday, Sunday, November 10, a coup d'état was carried out in Bolivia that has been in the works since the elections of last October 20, and in reality long before that. The trigger for the overthrow of the government was the sinister mutiny of the police, followed by the declaration of the heads of the armed forces calling on President Evo Morales to step down. The “civic-police-military” coup has a pronounced rightist and racist character, directed against the indigenous population which has been the main political base of Morales’ Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS). A key role has been played by fascistic elements sponsored by the ultra-racist Santa Cruz elite. All those who seek to defend the basic rights of working people and the oppressed are now in danger in the face of this reactionary onslaught.

Around Latin America, “center-left” politicians (like Lula in Brazil) are praising Morales, whom the coup plotters want to eliminate. The Mexican government has granted asylum to various members of the deposed government. The capitulation to the coup of the Bolivian president and his vice president, Álvaro García Linera, who resigned along with various officials of the MAS, are an expression of the bourgeois character of this party and its submission to the dictates of the Organization of American States (OAS), the infamous “Yankee Ministry of Colonies.” Once again, as in Chile in 1973, we see the mortal danger of illusions spread by populist and reformist leaderships in the “unity of the people” with the armed forces and the police.

We of the League for the Fourth International categorically



AFP

Police in rightist bastion of Santa Cruz celebrate coup d'état against government of Evo Morales, November 10.

oppose the rightist coup, fighting for the full political independence of the proletariat from all bourgeois parties and politicians, including the MAS, which has coopted the worker and peasant leaderships and repressed workers who fight back. Against the Bolivian coup, we insist on the need for a revolutionary proletarian policy, fighting for a workers, peasants and Indian government.

At the same time, we call to organize the self-defense of organizations and communities of urban and rural workers, and the indigenous peoples, against the attacks of the rightist coup organizers, which have already begun. Above all, we fight to drive the main authors of coups d'état throughout the continent, the Yankee imperialists, out of Bolivia and out of Latin America.

It is urgently necessary to draw the lessons of this entire experience. To do so, it is necessary to forge a genuinely Leninist and Trotskyist vanguard party. Sections and locals of the LFI, and on its supporters and sympathizers, are participating with the following slogans in emergency protests being organized for today:

Against Bolivia Coup
Fight for a
Revolutionary
Workers, Peasants &
Indians Government

Bolivian Workers:
Smash the Coup!

Yankee Imperialism
Out of Bolivia
And Latin America

Against Bolivia Coup
For Revolutionary
Class Politics
No Political Support
to the MAS

For Worker-
Peasant-Indian
Self-Defense
Against Racist
Rightist Attacks



Internationalists at protest outside Trump Tower in New York City against coup in Bolivia, November 11.

Down with Stalinist Exclusion!

For Proletarian Opposition to the Coup in Bolivia

BERLIN, 20 November 2019—On Sunday, November 10, a coup d'état was carried out in Bolivia led by far-right forces, triggered by the police and military, ousting president Evo Morales. The Internationalistische Gruppe (IG), German section of the League for the Fourth International, joined in protests against this coup as a part of international mobilizations of sections of the LFI.

The “civic-military-police” *golpe* was instigated by ultra-rightist, even fascistic, elements, whose leaders were photographed kneeling before the Bible resting on the Bolivian flag in the parliament following the coup. Led by the ultra-reactionary bourgeois elite of the eastern Bolivian city of Santa Cruz, this religious right is viciously racist toward the indigenous peoples who constitute a large majority of the country's population and the main base of Morales' populist Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS).

The racist nature of the coup was underlined by videos showing *golpistas* burning the wiphala, the multicolored flag representing the multi-ethnic population, which was made a co-equal official flag of the Plurinational Republic of Bolivia in 2009. The attacks on the wiphala sparked marches by thousands of enraged Indians, from El Alto down to La Paz and in Cochabamba, Morales' home region. There they were mowed down by military forces, leaving at least nine dead and scores wounded. The “interim government” has now given the green light to more massacres with a decree exempting the military from any responsibility for such crimes.

The coup plotters' proclamation of the ultra-racist Jeanine Áñez as “president” is being hailed by Washington as the first step toward seizing power in Venezuela. Those forces (including the head of Organization of American States, who accused Morales of electoral fraud, and top officials of the imperialist European Union, who offered to “mediate”) that pretend that this is anything other than a coup are in fact accomplices of this racist seizure of power and of U.S. imperialism, which was up to its neck in the plotting. The LFI emphasized this in calling for “Yankee Imperialism Out of Bolivia and Latin America!”

On Wednesday, November 13, members of the Internationalistische Gruppe attended a protest called by the Anti-NATO Gruppe Berlin-Brandenburg in front of the Bolivian embassy in Berlin to oppose the right-wing Bolivia coup. IG supporters held signs calling for “Bolivian Workers: Smash the Coup!” “For Worker-Peasant-Indigenous Self-Defense Against Racist Rightist Attacks” and to oppose the coup with revolutionary working-class politics independent of all bourgeois parties, including the MAS. The IG called for the



Natasha Pisarenko / AP

Protester with wiphala, flag of the indigenous peoples of Bolivia, as police blocked entry into La Paz, November 15.

unconditional defense of anti-coup protesters, including the members of the MAS, against the attacks by the *golpistas*.

At this protest, members of the Anti-NATO Gruppe linked to the German Communist Party (DKP) immediately set upon IG supporters to accuse them of being counter-protestors in support of the coup, attempting to expel them from the demonstration. This was a deliberate move to exclude Trotskyists who oppose the coup with proletarian-internationalist rather than bourgeois-nationalist politics. The IG supporters were physically expelled from the demonstration among slanderous accusations of being racists because we give no political support to the MAS – a particularly vile slander given our call for worker-peasant-indigenous self-defense and for a workers, peasants and Indian government.

In a subsequent demonstration against the coup in Bolivia, held on Saturday, November 16 in front of the Brandenburg Gate, members of the Anti-NATO Gruppe and DKP approached the IG contingent yet again to say that they were “not welcome” at the publicly advertised protest. The self-described organizer of the demonstration began to physically push members of the contingent away from the demo and threatened multiple times to call the police if they did not leave the area.

After much shoving and shouting on the part of the organizers, the IG contingent was pushed to the side of the protest, while we explained our revolutionary program to defeat the coup to onlookers and distributed our leaflets. A member of the group organizing the demonstration grabbed these leaflets out of an IG supporter's hands and ripped them up. This act of censorship by the demonstration organizers, inviting a police intervention, actually opened up all members of the left present, not to mention anyone not a German citizen, to bourgeois state repression.

Janis Garnet



The Trotskyist Internationalistische Gruppe was slandered and pushed out of a November 15 demonstration in Berlin against the coup in Bolivia as we called for a revolutionary workers, peasants and Indian government.

This episode is just one more example of cynical class collaboration. The organizers are ostensibly against NATO, but they do not shy away from running to the German bourgeoisie's police – which includes not a few actual fascists – to expel other left groups from their events. They justified this by saying this was no time for criticism of the MAS. But they were not calling for unity in action against the coup but rather for political support to the ousted government. They are *always* against left opposition to the bourgeois nationalists. The sort of “unity” these Stalinists want is a popular front; that is, chaining the working class to the bourgeoisie.

Such popular-frontist and populist politics are exactly what opens the way to such coups. The submission of Evo Morales and his vice president, Álvaro García Linera, to the dictates of the OAS, also known as the “Yankee Ministry of Colonies,” shows the danger this poses to the oppressed. The followers of the MAS were abandoned by their leaders. And although Evo enjoys wide support among the indigenous population of Bolivia, he has also attacked workers' struggles, as in his 2013

repression of the mobilization of miners, factory workers and workers in the health and education sectors.

In fact, from the moment he assumed office in 2006, Morales preached treacherous “unity” with the military and police. On his arrival in exile in Mexico, he noted that he had given the police 25 helicopters where they only had one before, and those helicopters are now firing on indigenous protesters. And while breaking with the International Monetary Fund, Morales in no way broke with capitalism (García Linera

called for “Andean capitalism”).

Moreover, facing the hostility of U.S. imperialism, the Bolivian president sought support from other imperialists. Notably, he struck a deal with a German company ACI Systems (ACISA), backed by the government of Angela Merkel, to build a 51% state-owned battery plant to industrialize lithium, a vital metal of which Bolivia has the largest reserves in the world. Under pressure from the right (which wanted a privately owned plant so that it could feed off royalties), on the eve of the coup Morales announced he was canceling the contract.

Against the far-right mass murderers, a return to the populist policies that spawned them is no way out. The League for the Fourth International stands for revolutionary class-struggle politics against popular-frontist class collaboration. The coup poses a life-or-death threat to workers, peasants and indigenous peoples. What's needed to smash the ultra-rightist “interim government” is to fight for socialist revolution, led by a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party and extending from semi-colonial countries to the imperialist centers. ■

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CLASS STRUGGLE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

Democrats Paved the Way for “Gig Economy” Uber-Exploitation

Finally! California AB5 Law Says App-Taxi Drivers Are Workers

By Class Struggle International Workers

The article below was issued as a leaflet in December 2019.

Alert: Road closures ahead for the so-called gig economy’s “independent contractor” scam. In California, come January 1, 2020, app-taxi drivers for companies like Uber and Lyft, as well as workers for various delivery service companies like Instacart, DoorDash, GrubHub and Postmates, and even writers for Internet news outlets like Vox, will officially be classified as employees, entitling them to the same rights and protections as any other worker under existing labor law. After much wrangling, on September 18, Democratic state governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 5 (AB5) into law, mandating that any worker who does not pass the “ABC test” is considered an employee of a company and *not* an independent contractor.

The three-point test was taken from a 2018 California Supreme Court ruling in the *Dynamex Operations West, Inc. v. Superior Court of Los Angeles* case. According to that ruling, someone is a private contractor only if:

“(A) The person is free from the control and direction of the hiring entity in connection with the performance of the work. . .

“(B) The person performs work that is outside the usual course of the hiring entity’s business.

“(C) The person is customarily engaged in an independently established trade, occupation, or business of the same nature as that involved in the work performed.”

—“AB-5 Worker Status: Employees and Independent Contractors” (2019)

Drivers for Uber and Lyft clearly do not meet these conditions, as the glorified taxi companies monitor, micro-manage and penalize them for nearly every aspect of their performance. But app-taxi drivers have known this all along and have been living with the grim reality of being deprived of unemployment insurance, workers’ comp and other job protections and benefits.

Under AB5, “gig economy” companies that rely on super-

Only Workers Action Can Beat Back Silicon Valley/Wall Street Assault



Getty Images

App-taxi drivers on strike in San Francisco, 8 May 2019.

exploiting their workers now have to meet minimum wage, overtime pay, and payroll tax requirements. But the fight is far from over. Shortly before AB5 came to the Assembly floor for a vote, arch-rivals Uber and Lyft, as well as food delivery service DoorDash, united to pledge \$90 million, should AB5 get passed, to push a ballot initiative seeking to repeal the law. Since then, Instacart and Postmates have ponied up another \$10 million each. Meanwhile, a bill similar to AB5 is working its way through the New York State Assembly, and the app-taxi giants have been fighting it every step of the way.

It’s no secret why they’re so opposed. Uber’s S-1 filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission wrote that:

“If, as a result of legislation or judicial decisions, we are required to classify Drivers as employees, we would incur significant additional expenses associated with the application of wage and hour laws (including minimum wage, overtime, and meal and rest period requirements), employee benefits, social security contributions, taxes and penalties. Further, any such reclassification would require us to fundamentally change our business model, and consequently have an adverse effect on our business and financial condition.”

In other words, the Ponzi schemes Uber and Lyft have

been running could implode spectacularly if they suddenly have to treat their workers as the employees that they are. And it's been a bumpy ride for Uber and Lyft since their Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) hit the stock market last spring: Lyft's stock price has been cut in half while Uber's has fallen by 40%. At the same time, the companies continue to hemorrhage money, with Lyft booking \$2.25 billion in losses for the first three quarters of 2019 and Uber registering an astronomical \$7.4 billion loss (*Los Angeles Times*, 5 November).

Despite the losses these companies will spare no expense to protect their business models. Moreover, they enjoy the support of politicians from both capitalist parties, especially the Democrats, who have aided and abetted these job-killers. Laws passed by bourgeois politicians under pressure such as California's AB5 can help, although the companies will try to gut them in the capitalist courts. But the only way to ensure that Uber, Lyft and the rest of these Silicon Valley vultures and their Wall Street bankrollers pay their employees even a fraction of what's been extorted from their labor is *mass workers action*, including preparation for *solid strikes of the taxi industry* in key cities. And that means *breaking with the Democrats and all capitalist parties*, while *building a class-struggle workers party*.

Democrats: Uber/Lyft Enablers, Enemies of the Working Class

Uber, Lyft and DoorDash's vow to bring repeal of AB5 to a ballot initiative came as back-room negotiations between the companies and labor bureaucrats from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters fell apart over the summer. The sellout union tops, ever eager to appease the bosses and collaborate with Democrat Newsom, worked on a "third way" to exempt app-drivers from being classified as employees. But as the California legislature was in mid-summer recess, drivers rounded up support for AB5 around the state, and the labor misleaders of SEIU and IBT had no choice but to endorse the bill.

AB5 was supported by a fleet of workers' rights organizations like Rideshare Drivers United, Gig Workers Rising and Mobile Workers Alliance, and also unions like the Communication Workers of America. Seeking to boost their labor credentials, Democratic presidential hopefuls Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren and Kamala Harris also endorsed the bill. But Democrats have been the biggest boosters of tech companies like Uber and Lyft from the start, counting Obama administration alums among their top executives and board members. In fact, amid the meltdown over founder Travis Kalanick and the sexist "bro culture" at Uber, liberal Democratic celebrity



Uber drivers demonstrated across the UK ahead of the company's U.S. stock market debut, 8 May 2019.

Adrianna Huffington engineered the firm's rehabilitation in 2017 with the ouster of Kalanick and installation of Dara Khosrowshahi (himself a big Democratic donor) as CEO.

As AB5 was coming up for a vote, and it was clear there would be no deal between labor bureaucrats and Uber/Lyft, Newsom penned an op-ed in the *Sacramento Bee* (2 September) posing as a great defender of the workers' rights:

"Reversing the trend of misclassification is a necessary and important step to improving the lives of working people. That's why, this Labor Day, I am proud to be supporting Assembly Bill 5, which extends critical labor protections to more workers by curbing misclassification."

Yet Newsom's eleventh-hour support came after intense efforts in cahoots with the app-taxi bosses to forge a "compromise" that would have excluded their drivers from AB5's provisions:

"Mr. Newsom's chief of staff, Ann O'Leary, a former top advisor to Hillary Clinton, had lunch with John Zimmer, the president of Lyft, and Tony West, Uber's chief legal officer, to keep the discussions alive..."

"Aides to the governor also began calling legislators like Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, the A.B. 5 sponsor, to gauge her openness to a deal. 'He absolutely wanted a compromise,' Ms. Gonzalez said of the governor."

—"Uber and Lyft Face Rebuff on California Rights Bill," *New York Times*, 10 September

You bet Newsom wanted a "compromise," and not only because he is a capitalist politician overseeing the world's fifth largest economy, home to Silicon Valley. Among his top donors are tech heavyweights Elon Musk and Facebook, Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer, Lauren Jobs (widow of Apple founder Steve Jobs), as well as billionaire former NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg, now once again a Democrat, who was key to Uber and Lyft's rise in the city.

But even though in California the app-taxi companies can no longer hide behind the fiction that their drivers are "independent contractors," the workers behind the steering wheel are still superexploited. So Rideshare Drivers United (RDU) turned to the Los Angeles city council to pass a law mandating minimum pay for drivers of \$15 an hour plus \$15/hr. expenses. Instead, on

October 15 the council passed a motion calling to study an hourly minimum wage “with the goal of a \$30 minimum” (before expenses, of course).

The original L.A. motion was modeled on New York City’s 2018 law calling for minimum pay of \$17.22/hr. after expenses, which when you subtract social security and other taxes required of “independent contractors” barely equals the NY state \$15 minimum wage. If actually implemented in L.A. that would be a step up from the present situation, as several studies show app-taxi drivers make little more than \$9 per hour, it is still far from being a living wage. Many drivers would still have to live in their cars, as thousands do now, unable to afford an apartment.

In the meantime, the Uber/Lyft/Door Dash ballot initiative has been unveiled, claiming to offer 120% of the California state minimum wage (\$12/hr.), plus a “stipend” to cover part of cost of bare-bones health insurance plans. As a University of California/Berkeley Labor Center study (31 October) showed, considering that this “guarantee only applies when the drivers are engaged with passengers,” that the rate per mile is barely half the IRS rate, that “the vast majority of drivers would not qualify” for the health care stipend, and that as “independent contractors” drivers would still have to pay both employer and employee shares of payroll taxes, “The Uber/Lyft Ballot Initiative Guarantees Only \$5.64 an Hour.”

And while L.A. is talking about replicating NYC’s minimum wage law, New York legislators are considering a bill similar to California’s AB5. Testifying against it in an October 16 senate hearing, the executive director the Independent Drivers Guild (IDG), which claims to represent Uber drivers, argued that since Trump’s National Labor Relations Board denied drivers’ right to form a union, classifying them as employees would put them in “purgatory” and thus should be rejected so as to provide “a path to unionization, and collective bargaining”! Not coincidentally, the IDG receives financing from Uber.

Responding to this absurd “logic,” Bhairavi Desai of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), a genuine union, noted that 40 years ago when taxi drivers worked on a commission basis and were categorized as employees “they had the right of minimum wage and all other protections and including the right to a democratic union, not one that’s funded and financed by the company or controlled by that company.” Yet rather than organizing a *real union of all taxi workers*, what the labor movement has done is set up fake “unions” together with the bosses, like the International Association of Machinists did with IDG, or vague association agreements, as the Mobile Workers Alliance has with the SEIU or the RDU with the Transport Workers Union.

As January 1 approaches, various opponents of the Cali-



Twitter/Arianna Huffington

The gang’s all here. From left foreground: “Calamity” Kalinick, Dara Khosrowshahi and Arianna Huffington.

fornia law including a truck owners’ lobby and the libertarian Pacific Legal Foundation, which defends employers’ “property rights,” have gone to the bosses’ courts to stop it. As for the L.A. city council motion to “study” raising drivers’ pay – like the promise of legislation (since withdrawn) to cap the number of charter schools that was used to sell out the Los Angeles teachers strike earlier this year¹ – even if it leads to the far-too-low minimum wage, reliance on the capitalist Democratic Party is a dead end. What’s needed is to ***bring out the power of labor in joint strike action to paralyze all forms of urban public transportation*** (taxis, mass transit, rail and trucking).

An example of what’s needed (although it was organized by IDG pseudo-union) was when hundreds of black cars in New York massively snarled traffic during rush hour this past September 17 with a slow-moving caravan over the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan and then up the East Side FDR Drive to the mayor’s residence at 96th Street and on to Uber’s local headquarters, demanding that the city “crackdown on the app companies” as Uber and Lyft announced they were kicking drivers off the app in response to the city’s minimum wage rules.

Rather than endlessly lobbying Democratic office holders, what’s needed to lift taxi workers out of the *hell* they are now consigned to is to address the bosses with the only language they understand, whether it’s the Republican Trump in the White House or the Democrats in city halls, state capitols and Silicon Valley: the language of raw *class power*. The reality is that all capitalist parties and politicians are enemies of the working class. As Class Struggle International Workers wrote in our program, reprinted in the CSIW pamphlet *Taxi Workers Under Siege* (May 2019), “We know that every class struggle is a political struggle.... We who lack the right to vote call for the formation of a ***workers party to fight for a workers government.***” ■

¹ See “Powerful L.A. Teachers Strike Was Betrayed in Settlement,” *The Internationalist* No. 55, Winter 2019.

Taxi Workers Under Siege: Wall Street, Uber Profiteers and Democrats Wring Workers Dry

**No Confidence in the Bosses' Politicians –
Build A Class-Struggle Workers Party!**

Last May, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas/Class Struggle International Workers (TIC/CSIW) produced a pamphlet on the desperate condition of taxi drivers in New York City and around the world. We print here the introduction to the pamphlet (see page 36), the lead article (below) and an analysis of the key role of the Democratic Party.

On May 10, the app-based taxi company Uber launched its hugely anticipated “initial public offering” (IPO), for the first time selling shares on the New York Stock Exchange. The lead-up was marked by “an insane amount of hype and media coverage” (CNN). Instead Uber had “the worst first-day dollar loss of any U.S. IPO ever” (*New York Times*). Its stock fell by 7.6% from its opening price, meaning that the initial investors took a loss of \$655 million. A week later, its stock price was at the same level, leaving it with a market capitalization of \$69 billion. Yet last fall its lead underwriters, Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley, put the company’s value of \$120 billion, almost double its current level. Its rival Lyft, the second largest app-taxi¹ outfit, launched its IPO in March, only to see its share price fall by one-third.

It was a brutal comeuppance for the high-flying tech companies that have been touted as the harbingers of a “gig economy” in which careers and steady jobs are out, replaced by brutally exploited temporary, part-time or freelance workers, classified as “contractors,” who have no job stability, health care or other “benefits” and work for minimum or sub-minimum pay. Yet all they have produced so far are massive losses. Uber and Lyft burned through over \$5 billion just in the last year (March 2017-March 2018), and there is no prospect of either company becoming profitable in the near future. The fact that investors on the first day of the IPO poured another \$8 billion into the coffers of Uber, which raised \$20 billion in the last ten years despite mounting losses, shows how desperate Wall Street is.

¹ Note on terminology: Various terms are used to designate that segment of the urban car service industry consisting of vehicles that are summoned by mobile phone applications. We refer here to “app-based cars” or “app taxis,” as a neutral description. The terms “rideshare” and “ride-hail” used by Uber and Lyft are loaded propaganda terms and inaccurate. Passengers in Uber, Lyft, Juno, Via and similar vehicles don’t share with random persons (except in pool cars), nor are they part of some kind of cooperative “sharing economy.” And they do not hail these vehicles on the street, as they might with a “traditional” taxi. These terms and another of their favorites, “transportation network companies,” are attempts to make it seem as if they are a different industry than taxis (and thus should not be tightly regulated, as taxis are).

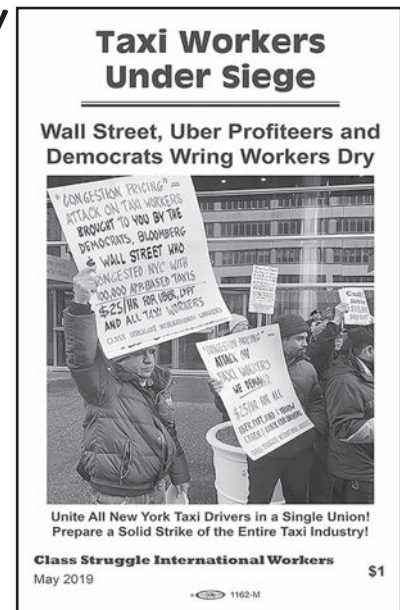
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This is another speculative bubble, like the dot-com binge at the turn of the century or the sub-prime mortgages that led to the 2008 stock market crash. Sooner or later it is bound to burst.

There are some complaints in the financial press about Uber and Lyft’s “creative accounting” designed to hoodwink unwary small investors. “The early investors are trying to find some sucker who will buy the stock in the public market,” an accounting expert told the *Wall Street Journal* (14 May). Yet the real victims of this gigantic swindle are taxi drivers who are seeing their livelihoods and their lives destroyed. The app taxis may have raked in enough to cover a few more years of multi-billion-dollar losses, but the IPO financials show that *to become profitable, they will have to drastically slash driver pay and incentives*. Analysts at Guggenheim Partners wrote that to reach its profit margin “would likely require LYFT to cut pay by ~20%” or to completely eliminate incentives or insurance costs. And this was after Lyft sharply increased its fees and commissions late last year. Uber’s S-1 statement for the Securities and Exchange Commission spelled it out in print:

“In particular, as we aim to reduce Driver incentives to improve our financial performance, we expect Driver dissatisfaction

Introduction

Class Struggle International Workers, an organization of immigrant workers based in New York, in conjunction with the Internationalist Group has taken part in the struggles of urban car service workers for more than a decade. CSIW members in the industry are also members of the NY Taxi Workers Alliance.

Taxi drivers have long been targeted by city rulers. Now they are at the focal point of a global capitalist offensive, and the situation is explosive. Owner-operators have been bankrupted by the crash in medallion prices while all taxi workers (yellow and green cabs, black cars and app-based car services) have seen their incomes decimated by the inundation of new cars.

It's like a scene out of a horror movie with a cab driver hurtling at top speed toward a cliff with no brakes and family members in the back seat. Public attention has been caught by the wave of suicides by NYC taxi drivers. But rather than despairing, an increasing number of taxi workers want to fight back. That means going up against powerful enemies, from Wall Street to Silicon Valley. Now more than ever, a class-struggle leadership is needed.

Driving a taxi has always been a grueling occupation, with long days behind the wheel, fighting traffic, inhaling fumes. Not so long ago, a typical cab driver would clock a 60-hour workweek to take home pay that other workers might earn in 40 hours. (These long hours are so much the norm that the U.S. Census Bureau counts taxi drivers who worked 40 hours a week as part-time.) But in the last half-decade there has been a huge influx of app-based taxis in NYC, across the country, and the world.

As a result, many veteran drivers are forced to work even longer hours, often 12 hours a day, six days a week (72 hours) or more, in a desperate attempt to maintain their standard of living. Nationally, the Census Bureau reports that the number of "self-employed taxi workers" *tripled* between 2013 and 2016, going from 224,000 to over 700,000 in four years. And while the average driver earned \$41,840

in 2013, new drivers only took in \$21,340 that year, falling to \$16,160 in 2014 and \$11,450 in 2015.

By now, the tidal wave of app-cars inundating the market has been studied to death. Every month or two a new report comes out full of statistics. Investigative newspaper reports document the horror show that drivers are facing. Elected officials make a show of concern, investigations are launched. It's clear that a massive transfer of income from terribly exploited drivers and small owners to powerful would-be monopolies is under way. Yet none of the feeble reforms proposed will stop this relentless process of impoverishment.

This is not just a story of unbridled greed, although there is plenty of that. What we are seeing is a brutal centralization of capital as Karl Marx described in *Capital*, coming in the wake of the global depression set off by the financial crash of 2008. Struggles to restore the "good old days" cannot succeed, nor is it possible to simply replace "neoliberal" austerity with social-democratic reforms. Rotting capitalism must feed off and destroy public services while spawning one speculative bubble after another.

Class Struggle International Workers and the Internationalist Group support and join in the defensive struggles that have broken out, while underscoring that only a revolutionary mobilization against the capitalist system can defeat the powerful forces arrayed against us. That means uniting workers in all sectors of the fragmented urban car service industry with the tremendous potential power of the mass transit unions. Above all it requires forging a leadership that breaks with all the capitalist parties to form a class-struggle workers party.

The articles in this pamphlet analyse the present hellish situation and raise a transitional program pointing the way forward to socialist revolution. To expropriate the Ubers and Lyfts, and all the vultures of Silicon Valley and the sharks of Wall Street, we must fight to *replace the dictatorship of capital with the liberating rule of the working class*, here in the center of international finance capital and across the globe. ■

will generally increase.... Driver dissatisfaction has in the past resulted in protests by Drivers, most recently in India, the United Kingdom, and the United States."

"Driver dissatisfaction"? Seething anger, outrage, fury would be a more accurate description. That outrage and frustration is increasing and will continue to do so. But how will it be expressed? What the press didn't cover is that while these global corporations devour billions of dollars, their drivers barely make the minimum wage, and sometimes far less. Across the world, Uber boasts of having 3.9 million drivers in 63 countries, on whom they impose poverty pay, while driving down the incomes of all taxi workers, bankrupting many. A striking Uber driver called the system "slavery" and his bosses "slave drivers," as his pay often barely covers expenses, leaving him with nothing, working for free (Democracy Now, 9 May). In New York City, in a little over a year, *at least nine taxi workers have committed suicide* because of their desperate economic condition. The latest, on March 23,

was a livery cab driver who had driven for Lyft since 2014.

In New York, driver earnings across all sectors of the industry are miserable. Cabbies are clocking 70+ hour weeks and barely making ends meet, if at all. As it stands, most taxi drivers work 10 to 12 hours per day and earn an average of \$25,000 a year, with no health insurance to speak of or benefits of any kind. Several studies and U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics put the hourly earnings of taxi drivers at around \$14 per hour after expenses. Despite their overall losses, Uber has been making a killing in NYC, with Democrat politicians like Andrew Cuomo backing them up along the way. Meanwhile, the Taxi and Limousine Commission continues its vicious, racist harassment of drivers, extorting thousands of dollars for minor "violations" like picking up passengers without proper authorization. And in the background, New York's crumbling public transit system, which capitalist politicians and their Wall Street patrons have been running into the ground for decades, continues to deteriorate.

A minimum pay floor for app-based drivers that went into effect January 30 is supposed to increase their pay to \$17.22/hr. after expenses. When taxes for “self-employed contractors” are deducted, this would only bring their earnings up to the New York state minimum wage of \$15 per hour. At the same time, New York governor Cuomo rammed “congestion pricing” through the state legislature, with the support of NYC mayor Bill de Blasio, including a \$2.50/2.75 surcharge on fares in Midtown and Lower Manhattan. This means that the base fare in Manhattan south of 96th Street will go from \$3.30 to \$5.80, a 75% increase, which will sharply reduce the number of riders, drastically cutting drivers’ already miserable pay and thus cannibalizing some, if not most or all the much ballyhooed raise ordered by the city council (see the CSIW leaflet, “Taxi Workers to Gov. Cuomo: No to ‘Suicide Surcharge’” [reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 55, Winter 2019]).

This is nothing short of highway robbery – legalized pilfering of driver wages at a time when taxi workers from all sectors of the industry are in dire economic straits. And it was cooked up by the same Democratic politicians who helped cause the congestion in the first place by flooding New York streets with over 100,000 app-based taxis, far outnumbering the 13,587 medallion yellow cabs. These new unregulated taxis can pick up anywhere and set their own rates, siphoning off a middle-class clientele (those with credit cards), while yellow cabs, black cars and green cabs are tightly regulated and relentlessly policed. Burdened for years by skyrocketing costs of living, plummeting wages, predatory bank loans and vicious TLC harassment, many cabbies have reached the breaking point. Meanwhile, app-taxi companies are planning to drastically lower their pay. The situation is explosive, and this powder keg of class struggle could detonate at any moment.

But at present, taxi workers are divided. Yellow cabs, green cabs, black cars, liveries, dollar vans, app-based – the different sectors have been set against each other by the taxi bosses and city rulers. Black car and livery drivers are separated by ethnicity – Dominicans here, Mexicans there, etc. And yellow cab drivers (many from South Asia) blame the influx of Uber drivers for their travails, citing the company’s artificially low fares (which have now been raised). The reality is that *all* taxi workers are being gamed by the capitalist profiteers and Democratic politicians who have backed Uber and its competitors to the hilt at the expense of drivers. And the congestion surcharge has made things worse by framing the issue as one of improved public transit versus a recalcitrant taxi industry, thereby pitting taxi workers against the riding public and against their brothers and sisters in the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, who make NYC’s subways and buses run.

The issue facing us is what it will take to confront this calamitous situation. The first step is to overcome divisions in this highly segmented industry. The next is to prepare to take on the capital-



Douglas Schifter committed suicide due to the impossible situation taxi drivers are facing.

ist state. Twice this year, Uber and Lyft drivers based in Los Angeles have called job actions, which have been picked up by drivers in San Francisco, New York and elsewhere in the U.S., as well as in London, England. While they have gotten a lot of press, it’s hard to gauge their impact, as they mainly consist of turning off the app. The numbers in protest rallies are small (100 or so in L.A., several score in SF and NYC). And by focusing on one sector, they feed into the bosses’ divide-and-conquer schemes. It is to the credit of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), representing mainly “traditional” yellow cab drivers, that it took up the appeal for strike on May 8 and called a solidarity protest outside the TLC headquarters. Yet the moment the NYTWA rally started, the members of the boss-financed “Independent Drivers Guild (IDG) left.”²

What’s needed above all is a strategy to **defeat the taxi bosses** – all of them – by mobilizing the power of the working class. In New York, Class Struggle International Workers/Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas together with the Internationalist Group has put forward a program **to unite yellow and green cab, black car, limousine, van and app-based taxi drivers together with mass transit workers** to bring traffic to a standstill and paralyze this center of international finance capital. In this fight **we are going up against the power of Wall Street** and the capitalist parties – **mainly the Democrats** – in a battle that must be fought **politically**. And because paying a living wage to drivers would bankrupt these high-tech slave drivers, a purely defensive struggle cannot win. That underscores why it is necessary to **break with the Democrats, Republicans and all parties of capital**, and to **forge a class-struggle workers party**.

Only a program for revolutionary struggle internationally can bring down these giant companies on the cutting edge of a worldwide anti-working-class offensive. **The Uber/Lyft “business model” depends on having “suckers” for investors and desperate “slaves” for drivers, sinking ever deeper in poverty.** Sooner or later it will blow up in the faces of the Wall Street sharks and Silicon Valley vultures who are behind it, and the Democratic hucksters who are facilitating this plundering. It can’t work if investors wise up, and particularly if workers fight back. So that’s what we have to do. The time is now, the question is how. That is the issue this pamphlet seeks to address. ■

² *AM New York* (7 May) published a story the day before the app-based drivers strike in which it reported that, while the IDG claimed to be “standing in solidarity” with the strikers: “The Independent Drivers Guild receives some funding from Uber and is opting out so as not to break its agreement with the company....” The IDG is a “company union,” directly financed by the bosses, set up to prevent the rise of a genuine workers union representing the drivers. Class-conscious app-taxi drivers should have nothing to do with it.

Democrats and Wall Street Wage War on Workers

Uber is just the most recent example of the capitalist drive to privatize public services and bust unions which took off in the late 1970s and kicked into high gear in the '80s under Ronald Reagan. The first installment of this war on working people was when in the post-Vietnam War recession – with the economy stagnating, public debt ballooning and profit rates falling – Wall Street in 1975 refused to lend to New York City. In the bank-engineered NYC “fiscal crisis,” the Democratic mayor and NY governor froze wages, ordered mass layoffs, stopped maintaining subways and bridges, and introduced tuition in the City University. The banks took direct control of city finances through the Municipal Assistance Corporation and Emergency Financial Control Board.¹ And pro-Democratic union misleaders did not resist. In 1980 Democratic mayor Ed Koch provoked an eleven-day transit strike. The pro-Democratic leaders of Transport Workers Union Local 100 caved, saddling the union with a \$1.25 million fine.

The current assault on taxi drivers is backed by both main capitalist parties, Democrats and Republicans. Many drivers recall that it began under Republican mayor Mike Bloomberg, the Wall Street billionaire who swore at a taxicab fleet owner in 2013 that he would “destroy your fucking industry.”² And so he did, pouring millions into Lyft. Bloomberg’s former campaign manager Bradley Tusk mounted a massive media PR campaign that painted Uber as the transportation savior for the transit-dry outer boroughs, while suggesting that any opposition to it was racist, Tusk pressured the City Council, and eventually De Blasio, to turn on his own bill that would have capped Uber’s growth at 1% a year.³ As compensation, Tusk received Uber stock worth at least \$100 million as of 2017. With the flood gates open, Uber and its competitors swarmed NYC with 80,000 more cars in three years.

The Democrats are also guilty. Amid the wave of suicides, the New York City Council (currently 48 Democrats, 3 Republicans) is pretending to take action about the plummeting incomes of taxi drivers. Yet it only enacted a one-year cap on the number of app taxis (in order to “study” the problem) and passed a bill supposedly raising minimum

pay to \$17.22/hr., which after expenses is just the \$15 state minimum wage. And remember that without the approval of the City Council – which controls the Taxi and Limousine Commission and thus licensing of all for-hire vehicles – the inundation of app-based taxis never could have happened. Plus it was Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo who pushed through the recent “congestion pricing” surcharge (known to cabbies as the “suicide surcharge”) with Democratic mayor de Blasio’s approval, claiming that this would relieve the traffic congestion – which they authorized – and provide money to upgrade the subways – which they have systematically starved of funds.

But it’s more than that. Democratic Party heavy-hitters are among the strongest supporters of Uber and Lyft. In 2017, when Uber founder “Calamity” Kalanick came under fire over fostering sexual abuse and driver harassment, the company employed the services of David Plouffe, a former advisor to Barack Obama, to salvage their public image. They hired Obama’s former Attorney General, Eric Holder, to investigate claims of sexual harassment in the company. And liberal Democratic celebrity Arianna Huffington, who had joined Uber’s board of directors in 2016, engineered the hiring of a new CEO, Dara Khosrowshahi, formerly of Expedia Group (and a donor to the Democratic Party). As for Lyft, among those who invested (\$478,000) in the company when it was still private was Valerie Jarrett, former advisor to Barack Obama. Lyft’s chief policy officer is Anthony Foxx, formerly Obama’s secretary of transportation. And just before it went public, George Soros (moveon.org) snapped up a half billion in Lyft shares.

The Democrats are just as much a capitalist party as the Republicans, and when it comes to representing the interests of Wall Street bankers, sometimes even more so. Following the 2008 market crash, the Democratic Obama administration handed out 16 *trillion* dollars (that’s \$16,000,000,000,000) in free money to save the very investment banks whose predatory lending practices and unbridled speculation triggered the stock market crash. Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs, the two main underwriters of both the Lyft and the Uber IPOs, traditionally give more in donations to Democratic than to Republican candidates, donating over a million dollars apiece to Hillary Clinton over the course of her career.

To try to stop the “vulture capitalists” behind the app-taxi megacompanies by appealing to Democrats, whether in city hall or the state house, as the NYTWA and other union leaders do, is doomed to failure. The Democratic Party is a defender of capital and an enemy of working people, including taxi workers, not a potential ally. Class Struggle International Workers fights to **break with the Democrats and all the bosses’ parties** and **build a class-struggle workers party.** ■

¹ See “NYC Transit Summer of Hell? What about Winter, Spring and Fall?” *The Internationalist* No. 50 (Winter 2017).

² See the CSIW leaflet, “Taxi Driver Rebellion” (March 2018) on page 32 of this pamphlet.

³ Tusk details this campaign in his 2018 memoir, which gives a surprisingly honest and clear explanation from a veteran operator of how capitalist politics works – money: “The fight lasted a few weeks. We kept upping the stakes with more TV, more radio, more calls, more lobbying, more public pressure. ... Councilmembers kept jumping to our side. ... Then Cuomo came out publicly against the bill.... City hall had nowhere to hide.” (<https://www.fastcompany.com/90237321/the-inside-story-of-how-uber-won-over-new-yorks-mayor>)

Outrage Over Brazen I.C.E. Shooting in Brooklyn

**Statement by the Internationalist Group,
Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and
Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas/
Class Struggle International Workers**

FEBRUARY 6 – This morning, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) agents kidnapped an immigrant worker, Gaspar Avendano Hernández, in his front yard in Brooklyn as he was leaving for work. As I.C.E. agents in hoodies manhandled Gaspar, who had been arrested a couple of days ago on a traffic violation, a melee broke out. Then suddenly one of the I.C.E. cops pulled out a gun and shot Eric Díaz Cruz, the son of Avendano Hernández' *compañera*, point-blank in the face.

Avendano Hernández was getting into an Uber taxi when the I.C.E. agents rammed it from behind. The driver reported that “they tased and pepper sprayed him about 20 times.” Gaspar was taken to the 62nd Precinct, but was later turned over to I.C.E. As for Eric, the taxi driver said “the officer pulled a gun and shot him.... He wouldn’t tell the guy why they were arresting him” (*amNew York*, 6 February).

Outrage over this this violent provocation by the hated *migra* (immigration cops) quickly spread through NYC. In response to an urgent appeal by the New Sanctuary Coalition in the early afternoon, the Internationalist Group rushed to the Brooklyn hospital where Eric had been admitted in critical

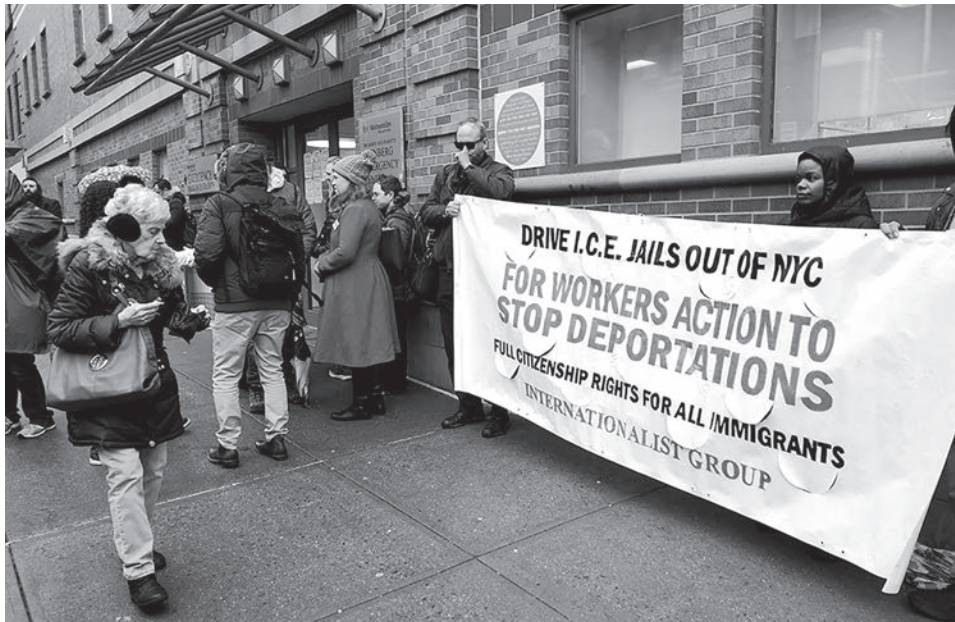


Photo courtesy of the family

Eric Diaz in hospital, being held in custody of I.C.E., after immigration cops shot him in the face.

condition and is being held in custody by I.C.E. agents, even though he has legal status in the U.S. As more people arrived, we led the crowd in chanting for “Full rights for immigrants, I. C. E. out of New York,” “For workers mobilization to stop deportations” and “I.C.E. out of the hospitals, I.C.E. out of New York,” among other chants.

While some activists focused solely on the Trump administration and called to “abolish I.C.E.,” an IG speaker emphasized that the Democrats built up the I.C.E. deportation machine, and that Barack Obama deported more people than any previous president. Our speaker noted as well that despite all the talk of New York as a “sanctuary city,” someone tipped I.C.E. off to go after Gaspar. He underlined that it was not enough to “speak truth to power,” that the only language the capitalist government understands is that of power, and so we need to



Internationalist Group and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas outside Maimonides Hospital where Eric Díaz was being held by I.C.E. cops, February 6.

I.C.E. Out – Full Citizenship Rights for All Immigrants!

On Bolivia, Haiti, Puerto Rico...

SL/ICL Flip-Flopping Toward Oblivion

In a recent issue of *Workers Vanguard* (29 November 2019), the newspaper of the Spartacist League (SL), in an article titled “Down with the U.S.-Backed Right-Wing Coup!” we read:

“Our last article on Bolivia, ‘Trotskyism vs. Bourgeois Nationalism,’ (WV No. 868, 14 April 2006) pointed to the material and political decimation of the tin miners, who had once been some of the most class-conscious workers in Latin America, and asserted that ‘the proletarian instrumentality for overturning capitalism has been qualitatively diminished.’ While it is true that the tin mining industry was devastated decades ago, and that some 20,000 miners were fired and displaced and their radical union gutted, our article essentially denied that there was a working class in Bolivia and thereby argued that the basis for workers revolution did not exist in the country. The article also wrongly implies that struggle is futile in Bolivia unless it is sparked in countries with more ‘viable concentrations of the proletariat.’ These assertions amounted to a rejection of permanent revolution as applied to Bolivia.”

Well, well, an explicit renunciation of its previous, deeply anti-Trotskyist line by the SL/U.S. and the International Communist League (ICL) it leads. A little late (13 years), one might say. Better late than never? Let’s see. Is there any explanation of how the SL/ICL’s now-repudiated line came about? Nothing.



Miners who battled cops and army with dynamite cheer after forcing President Sánchez de Lozada to resign in 2003. This is the Bolivian proletariat that the ICL sneered “barely, if at all, exists.”

How about the fact that their earlier article was a foam-flecked polemic against the Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International for calling for workers revolution in Bolivia. Not a word. The fundamental political dishonesty remains.

The fact is that the latter-day SL/ICL isn’t the least bit interested in the Bolivian proletariat, or the struggle for revolution on the Altiplano. This is one of the countries that they rarely write about except in order to attack the IG/LFI (Venezuela is another). The 2006 piece was the only other article on Bolivia in *Workers Vanguard* since the founders of the IG were expelled from the ICL a decade earlier. “The IG can conjure up a proletariat where it barely, if at all, exists,” it sneered. This was WV’s cynical answer to *The Internationalist*’s coverage of the tumultuous Bolivian worker-peasant upheavals in the 2003 “gas war” and again in 2005.¹

More specifically, WV’s 2006 polemic, “Bolivia: Trotskyism vs. Bourgeois Nationalism,” was in response to our report that the ICL’s Mexican comrades declared there is “no working class in Bolivia today.” We replied, “So the dynamite-wielding miners and other workers who battled the cops and army in

¹ See “Bolivia Aflame: “Gas War’ on the Altiplano, Workers to Power!” *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003; and “Bolivia Explodes in Sharp Class Battle,” and the collection of eyewitness reports in *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005.



Mine workers from Huanuni, Bolivia’s largest mine, protesting in La Paz during 2005 upheaval.

Sebastian Haecher/Indymedia Bolivia

Centro de Medios Independientes

2003 and again in last year's near civil war, bringing down the second president in two years, either 'barely' exist or don't exist 'at all'."² The SL's denial of the existence of a working class was a justification for its anti-Marxist "denial of the possibility of revolution in Bolivia" and "a transparent excuse for passivity, saturated with historical pessimism," we wrote.

In addition to "conjuring up a proletariat" where supposedly none existed, the SL claimed that the IG "ignores powerful concentrations of the working class." But precisely in one such concentration of the working class, in the Brazilian "steel city" of Volta Redonda, where there was a campaign in the municipal workers union to exclude the police, the ICL turned tail, declaring that the struggle posed "unacceptable risks to the vanguard" and telling our comrades, who were leading that historic fight, that it was necessary to "pull our hands out of the boiling water." The ICL's International Secretary wrote that the ICL should never "set foot in that town [Volta Redonda] again." The Brazilian comrades indignantly refused the ICL's shameful call to flee the battle, and have continued the fight for genuine Trotskyism as part of the LFI.³

But now that the ICL has very belatedly recognized the existence of the Bolivian proletariat, what program does it put forward for struggle? In its article on the November 10 coup d'état by racist rightist forces that overthrew the populist president Evo Morales and his indigenous-based Movement for Socialism (MAS), aside from calling to "oppose the coup without giving any political support to Morales or MAS" and to form a Trotskyist party, the only concrete proposal was "For an Indigenous-Centered Workers and Peasants Government!" This is a blurred copy of the LFI's call for a "workers, peasants and Indian government" in Bolivia and other Andean countries, which we have (uniquely on the left) called for since 2003⁴ and today.⁵ And again, they put forward no program for action by the workers and oppressed.

The SL/ICL's Retrogression of Consciousness

The claim that Bolivia, of all places, lacks a proletariat was not some absurd misreading of the academic studies it cited, or just simple ignorance and imperialist arrogance (although it showed plenty of both). It was an invention intended to buttress the SL/ICL's mantra of a qualitative "retrogression of proletarian consciousness worldwide" accompanying the destruction of the Soviet Union in the counterrevolutionary wave of 1989-92. This thesis has been used by the now-centrist Spartacists as a justification for declaring workers revolution off the agenda in one country after another, fleeing from the class struggle everywhere, and step-by-step abandoning the Trotskyist program.

As Leon Trotsky wrote in his essay "Stalinism and Bolshevism" (August 1937):

² "Spartacist League Disappears the Bolivian Proletariat," *The Internationalist* No. 24, Summer 2006.

³ See our bulletin *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle* (July 1996).

⁴ See "Marxism and the Indian Question in Ecuador," in *The Internationalist* No. 17, October-November 2003.

⁵ "For Workers Resistance Against Rightist Bolivian Coup," *The Internationalist*, 11 November 2019.

"Great political defeats provoke a reconsideration of values, generally occurring in two directions. On the one hand the true vanguard, enriched by the experience of defeat, defends with tooth and nail the heritage of revolutionary thought and on this basis strives to educate new cadres for the mass struggle to come. On the other hand, the routinists, centrists and dilettantes, frightened by defeat, do their best to destroy the authority of the revolutionary tradition and go backwards in their search for a 'New World'."

The demise of the Soviet Union – the first workers state in history, bureaucratically degenerated under Stalinist rule – and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of East Europe in 1989-92 was a huge defeat for the proletariat worldwide. U.S. rulers proclaimed the "death of communism." Not only did counterrevolution devastate the livelihoods of millions of Soviet bloc citizens, all over the capitalist world it intensified attacks on trade unions and launched a wave of privatizations targeting social programs (public health, education, welfare). And it had a profound effect on would-be socialists everywhere.

Many drew defeatist conclusions from the world-historic defeat. Stalinist "communist" parties rebaptized themselves as "socialists," social democrats became "left" parties, while some went on to become bourgeois "democrats" (Italy). Various of those who falsely claimed to be Trotskyists dropped the label, transmogrifying themselves into "anti-capitalists." A number of pseudo-Trotskyist internationals have split or been rent by internal division, including the CWI,⁶ IMT⁷ and the United Secretariat/International Committee.⁸ Smaller groups simply closed up shop and hung an "out of business" sign on the door. On their websites: Error 404 ("page not found").

The Spartacist League in the U.S. and the International Communist League underwent a variant of this degeneration. From the 1960s to the early 1990s, the Spartacist tendency stood for revolutionary political continuity from Marx and Engels through Lenin and Trotsky and their Internationals. It fought against petty-bourgeois nationalism and popular-frontism when these were all the rage among opportunist leftists. It added to the Marxist program, developing Richard Fraser's writings on revolutionary integrationism in the U.S. and outlining the proletarian internationalist position on interpenetrated peoples, from Palestine to Northern Ireland.

As the vast bulk of the left abandoned the defense of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state with the onset of the second imperialist Cold War in the early 1980s, the Spartacist tendency rightly denounced the U.S.-sponsored Polish nationalist Solidarność and defended Soviet intervention in Afghanistan against the CIA-backed *mujahedin* (holy warriors). When the imperialist offensive reached its high point in the late '80s, the ICL uniquely fought, first in East Germany and then in the Soviet Union, to defeat the counterrevolution and for a proletarian political revolution to replace the sellout bureaucracy with internationalist soviet democracy.

⁶ Committee for a Workers International, led by Peter Taaffe, derived from the Britain-based Militant tendency.

⁷ International Marxist Tendency, led by Alan Woods, the other offshoot of the Militant tendency.

⁸ The current of followers of the late Ernest Mandel.

So the colossal defeat for the world working class in the Soviet Union and East Europe hit the SL/ICL particularly hard. The comrades had worked their hearts out to stave off capitalist restoration as the pseudo-Trotskyists lined up with the counterrevolution. While many of the latter dropped any pretense of upholding the revolutionary program of Lenin and Trotsky, the ICL leaders kept a veneer of Trotskyism, but declared that workers' struggles no longer had any relation to the goal of socialist revolution. Using this claim as an excuse to flee the battlefield, the ICL purged long-time leading cadres who went on to found the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International.

But the revolutionary program cannot be maintained as an icon on the mantlepiece, honored with a ritual bow from time to time, divorced from the class struggle. The backsliding soon set in. In response to the reaffirmation by the IG of Trotsky's statement that "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership," the latter-day ICL proclaimed that this "predates the present deep regression of proletarian consciousness" with the destruction of the Soviet Union. As Trotsky described the "classical trick of all traitors, deserters and their attorneys," these ex-Trotskyists "unload the responsibility on the masses" for the defeat.⁹

This fundamental revisionism was written into an ICL Declaration of Principles (1998), replacing the 1966 SL Declaration of Principles, which centered on Trotsky's (now supposedly outdated) thesis about the centrality of the crisis of proletarian leadership. That, moreover, was the central tenet of the founding program of the Fourth International. In reality, it was not so much the consciousness of the working class that suffered a qualitative retrogression but above all that of the ostensibly socialist and communist left, including the SL/ICL, which began to revise Lenin and Trotsky, and its own past program, on one issue after another.

We could point to numerous examples. In the United States, the election of a black president, Barack Obama, we wrote, represented "a considerable social change in this country founded on chattel slavery.... But this has not changed the system of imperialist capitalism one iota."¹⁰ In contrast, WV (4 December 2009) reported (in one of the endless chain of self-disavowals, many of which would then themselves be disavowed) on the SL's June 2009 conference, that a meeting of the SL Political Bureau and ICL International Secretariat "applauded" Obama's March 2008 "More Perfect Union" speech "as a 'turning point' for 'acknowledging race and racial oppression in the U.S.'"

Or take Britain, where the 2015 election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party set the left spinning. The Spartacist League/Britain hailed the not-so-left reformist social democrat in a leaflet calling Corbyn "Tony Blair's nightmare!"¹¹ A year later it proclaimed "*Jeremy Corbyn must be allowed to run the Labour Party, in his own way.*" But as the issue of Britain leaving the European Union (EU) came to the fore, with both

⁹ "Stalinism and Bolshevism."

¹⁰ "Obama Presidency: U.S. Imperialism Tries a Makeover," *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2018.

¹¹ "Corbynmania Sweeps Britain" (*The Internationalist* No. 41, September-October 2015),

sides campaigning against immigrants, the SL/B went hard for "Brexit." So in the last election it headlined "BREXIT NOW!" (*Workers Hammer*, Summer 2019) echoing Tory Boris Johnson's campaign slogan "Get Brexit Done"! Having given up on the program of revolutionary internationalist class struggle to bring down the EU, the ICL climbs aboard a rabidly anti-immigrant, bourgeois-nationalist campaign.

Capitulating to Imperialism: Germany, China, 9/11 ...

Having lost the anchor of Soviet defensism, which it had upheld "against high wind and high water" in fighting the fake Trotskyists, the recurring pattern has been that at every crisis the now-centrist, ex-Trotskyist SL/ICL would dump its former principled positions. First, during a year-long fight over Germany that led up to the 1996 expulsions, the leadership declared that the "Stalinists led the counterrevolution." This negated Trotsky's analysis of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a parasitical, contradictory layer incapable of leading revolution or counterrevolution; was counterposed to the ICL's valiant intervention in East Germany (the DDR) against imperialist-led counterrevolution; and flew in the face of reality, as the Stalinist ex-leaders of the DDR ended up in jail.

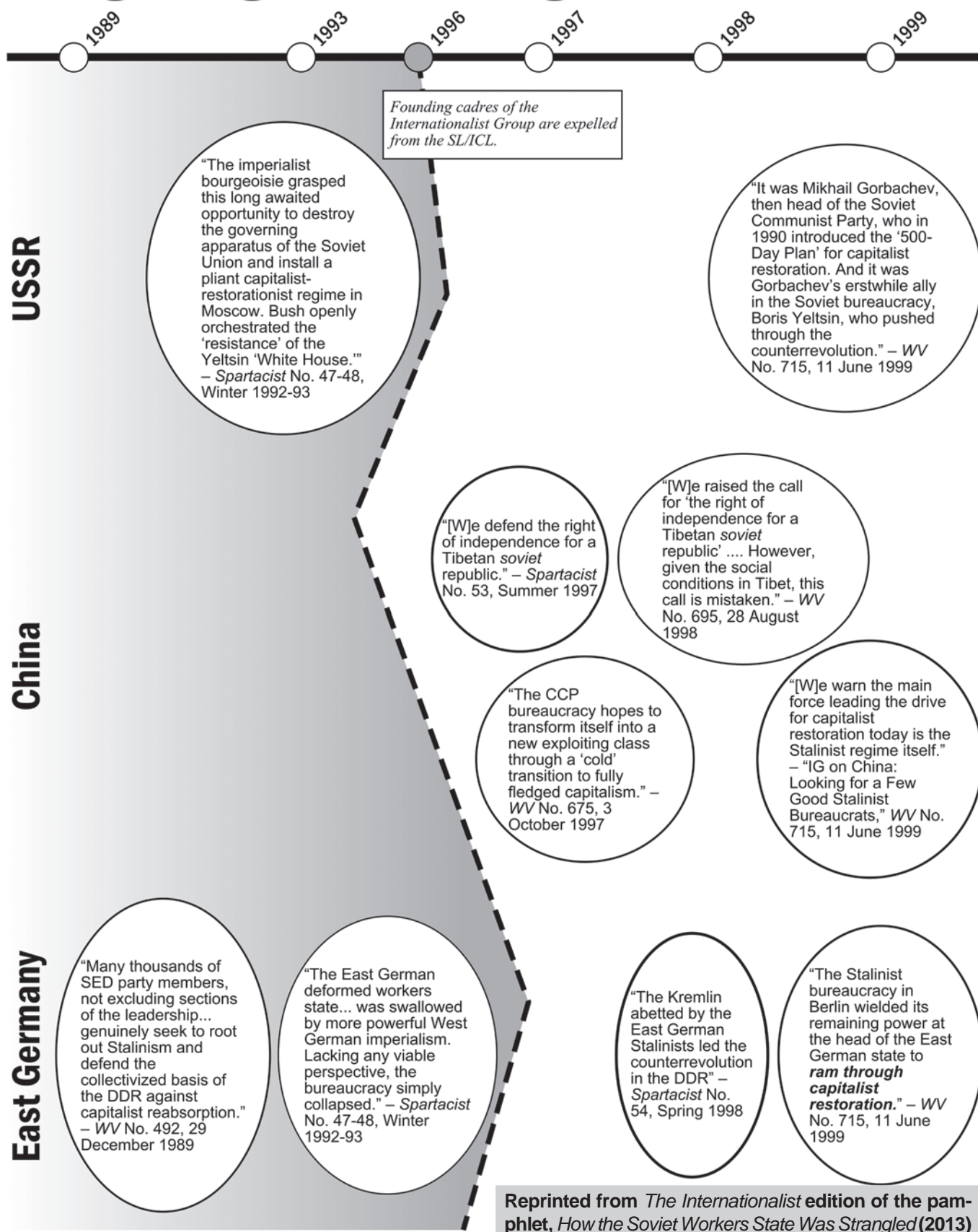
After decades of programmatic consistency, a characteristic feature of the "post-Soviet" ICL has been its zigzags, typical of centrism. On China the ICL declared that "the CCP bureaucracy hopes to transform itself into a new exploiting class through a 'cold' transition to fully fledged capitalism" (WV, 3 October 1997). In a polemic against the IG, it declared: "the main force leading the drive for capitalist restoration today is the Stalinist regime itself" (WV, 11 June 1999). But when we denounced this, it conceded that "the Beijing regime is not committed to capitalist restoration" (WV, 17 November 2000). And a decade later it finally admitted: "the Stalinist bureaucracy is incapable of implementing a cold, gradual restoration of capitalism from above" (*Spartacist*, Spring 2011).

On counterrevolution in the DDR, the ICL also shillyshallied. In WV (11 June 1999) it wrote, repeating the Stalinophobic arguments of Max Shachtman and other renegades from Trotskyism, that "the Stalinist bureaucracy in Berlin wielded its remaining power at the head of the East German state to **ram through capitalist restoration**" (their emphasis). But after the ouster of the post-purge SL/ICL leadership, these were declared "polemical excesses in the heat of battle" against us, and that "it is not correct to say the PDS led the counterrevolution in the DDR" (*Spartacist*, Spring 2004). Yet the line that "The Kremlin abetted by the East German Stalinists led the counterrevolution in the DDR" is still in its "Declaration of Principles." (See the diagram "Zig-Zag: ICL Caught Between Shachtman and Trotsky" on pages 44-45 of this issue.)

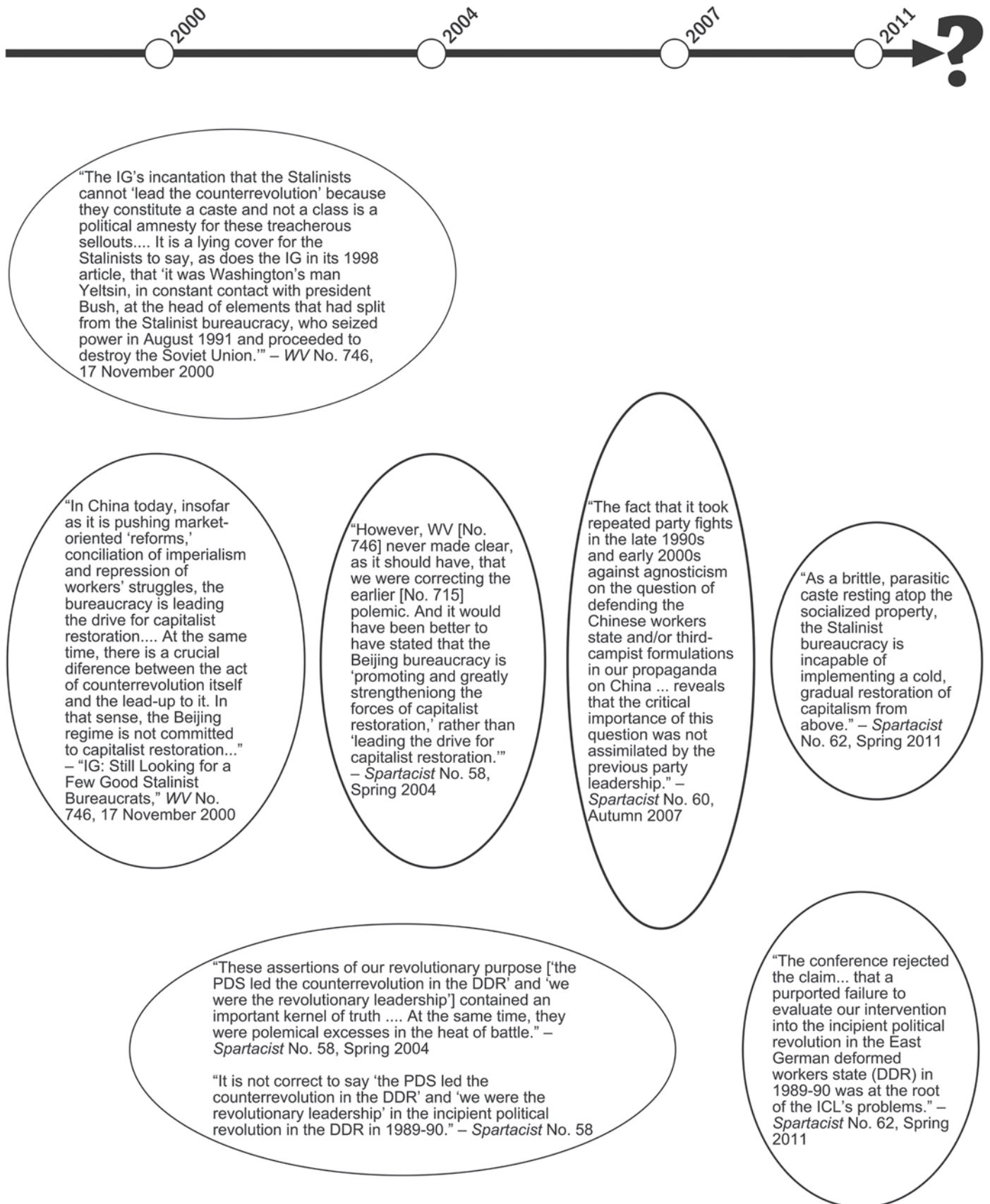
By claiming that the Stalinists "led the counterrevolution," the ICL alibied the imperialists and their social-democratic agents who actually spearheaded the capitalist reunification of Germany. And their capitulation to imperialist pressure, combined with venomous denunciation of the IG/LFI, became

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Zig-Zag: ICL Caught Between



Shachtman and Trotsky



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even more direct. Following the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon, the panicked SL/ICL abandoned its longstanding call for the defeat of U.S. imperialist wars. In a particularly vile smear, it accused the IG of “Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism” for upholding this basic Leninist position.

It went further, grotesquely claiming we were “playing to an audience of ‘Third World’ nationalists for whom the ‘only good American is a dead American’.”¹² As the SL knew perfectly well when they printed this filth, particularly in the hysterical atmosphere following the 9/11 attacks, this monstrous lie could have led to serious repression against us. In contrast to the SL/ICL’s cringing before imperialism, three days after the attack, with New York City under military occupation, we wrote:

“The Internationalist Group, section of the League for the Fourth International, calls on the working class throughout the world to fight to defeat the imperialist drive for war and repression. As the U.S. gears up to invade Afghanistan, revolutionaries defend it, Iraq and any other countries assaulted by the would-be global cops of the New World Order led by Bush & Co. who are far and away the biggest mass murderers of all.”

–“U.S. Whips Up Imperialist War Frenzy, Drives Toward Police State,” *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001

Social-Imperialist Betrayal Over Haiti

This combination of groveling before the imperialists and foam-flecked denunciation of the IG/LFI for upholding Trotskyism (i.e., the SL/ICL’s own past positions) reached its nadir with the U.S. invasion of Haiti following the January 2010 earthquake that devastated the impoverished black republic in the Caribbean. The IG took the lead in initiating united-front protests demanding “U.S./U.N. Forces Get Out!” of Haiti, warning that the troops were intended “to **put down unrest by the poor and working people of Haiti**.”¹³ WV, however, grotesquely *justified* the U.S. occupation forces, claiming they were providing humanitarian aid:

“The U.S. military is the only force on the ground with the capacity – e.g., trucks, planes, ships – to organize the transport of what food, water, medical and other supplies are getting to Haiti’s population.”

–*Workers Vanguard*, 29 January 2010

The Internationalist Group immediately called this garbage what it is, “a classic example of the term Lenin coined during World War I: ‘social-imperialism’” (“Spartacist League Backs U.S. Imperialist Invasion of Haiti,” *The Internationalist*, 30 January 2010). Behind the cover of “socialist” rhetoric

¹² “ICL Refuses to Call for Defeat of U.S. Imperialism, ‘Anti-American’ Bait the Internationalist Group,” *The Internationalist* No. 11, Fall 2001.

¹³ “Haiti: Workers Solidarity, Yes! Imperialist Occupation, No!” *The Internationalist*, 20 January 2010.



If Stalinists “led the counterrevolution” in East Germany, why was ICL up there with Stalinist leaders speaking from the Soviet War Memorial at a united-front anti-fascist mobilization on 3 January 1990?

the Spartacist League was supporting imperialist occupation. After the 9/11 attack in 2001 it had *flinched* under imperialist pressure; this was an outright *betrayal* of the first order. Our denunciation – and a subsequent article (“SL Twists and Turns on Haiti,” *The Internationalist*, 9 April 2010) – stung, and the SL unleashed a new torrent of ranting invective against the IG.

Over and over, in five out of six consecutive issues of WV, we were accused of “Third World Cheerleading and Cynical Phrase-mongering,” “IGiocy,” “oh-so-revolutionary rhetoric,” “bravado,” “adaptation to Third World populist nationalism,” and the like. The IG was declared guilty of “conjuring up fantasies of proletarian revolution in Haiti” because we had written of Haitian workers: “This small but militant proletariat can place itself at the head of the impoverished urban and rural masses seeking to organize their own power.” In response, the SL decreed that “even before the earthquake, there was virtually no working class in Haiti.”

As we wrote at the time, “Haiti has now joined a growing list of places where, according to the SL, there is no working class. It started off with Bolivia in 2005, then came Oaxaca in 2006, now Haiti in 2010.” Moreover, there was a pattern here: “in each case the SL proclaims there is no proletariat in country x just when there are explosive workers struggles there. Those Bolivian miners leading mass marches while setting off sticks of dynamite, those Oaxacan teachers and government workers who set up hundreds of barricades to stop the death squads, those Haitian workers who shut down the factories to march on parliament,” they don’t exist, said WV.

The SL/ICL began to backtrack, calling for “All U.S./UN Troops Out of Haiti Now!” (26 March 2010). But in the end, it was too much to stomach. The ICL’s International Executive Committee declared that the IG “quite correctly characterized our position as ‘social imperialist’ – socialist in words, support for imperialism in deeds.” It even admitted that, “In the context of polemics with the IG, *Workers Vanguard* misused the authority of the revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in order to alibi support to an imperialist occupation” (“Repudiating Our Position on



U.S. troops patrol Haiti's capital of Port-au-Prince, January 2010. ICL shamefully supported U.S. occupation, later admitted IG was right in labeling this betrayal "social-imperialist."

Haiti Earthquake – A Capitulation to U.S. Imperialism,” WV, 7 May 2010).

In an “Open Letter from the Internationalist Group to the Spartacist League and ICL” (8 May 2010), we suggested that any militants in the SL/ICL who wanted to get to the bottom of this capitulation should investigate, “1) *How did this betrayal come about?*” and “2) *Why did this betrayal come about?*” We answered, “*It was an extension of previous capitulation to the pressures of U.S. imperialism,*” and listed some of them. But even as the ICL called for “a savage indictment of our line,” it continued to insist that there was/is no working class in Haiti, and thus to fight for workers revolution there was nothing but IG “Third Worldist fantasies.”

They maintained this lie for almost a decade. The IG published several articles about Haitian women workers,¹⁴ initiating a solidarity protest in New York in 2013 and highlighting Hillary Clinton’s theft of earthquake relief funds to set up sweatshops. We campaigned and wrote articles in 2015 against the expulsion of Haitians from the Dominican Republic.¹⁵ We initiated an emergency trinational LFI protest in 2016 when Obama excluded Haitian refugees, and an article on “Haiti Hurricane Disaster: Workers Revolution the Answer.”¹⁶ We protested Trump’s plans in 2017 to deport Haitian refugees,¹⁷ and covered the 2018 revolts in Haiti against imperialist austerity.¹⁸

¹⁴ “Haiti: Women Workers Strike Against Starvation Wages,” *The Internationalist* No. 36, January-February 2014; and “Haitian Workers Brave Repression in Fight Against Starvation Wages,” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

¹⁵ “Stop Expulsion of Haitians from the Dominican Republic,” *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015.

¹⁶ “Protests in U.S., Mexico and Brazil Demand: Stop Exclusion of Haitians! Stop All Deportations! Occupation Troops Out of Haiti!” *The Internationalist* No. 45, September-October 2016.

¹⁷ “LET HAITIANS STAY!,” *The Internationalist*, January 2018.

¹⁸ “Revolt in Haiti Against IMF-Dictated Austerity,” *The Internationalist* No. 54, November-December 2018.

For its part, after 2010 the SL had a few articles on the U.N.-imported cholera epidemic, one on the Obama order barring refugees (with no mention of the LFI-initiated protests, to which they were invited), and that was about it. Until last fall, when an article appeared on “Haiti: Mass Revolt and State Terror” (WV, 15 November), in the issue before the article on the Bolivia coup. There we read, lo and behold, that Haitian “workers must pursue a class perspective” leading other oppressed sectors to “sweep away capitalist rule,” and “fight for a workers government.” Out of nowhere, suddenly Haitian workers surface in the pages of *Workers Vanguard*.

Moreover, *mirabile dictu*, there is even talk of “a socialist revolution in Haiti” and the “extension of workers revolution throughout the region” and into the imperialist heartland. But, significantly, there is *no mention that this is in blatant contradiction with the ICL’s previ-*

ous line that there is “virtually no working class in Haiti” and that any talk of workers revolution there is a “Third Worldist fantasy.” So the SL/ICL decided to clean up its act a bit, surreptitiously over Haiti, more explicitly over Bolivia, but always without explaining the origins of their previous line rejecting permanent revolution in impoverished countries.

2, 3, Many Dodges on Independence for Puerto Rico

The ICL’s years-long insistence that a series of countries and regions where there were sharp and often explosive struggles of working people had no proletariat was an expression of its line of a qualitative “regression of proletarian consciousness” to justify retreat from the class struggle. It also expressed a visceral hatred of the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International, all the more virulent as the IG/LFI is the political continuity of the “old Trotskyism” that the latter-day ICL has junked, bit by bit. Over Germany, China, defeat of imperialist wars, Bolivia, Haiti, and a host of other issues, we continue to uphold the positions the SL/ICL used to defend before they bought into the imperialist “death of communism” lie.

But the ICL’s multiple line changes after 1996 also have a heavy dose of imperialist chauvinism. This brings us to Puerto Rico, where the ICL’s disdain toward colonial and semi-colonial countries first came to the fore. Puerto Rico is the world’s oldest colony, having been under Spanish rule from 1493 to 1898 and under U.S. colonial rule from 1898 to the present. It is also the largest remaining colony in the world today. A colony is inherently oppressive, a negation of the national rights of the colonized people, without control over its own affairs and subject to the dictates of the imperialist master. There can be no “democratic” colonialism.

Colonial rule is a form of capitalist slavery. During the imperialist World War I, Lenin wrote: “The demand for the immediate

liberation of the colonies that is put forward by all revolutionary Social-Democrats is also 'impracticable under capitalism without a series of revolutions'. He insisted that, "Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation" but actively support the more revolutionary elements ("The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination" [1916]). Trotsky's 1919 "Manifesto of the Communist International to the Workers of the World" proclaimed:

"Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will strike for you as the hour of your own emancipation!"

Revolutionaries in the imperialist country have a special responsibility to fight for the liberation of the peoples under the colonial boot of "their own" bourgeoisie. Although this is an elementary statement of principle, many social democrats shamefully supported colonial rule of African and Asian countries. Thus one of Lenin's famous "21 conditions" of the "Terms of Admission into the Communist International" (1920) was:

"Any party wishing to join the Third International must ruthlessly expose the colonial machinations of the imperialists of its 'own' country, must support – in deed, not merely in word – every colonial liberation movement, demand the expulsion of its compatriot imperialists from the colonies, inculcate in the hearts of the workers of its own country an attitude of true brotherhood with the working population of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and conduct systematic agitation among the armed forces against all oppression of the colonial peoples."

Genuine Trotskyists have always called for independence for Puerto Rico, as part of our program for international socialist revolution. At the 1938 founding conference the Fourth International, a special "Thesis on the World Role of American Imperialism" declared that the parties of the FI throughout the Western hemisphere "stand for the immediate and unconditional independence of Puerto Rico" and all other "direct colonies, dependencies, and protectorates of American imperialism." That call was repeated in the 1938 founding convention of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), then the Trotskyist organization in the U.S.

The Spartacist League, which took up the banner of revolutionary Trotskyism as the SWP abandoned it in the mid-1960s, for years called for Puerto Rican independence, "even under bourgeois leadership," while fighting for a workers republic and socialist revolution from the Caribbean to the U.S.¹⁹ Continuing that program, the Internationalist Group declared, in a leaflet distributed during the July 1998 general strike in Puerto Rico:

"The Internationalist Group and the League for the Fourth International advocate independence for Puerto Rico, in



Above: Delegates to the Second Congress of the Communist International (including Lenin, Zinoviev, M.N. Roy and others), which voted the "21 Conditions" for joining the CI, including demanding expulsion of the imperialists from the colonies. When ICL renounced calling for Puerto Rican independence, it wouldn't have been admitted into the Comintern.

order to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism and because only by breaking out of the national subjugation of colonial rule can the international class struggle come to the fore. We support struggles for independence from colonial rule, even when they are led by petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces, at the same time as we fight for proletarian leadership of the struggle against imperialism through international socialist revolution. Genuine national liberation can only be achieved by workers revolution, in Puerto Rico and the U.S. We demand: Yankee imperialism get out! U.S. military out of Puerto Rico and all of the Caribbean! Return Guantanamo to Cuba! "At the same time, however distorted by the mechanisms of colonial referendums, the fact remains that an overwhelming majority of the Puerto Rican population does not presently favor independence. As the right to self-determination is a democratic question, and the working class has no interest in forcing independence against the will of the Puerto Rican population – especially when the impetus for separation comes from right-wing reactionaries – we underline our defense of Puerto Rico's right to independence."

–"Puerto Rico General Strike Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!" *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1996

The Spartacist League, however, used the occasion to abandon its call for independence for Puerto Rico. Its article on the strike included a quote from a 1993 article, that declared "We advocate independence in order to strike a blow against U.S. imperialism," while saying it wasn't in favor of "forcing" that. But a few weeks later, *WV* (11 September 1998) printed a "correction" which claimed that to advocate independence while opposing forcing it on the Puerto Rican people is "self-contradictory." Not at all. Revolutionaries advocate all kinds of positions that are today minority views, which in no way

¹⁹ "Puerto Rico: National Independence and the Class Struggle," *Young Spartacus*, No. 20, November-December 1973.

means imposing them by force. On the basis of this absurd argument, the SL claimed to defend the Caribbean nation's "right to independence," but declared: "We do not currently advocate independence for Puerto Rico, not least because the vast majority of the population there is not in favor of it at this time." Against this turn to "socialist" colonialism, we wrote:

"For the Spartacist League in the United States, this renunciation of the call for independence for this key U.S. colony, the linchpin for U.S. military and economic domination of the Caribbean, amounts to outright capitulation before 'their own' bourgeoisie.... For socialists in an imperialist country to refuse to call for independence for a colony is a betrayal and a colonialist, chauvinist position. Lenin insisted, over and over, that the right of self-determination for colonies can only mean independence."

—"ICL Renounces Fight for Puerto Rican Independence," *The Internationalist* No. 6, November-December 1998

In response to our denunciation of this betrayal, *Workers Vanguard* (8 January 1999), published a frenzied and exceedingly dishonest polemic, claiming that "IG Centrists Pander to Latin American Nationalism," *for defending the principled position that the SL had upheld for the last quarter century*. Quoting Lenin's 1916 article "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," WV omitted his insistence on "the demand for the immediate liberation of the colonies." It never mentioned that Trotsky, the Fourth International and the then-Trotskyist SWP called for independence for Puerto Rico.

So for the next 21 years, the SL refused to advocate independence of Puerto Rico. Yet all the while, these erstwhile Trotskyists were continuously dancing around the issue, with one evasive formulation after another. (Meanwhile, they continued screaming that by "advocating" independence, the IG stood for "forcing" it.)

Thus in their January 1999 screed they wrote that, actually, "we favor Puerto Rican independence, in order to fight against chauvinism in the United States and to undercut the bourgeois-nationalist leadership of the working class on the island." So the SL "favors" independence, but doesn't "advocate" it. What then *does* the SL advocate? Far from a guide for revolutionary struggle against U.S. subjugation of the island colony, this pious wish was an excuse for passive acceptance of the colonial status quo. One might similarly "favor" rain (or not, depending).

Then came another variant: "As forthright opponents of all forms of U.S. imperialist colonial oppression, we would favor independence for Puerto Rico," declares a Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S. published in 2000. So now the SL doesn't "favor" independence in the abstract, but instead "would favor" it ... if what? If the majority of Puerto Ricans favor it? If there was a mass movement for it? If it happened? This is a meaningless statement, at most a platitudinous expression of sympathy, without any concrete application.

One might think that the difference between "favor" independence and "would favor" is insignificant, especially since they are both empty phrases. But from SL internal documents it turns out the most determined opponents of calling for Puerto Rican independence objected to the statement in WV 799 that it "favors" independence. In the Jesuitical nature of SL internal discussions,

the objection cited a resolution of a November 1998 Central Committee plenum which said "would favor." But a report on Puerto Rico at the same meeting by SL chairman James Robertson said that "we strongly advocate independence." Go figure.

Amid all this double-speak, the 2000 SL Programmatic Statement adds:

"At the same time, the sympathies of the population are a large factor for Marxists in determining how best to get the national question off the agenda and clear the road for revolutionary internationalist class struggle. In recent years, referendums in Puerto Rico have shown those in favor of independence to be in a minority, although referendums are not the main or only means of measuring the sympathies of the population; for example, the 1998 two-day general strike against privatization of the telephone company through sale to an American firm was a powerful demonstration of opposition to the island's national subjugation."

In the first place, in a colonial or semi-colonial country, the struggle for independence is not just to "get the national question off the agenda" and clear the road for the class struggle. For Trotskyists who fight on the program of permanent revolution, the struggle for national liberation from colonial subjugation is an integral part of the class struggle, requiring a socialist revolution in order to throw off the yoke of imperialism. Secondly, the two-day 1998 general strike did not just show popular sympathies, it was led by pro-independence unions and unionists.

And thirdly, the small vote for independence in colonial referendums is nothing new. There have been four referendums on the status of Puerto Rico, in 1967, 1993, 1998 and 2012, as well as a "referendum" called by pro-statehood forces in 2017 that was widely boycotted. At most 5% of the population voted for independence in these plebiscites. This does not reflect the sentiment for independence, which is substantial, or the affirmation of Puerto Rico's nationhood, which is massive, but rather the fear of being cut off from the mainland, where a majority of Puerto Ricans now live, and of becoming another impoverished Caribbean island.

This is why the struggle for the liberation of Puerto Rico from colonial domination must be part of a program of socialist revolution, from the Caribbean to the imperialist heartland. It is *not* a reason why revolutionaries should drop the demand for independence for all colonies, which for Leninists is a matter of principle. Lenin insisted that while the right of self-determination in colonies can only mean independence, for nationalities in a multinational state (such as the Russian empire), it is akin to the right to divorce, which one can exercise or not depending on the situation. The SL/ICL has in a confusionist way conflated these two different situations.

Then suddenly last summer, we read (in WV, 23 August 2019): "We advocate independence for Puerto Rico as part of our opposition to U.S. imperialism." Whoa! What about all your screeching against the Internationalist Group that to advocate independence can only mean imposing it by force? Not a peep. A public correction, perhaps, about the fact that you just changed your line? Or that you were returning to the position that you dumped in 1998? Nary a word. How about a little political honesty here? Like saying of the two decades

of sharp clashes between the SL/ICL and IG/LFI over Puerto Rico, *who was right and who was wrong*.

From Colonialist “Socialists” to Annexationist “Socialists”

So what is going on here? Does this reversal of positions of the post-1996 SL/ICL signify a return to revolutionary Trotskyism. Not at all. What happened is that around 2015 the ICL recruited a circle of leftists in Quebec who were under the sway of Quebecois nationalism. Rather than fighting for independence of Quebec, an oppressed nation within Anglo-dominated Canada, on a proletarian internationalist program in order to combat the Anglo-chauvinism of the oppressor and the bourgeois nationalism of sections of the Quebec bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie, the actual aim became to build a (bourgeois) Quebec nation-state.

This group was then used as a battering ram by Skye Williams, who at a memorial meeting for SL founder and leader Jim Robertson (who died last April) modestly proclaimed that “I became the central leader of the SL/U.S., and later, of the International” (WV, 13 December 2019). The newly re-configured leadership went after a whole layer of older SL/ICL cadres, demagogically charging them with having – for 40 years! – promoted a program of “chauvinism on the national question.” Anglo chauvinism certainly did rear its head within the ICL, but not in its political line on the national question, which was straight Leninism ... until it lost its moorings as it increasingly internalized a defeatist program following counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, and generated a new leadership (actually a series of attempted new leaderships) on that basis.

The new program was laid out in the monster document of the ICL’s Seventh Conference, published under the title “The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra” in *Spartacist* (Summer 2017). It was announced that “A leadership guided by comrade Coelho” led the internal fight to “regenerate the party.” *However, the program on which they are “regenerating” the party is not revolutionary Trotskyism but bourgeois nationalism.*

Regarding Bolivia, Haiti and Puerto Rico, the latter-day ICL’s line (which was in fact shot through with imperialist chauvinism) was an embarrassment for a new leadership committed to nation-building in the imperialist countries. So after years of denouncing the IG for allegedly “tailing after Third World nationalism,” suddenly these First World nation-builders declared that we are Anglo chauvinists for whom “imperialist white Americans can decide the fate of Puerto Ricans without any concern for their national will” (“Hydra”). All because we advocate independence for Puerto Rico, which they lyingly equate with forcing it on Puerto Ricans.

In “Hydra,” the “new leadership” of the “regenerated” ICL admitted that “we have had problems with our line on Puerto Rico as established over the years in WV,” that its line was “ambivalence toward colonialism,” and that “*until 2010*” its leading organ “disappeared” the “argument” that “we favor Puerto Rican independence!” But on the “do they or don’t they, yes or no” question of *calling for independence*, the regenerated leadership waffled, opining that “whether we use the term

‘advocate’ or (would) ‘favor’ independence” was not the point. *The point is that for two decades, these ex-Trotskyists did not fight for independence for Puerto Rico.*

Nor do they today. For the ICL, it’s all just words, which is why they play around with favor, would favor, don’t advocate, do advocate – it’s all about what’s in their heads, and has nothing to do with real intervention in the class struggle. Thus in “Hydra,” they came out for “the right of Puerto Ricans to freely decide on annexation” (sic!), and a few months later they blithely declare that “should Puerto Ricans decide they want statehood, we would support the will of the population” (WV No. 1123, 1 December 2017). This is truly perverse. As we wrote:

“In reality, becoming a state would be a *colonial annexation*. It would inevitably mean the destruction of the Puerto Rican nation, which is what advocates of statehood, namely the far right wing of Puerto Rican bourgeois politicians, intend.... So the *ex-Trotskyist anti-Leninists* of the Spartacist League/ICL are *explicitly supporting colonial annexation*.”

–“SL/ICL on Puerto Rico: Annexationist “Socialists,” *The Internationalist* No. 50, Winter 2017

So the colonialist “socialists” of the ICL have become annexationist “socialists”!

Now they have come back to saying they advocate independence for Puerto Rico, and recognizing that there is a proletariat in Bolivia and Haiti, even suggesting there could be a fight for workers revolution in these impoverished semi-colonial countries. But while they may try to quietly undo some of the more blatantly chauvinist lines, with a half-correction in the first case and back-door line changes in the other two, not mentioning their previous, vociferously defended positions, their only explanation for this topsy-turvy policy is to guilt-trip the SL/ICL membership, saying that for four decades they were all Anglo-chauvinists.

After all this, they still incongruously claim to be the continuity of Trotskyism and Leninism. To make this boast while condemning their 40-year line on a central issue (the national question) as not merely wrong but out-and-out chauvinist, they have transformed the whole conception of revolutionary continuity to turn it into a personal attribute, so that the line of succession goes from Marx to Engels to Lenin to Trotsky to Cannon to Robertson and now the new Central Leader. Yet in carrying out this self-aggrandizing operation, the “regenerated” ICL/SL unintentionally reveals that the *political continuity of the revolutionary program* is embodied in the League for the Fourth International.

In the hothouse atmosphere of the Spartacist League and ICL, things could seem like a version of “As the World Turns,” with new leaderships installed in 1996, 2004, 2008 and 2017, each with a new set of politics, which then get discarded in the next fight. But rather than regenerating revolutionary politics, it is spinning like a top, wobbling ever more wildly on the way to oblivion. The SL/ICL may persist as a centrist sect, with a mediocre leadership devoid of Marxist grounding. But the degenerated SL/ICL, a caricature of Trotskyism, can’t provide a materialist analysis of its endless twists and turns, and can never forge a genuine world party of socialist revolution. Carrying forward that task falls to the League for the Fourth International. ■

Mobilize Workers Power to Defend Immigrants, Stop Nazis! Germany: Bourgeois Backlash Hits Refugees After Racist Riot

The following article is translated from Permanent Revolution No. 3, Spring 2019, published by the Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the League for the Fourth International.

After the racist pogrom against immigrants in Chemnitz in August 2018, in recent months there have been both massive, vaguely anti-racist mobilizations as well as a number of incidents that clearly show the cooperation between various elements of the German bourgeois state and the fascists. The government coalition has naturally gone even further to the right and is working to prevent a further influx of refugees. Its next step will be to more expeditiously deport refugees who are already in the country and are considered economically unusable. This will only further stimulate the appetite of fascists, who have long had entire immigrant communities in their crosshairs, some of whom have been settled here for generations. After the election successes of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), there is increasing speculation as to what will happen if Germany's export boom subsides.

At the same time, the German ruling class looks with fear and disgust at the populist revolt of the "yellow vests" in France. European Union (EU) budget commissioner Günther Oettinger, a Christian Democrat (CDU), said that French President Macron had "lost authority" in the EU with his minimal concessions in the 2019 budget – a call for further repression. The AfD and the fascist gangs hiding behind it are protected here and, if necessary, deployed because they are ultimately more acceptable to the ruling class than economic populist protests or, even worse, an upsurge of class struggles like the wave of the wildcat strikes 50 years ago.

The Fascist Strategy

The tragic incident in Chemnitz, in which the German-Cuban Daniel Hillig died after a street fight in the early hours of August



Internationalistische Gruppe contingent at the Liebkecht-Luxemburg demo in Berlin, Germany, 13 January 2019.

26 [2018], was gratefully picked up by fascist agitators. In other circumstances, Hillig could equally well have been a victim of the dark racist and fascist forces that tried to stir up indignation over his death. In the weeks that followed, the AfD worked with a number of fascist groups to organize several threatening marches. The first of these turned into a pogrom of the kind that Saxony and other parts of Germany experienced in the early 1990s. This threw the entire country into an uproar.

What was the response from the reformist left, of social democracy and union bureaucracy? A few days later they organized a concert in Chemnitz that attracted tens of thousands to proclaim "Heart Rather Than Hatred." And in mid-October the same forces then carried out the large "#Unteilbar" (Inseparable) demonstration with hundreds of thousands of participants in Berlin. This was a "popular front" whose aim was to unite the left and the workers movement with bourgeois forces such as the Greens or liberal Christian groups, etc. But celebration of class collaboration with a happy face won't stop the Nazis.

We need an independent, class-based mobilization of the

**Break with Reformism –
For a Multiethnic Revolutionary Workers Party!**

social power of the working class, with its important component of immigrants, together with all potential victims of fascist terror, in order to nip the murderous racist gangs in the bud. The Internationalistische Gruppe intervened with this class-struggle policy in the union contingent in the Unteilbar demo. We attacked the lie of “social partnership” and the suicidal confidence of the DGB (German Labor Federation) bureaucracy that the bourgeois state would do something against the Nazis, while stressing the need for a multiethnic revolutionary workers party.

The AfD openly assumed responsibility for the attacks in Chemnitz, which again confirms our Marxist characterization of this party as fascistic. Its Bundestag press spokesman Markus Frohnmaier justified them on Twitter: “If the state can no longer protect citizens, people will take to the streets and protect themselves. It’s that simple!” AfD supporters also helped spread fictional stories, such as that the cause of the deadly conflict was supposedly a sexual assault by refugees, which even the Saxon police denied. It was not until weeks later that it was discovered that on August 27 fascist scum attacked a kosher restaurant in Chemnitz, Schalom, shouting “Get out of Germany, you Jewish sow,” injuring the owner, and then moving on to attack “foreign” restaurants. It is all about “ethnic cleansing” which, according to the fascists, is actually feasible in parts of eastern Germany. To do this, they make use of all the old filth, such as the age-old racist fantasies about the need to protect “German womanhood.”

The correlation between the electoral success of the AfD and mounting racist violence in Saxony is noteworthy. On October 1, the police uncovered a small group called “Revolution Chemnitz,” who are accused of being behind a vigilante group that attacked immigrants and planned attacks on foreigners, politicians and journalists. This is reminiscent of the death lists of AfD partisans in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern that were revealed in 2017.

For now the AfD and its youth are content to disrupt left-wing meetings at Humboldt University in Berlin, attacks which elsewhere, for example in Greifswald, are carried out by fascist “Identitarians,”¹ who are increasingly linked to the AfD. Leftists are by no means the only targets of the AfD and the fascist gangs, which after all also want to “save the German family.” Hate crimes reported against lesbians, gays and transgender people in Germany rose by a quarter in 2017, even according to the Interior Ministry.

Given the large number of fascist thugs hired by AfD deputies – despite “inadmissible” lists that nobody takes seriously – everything looks very much like the strategy that Björn Höcke, the

¹ The “Identitarian” movement is a white supremacist neo-Nazi current that grew out of the French “Nouvelle Droite” (New Right) in the 1960s and has expanded greatly since 2012 particularly in Austria and Germany through xenophobic actions against immigrants.



Riots in Chemnitz. Thousands of right-wingers and outright fascists rampaged in the East German city demanding “criminal foreigners out,” a number giving the Nazi salute and attacking “foreign” restaurants including a kosher establishment.

Joseph Goebbels of the AfD, laid out in his book *Never Twice in the Same River*. According to Höcke, there are three “fronts” – the AfD in parliament, groups like Pegida² and the Chemnitz mobs on the streets, and what he calls “frustrated sections of the state and security apparatus.” The latter are represented by the notably large number of current and former judges, prosecutors, police and military officers among AfD parliamentary representatives. The mobilization of petty-bourgeois and declassed elements in a terrorist mass movement against the working class and the oppressed is the hallmark of fascism. But fascism did not want and does not seek to “smash the state” or “illegally” seize power. In its “classic period,” in the 1920s and ‘30s, it also counted on the complicity of elements of the bourgeois state.

The Scandal Is That There Is No Scandal

After a team of reporters for the television news magazine *Frontal 21* was detained by police officers for 45 minutes at a Pegida demonstration in Dresden on August 16 (2018) – at the behest of a demonstrator who is also a police officer – this arbitrary act by the cops was defended by various CDU politicians and even the prime minister of Saxony. It is clear that Saxony is full of cops who sympathize with or support the AfD, Pegida and even the smaller Nazi groups. In an operation during the visit of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, members of a Saxon special police unit used the name of Uwe Böhnhardt as a codename, one of the NSU³ killers.

² Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West) is a xenophobic, German nationalist, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant movement shot through with outright fascists, which formed in Dresden, Germany in 2014.

³ The National Socialist Underground is/was a neo-Nazi terror group that murdered at least nine Turkish, Kurdish and Greek immigrants, killed a police woman in Heilbronn, carried more than a dozen bank robberies and bombed an immigrant neighborhood in Cologne in 2004. A scandal was set off when it became known that Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) and federal and state Offices for the Protection of the Constitution (Germany’s equivalent of the FBI) had fascist informants and agents who were present in and played a prominent role in the murders.



West German industrial police. The U.S. military recruited “former” Nazis as labor cops.

But the phenomenon of “Pegizei” (police acting in support Pegida) is not only to be found in Saxony. In Dortmund in western Germany, police simply disappeared from the scene as Nazis marched through the streets with flags and anti-Semitic slogans in late September 2018. In October, Seda Basay-Yildiz, a lawyer in Frankfurt/Main, received a letter signed by “NSU 2.0,” which threatened to “slaughter” her two-year-old daughter in retaliation for her defense of NSU victims. The letter actually came from a police officer who extracted Basay-Yildiz’s personal information from an official database.

It turned out that this was just the tip of the iceberg, because there is a whole network of fascist cells in the Hesse police. On 11 January 2019 the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* revealed that another Hesse police officer had supplied the Nazi terrorist group “Aryans” with unspecified internal materials. These cases show how fascists inside and outside the police can get their hands on data to attack unpopular individuals.

And it’s not just about the police. At the end of November, half a dozen different investigations were underway against members of the Bundeswehr elite unit Command Special Forces (KSK). One case that came to light was of two members, one a lieutenant colonel, who had ostentatiously thrown a Hitler salute at a KSK party in April 2017 (at which radical right-wing music was also played). The KSK, the spearhead of German intervention in Afghanistan (where we revolutionaries stand for the defeat of the imperialists), has been a hotbed of nostalgia for the Nazi “Third Reich” since its foundation.

The KSK complex also includes overlapping networks of right-wing radicals from the so-called “prepper scene,” KSK veterans and the “Uniter” secret society (of current and former members of elite military units). This includes the Bundeswehr lieutenant Franco Albrecht, who pretended to be a Syrian refugee (!) and apparently was planning a “false flag” attack, as well as police officers who are associated with the AfD in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Some of this has been known since 2017 and the “Uniter” network has now been reported in detail. Yet the priority for the Bundeswehr here was to limit both reporting and criminal prosecution.

These “preppers” (from the English “prepare”) aren’t just

into an eccentric hobby of preparing for natural disasters. They are racists who in anticipation of a social breakdown are setting up weapons depots and other storage facilities, and drawing up enemies lists. *Focus Online* (9 November 2018) reported on internal files of the Federal Criminal Police Office: “According to witness statements, there were concrete plans for a so-called ‘Day X’ in which disliked politicians would be “brought to a place with the intention to kill.”

The whole dirty tale of the interpenetration of the bourgeois state apparatus and fascist gangs began as early as the fall of 1945, before there even was a West German state, when the U.S. military began to recruit for its “industrial police.” The US Army Counterintelligence Corps hired Nazi war criminals like Klaus Barbie to spy on German Communists. It completely took over Reinhard Gehlen’s anti-Soviet Nazi espionage apparatus, from which the Federal Intelligence Service (BND, Germany’s CIA) emerged. And it set up paramilitary “Gladio” forces all over Europe with arms depots and kill lists. In Germany, this included the German Youth Federation (BDJ), which planned to liquidate selected socialists, communists and other “neutralists.” Its successor organizations can be traced from the bombing of the Munich Oktoberfest in 1980 up into the 1990s. This is only part of the whole underground cesspool that was supposed to be covered up by the NSU “investigation,” trial and verdict.

Marxists do not place an equal sign between the police or bourgeois state and the fascist gangs, but they are increasingly connected. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the police have been massively mobilized by *every* bourgeois government to protect fascist marches – such as the Rudolf Hess March in Berlin, which was protected by the cops of the SPD/Left Party/Greens city government. Relying on the police for protection against the fascists – and calling on the bourgeois state to ban them, as the Left Party does – is both foolish and dangerous. The contrast to the hysteria that was whipped up about the protests against the G20 summit in Hamburg and the ongoing repression against the left involved could hardly be sharper (see “G20 Summit Police State Terror in Hamburg,” in *The Internationalist* No. 50, Winter 2017).

Bourgeois Backlash Against Refugees

In the meantime, Hans Georg Maassen, then head of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV), claimed that there was no “manhunt” of foreigners in Chemnitz. When a video proved otherwise, he told the tabloid *Bild* that the clip might have been faked. Goebbels’ technique of the “Big Lie” is alive and well in today’s “democratic” Germany. However, a team of *Frontal 21* journalists gained access to internal police reports about the riots in Chemnitz, which clearly showed that the mobs were bent on attacking immigrants, leftists and “foreign” restaurants.

Maassen had previously attracted attention because he advised the AfD to ensure that it was not monitored by the BfV. This was also the line of his boss, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer (who also tried to legitimize the Chemnitz pogrom as self-defense). Seehofer tried to remove Maassen from the spotlight, but failed when Maassen attacked the SPD as “radical leftist” (!). While his successor Thomas Haldenwang emphasized his political agreement with Maassen, the latter rejected an attempt by the AfD

to recruit him; he prefers to be a reactionary in his own name.

It can be seen that the barriers against a CDU coalition government with the AfD are slowly crumbling. All the bourgeois parties are now playing the “law and order” card, including the rebranded FDP. The candidates who wanted to replace Angela Merkel at the head of the CDU competed with anti-refugee rhetoric. The winner, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, grotesquely equated the punk band “Feine Sahne Fischfilet” (Fine Cream Fish Fillet) and the Nazi thugs from Chemnitz and announced that she wants to “integrate” refugees by limiting their benefits to the Hartz IV level.

At the same time, “mainstream” politicians are getting involved in anti-immigrant baiting all over Europe. While the British Conservative government is concocting a “crisis” because of just under 100 refugees who made it across the English Channel, the “moderate” French president Emmanuel Macron has unleashed the police at the French borders to keep out refugees. The bourgeois consensus has once again shifted to the right. The smaller European countries have often pioneered reactionary socio-political measures and offensives of the ruling class. In Denmark, where the police are allowed to confiscate refugees’ valuables, the (anti) immigration minister declared the Muslim Ramadan time of fasting “a danger to all of us” and so-called “ghetto children” (i.e., Muslims) are given mandatory instruction in “Danish values.” Kindergartens may not have more than 30% children with an immigration background, and the penalties for crimes committed in “ghetto areas” are to be automatically doubled.

Similar apartheid measures are being worked on in Austria, where Interior Minister Kickl from the fascist Austrian Freedom Party not only wants centers to “keep refugees concentrated in one place,” i.e., in concentration camp demands – he is now targeting people with dual Austrian-Turkish citizenship. In Italy, the right-wing government ensures that refugees drown in the Mediterranean, while at the same time trying to close shops and restaurants that belong to immigrants. In Germany, which relies on a labor force of immigrants, but is now restricting the influx of refugees, a campaign is in full swing to punish crimes not according to legal stipulations, but based on nationality. The federal president of the Greens (who still has an undeserved reputation for “anti-racism”) endorsed an initiative by CDU-ruled states to speed up the deportation of refugees convicted of various crimes.

This consensus also finds support within the Left. The “Aufstehen” (Rise Up) movement of the Left Party politicians Sarah Wagenknecht and Oskar Lafontaine has just been launched. According to the daily *Neues Deutschland* (4 September 2018), this movement is intended to “undercut” the AfD. How? By deliberately refusing to confront racist anti-immigrant hysteria in the hope of winning over a few isolated AfD protest voters. Everything revolves around the reformist and chauvinist notion that there simply *isn’t enough for everyone*, and that “the Germans” should get theirs first. “Aufstehen” has already attracted people like Peter Brandt (Willy Brandt’s son), who after very briefly flirting with pseudo-Trotskyism decided that the “left” had to make the “German national

Permanente Revolution No. 3 (Spring 2019).

question” its own, and finally ended up with the “new right” weekly, *Junge Freiheit*!

Wagenknecht even falsely claimed that the call for the popular “Unteilbar” (Indivisible) demo in October 2018 contained the utopian call for “open borders,” a call that essentially amounts to asking the capitalist state to abolish itself. Team Wagenknecht/Lafontaine is in favor of the (bourgeois) state turning back refugees.

In contrast, we Trotskyists reject all racist immigration and alien laws, as well as the police that enforce them and the bourgeois parties that write them. We demand not only equal treatment, but full citizenship rights for all immigrants, regardless of how they got here, and asylum for those fleeing the destruction caused by imperialism. We emphasize that the capitalist oppression of immigrants can only be ended by the international socialist revolution.

Popular Front or Workers Mobilization?

Despite the increase in votes for the AfD in many parts of Germany, its opponents have undeniably outnumbered them on the streets. But the countermobilizations are usually cross-class coalitions, i.e., “popular fronts” in which the left and the workers movement are subordinated to their supposed bourgeois “allies.” Sometimes attempts are made to draw in even the CDU. Events such as the “Unteilbar” demo or the concert in Chemnitz were mainly directed against the AfD and/or against Seehofer and, if at all, only implicitly against Merkel and the CDU/SPD grand coalition. Furthermore, such “peace and love” festivals do not answer the question of how fascist attacks on immigrants can *actually be stopped*, especially in areas where fascist violence is a daily, demoralizing threat.

Marx21, a “network” in the Left Party linked to the tendency of the late anti-Trotskyist Tony Cliff, which by no means is any kind of left opposition, but instead offers the reformist party a thin “Marxist” veneer, wants to explain to us in the December 2018 issue of its magazine that we need

“broad alliances” against the right, in which even pastors can participate. The “pastors” et al. only serve as placeholders for the “democratic forces and parties,” including the Greens and even parts of the CDU, as well as the SPD leaders that Marx21 would like to hitch up for its class-collaborationist program. In another article, “How the Right Shift Was Stopped in the ‘90s,” the Cliffites are seriously trying to peddle the fairy tale that “the right wing was stopped by a broad mass movement” of “chains of lights and demonstrations.”

The article argues against the social-chauvinist Oskar Lafontaine, who (accurately) pointed out that racist violence abated after the right to asylum was largely abolished in 1993, with substantial support from the SPD, whose leader he was at the time. The influx of refugees abated because German imperialism hid behind a barrier of “safe third countries” (a construct that Lafontaine personally invented and has now been extended to the entire EU in the form of the racist “Dublin III” deportation regulation).

Of course, today’s Left Party politician Lafontaine brags about these facts because he now wants to appease the pogromists. But his Marx21 party friends prefer to rewrite history because they want to continue building harmless popular fronts instead of mobilizing the power of the working class to stop the fascists.

In view of this split in the Left Party, where the “anti-racist” wing has nothing to offer but the deceptive appeal to the bourgeois state to ban the fascists, please, Wolfram Klein of the Sozialistische Alternative (SAV, another grouping within the Left Party) leadership complains on www.socialistworld.net (1 October 2018) about another trend within the Left Party: “Unfortunately, the Left Party is currently not up to the task.” What a delicate way to disguise the decades-long betrayals by this party, and which helps various state governments to implement capitalist austerity measures and racist deportations! The SAV’s international organization, Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers International (CWI), said in December:

“However, the social base for mass fascist forces with the objective of crushing the organisations and democratic rights of the working class do not exist in the modern era. This of course does not mean that should these far right parties manage to come to power in some countries that they will not attempt to introduce extremely repressive measures. As we have seen fascist forces and groups can exist and grow to an extent but as an auxiliary force.”

—International Secretariat of the CWI, “Thesis on Europe 2018” (November 2018)

How can the CWI so categorically exclude the possibility of “fascist mass forces” for an unlimited historical period? Not, in fact, because they deny the possibility that impoverished petty bourgeois or lumpenproletarians could serve the fascists as voting cattle or shock troops. No, it’s because these class-collaborators, who yearn to administer the bourgeois state (like they did in Liverpool in the 1980s) and who believe that the cops are “workers in uniform,” don’t want to believe that the bourgeoisie would ever let the fascists come to power again. This is just a reformist lullaby based on the belief in the stability of the capitalist order. The CWI manifesto ironically makes use of the same argument used by the Social Democrats and

Stalinists who when Hitler came to power in 1933 appealed for calm, claiming:

“However, the growing support for far-right parties will lead to its own contradictions and increasingly expose them. Divisions are opening, and will open up within them. If they [the Nazis] are in power at local or national level, their actual economic and social policies will be tested and obvious.”

A similar contradiction, but in an even more concentrated and even schizophrenic form, is shown by the centrist Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SpAD – Spartacist Workers Party of Germany), part of the International Communist League, whose name is a holdover from the time when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism. It is quite an achievement to come up with the headline about the need for “Mobilizations of Workers and Minorities to Stop Nazis” (*Spartakist*, Autumn 2018) and then to explain on the same front page: “Workers struggles against the capitalists in Germany are currently at a historic low. That is why the bourgeoisie has no need to unleash its fascist attack dogs against the organized workers.” Although *Spartakist* advises in the next breath that these “attack dogs” indeed must be chased back into their “rat holes” (?), “while they are still relatively small,” the reader can actually only conclude that it cannot be so urgent. Especially since they haven’t done anything to concretize this for the last two decades.

Overall, the German bourgeoisie continues to rely heavily on the union bureaucracy and police repression to suppress militant class struggles. However, there is a growing low-wage sector that lacks any union representation and is targeted by fascists and the cops. Did the SpAD possibly sleep through the brutal attack on a trade unionist by two suspected AfD supporters in Hanau-Steinheim in July? Or the fact that, not long ago, Amazon hired a group of fascists in the form of a private security company to keep some of its migrant workers in Germany under control.

As Trotsky stated in the 1938 Transitional Program:

“The bourgeoisie is nowhere satisfied with the official police and army. In the United States even during “peaceful” times the bourgeoisie maintains militarized battalions of scabs and privately armed thugs in factories. To this must now be added the various groups of American Nazis.”

“Even in ‘quiet’ times”! Trotsky never mechanically defined the fascists as something that could be conjured up by the capitalists on command, and only in times of crisis. In reality, the demoralized SpAD believes that admitting that there is a fascist threat is tantamount to supporting an “anti-fascist” popular front. Why? Because the SpAD and its international think a revolutionary struggle against the fascists is impossible and live in fear of their own opportunism.

Nazi marches are not a question of “free speech”: they are provocations to promote lynching, terrorist cells and state repression. They try to terrorize vulnerable groups of the population and provoke the attacks of the capitalist state against those who oppose their racist, anti-communist violence. They must be stopped because their goals are to wipe out the workers movement and promote racist genocide. We need mass mobilizations of the multiethnic working class and all the oppressed to nip fascists in the bud before they can imple-

“Anti-German” Witch-Hunters Support Zionism and German Imperialism

In the last couple years there has been an internationally orchestrated offensive to define opposition to Zionism as anti-Semitism. Most recently this has been seen in U.S. president Donald Trump’s executive order calling on the federal government to vigorously enforce such definitions on university and college campuses, where there have been numerous protests against the unrelenting war on Palestinians by the Zionist state of Israel; and in the virulent campaign against Jeremy Corbyn over alleged anti-Semitism in the British Labour Party. We print below an article from March 2017 showing how in Germany slanderous accusations of anti-Semitism by a peculiar political tendency known as “anti-Germans” have led to persecution of leftists and support for imperialist war. This article was a companion piece to “Germany: Anti-Palestinian Witch Hunt Targets Leftist and Jewish Activists,” which appeared in The Internationalist No. 48, May-June 2017.

The “Anti-Germans” are a political current that originated with ex-leftists who moved rapidly to the right following the 1990 annexation of the German Democratic Republic (DDR, the East German bureaucratically deformed workers state) by imperialist West Germany. Elsewhere in the world such tendencies generally turned to social democracy or found their way into mainstream bourgeois politics, often through the local Green party. In Germany, however, a faction that continued to self-identify as “leftist” and even “communist” embraced Zionist Israel as a supposed “safe haven” for Jews, and came out in favor of imperialist interventions in the Middle East.

Thus the “Anti-Germans” around the magazine *konkret* grotesquely supported the U.S.-led Gulf War against Iraq in 1991, which was financially underwritten by Germany, out of solidarity with Israel. In 2000 they supported Zionist repression of the Palestinian Second Intifada against Israeli occupation. After the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the Anti-Germans enlisted in the imperialist “war on terror,” denouncing “Islamofascists” and supporting the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq. In the build-up to the 2003 U.S. invasion, *konkret* publisher Hermann Gremliza was for an Israeli nuclear first strike against Iraq. Today, former “Anti-German”

guru and writer for *konkret* Jürgen Elsässer heads Compact, the German far right’s equivalent of Breitbart.

It would be easy to discount the “Anti-Germans” and their deranged ravings, were it not for the fact that they carry out their pro-imperialist policies by attacking leftists and immigrants. While the German army helped bomb Afghanistan, and as data on tens of thousands of Muslim men were handed over to the German police by universities and other public institutions in a racist “dragnet” to find “sleepers”, the “Anti-Germans” labeled the anti-war movement “anti-Semitic”, and assaulted leftists and immigrants, especially on campuses. Lately, the “Anti-Germans” have concentrated on smear campaigns labeling pro-Palestinian groups and individuals “anti-Semites” and then calling for censorship and expulsion of them.

In fact, the “Anti-Germans” reflect the *raison d’état* of the “Fourth Reich” of German imperialism, which proclaims itself the legal successor state to the Nazi Third Reich. The German ruling class, which maintained its continuity even as the Hitler regime crumbled, arms and finances Zionist Israel to the hilt and uses the myth of “collective guilt,” the lie that all Germans were responsible for the Nazis’ Holocaust, in order to whitewash the *German bourgeoisie’s* guilt for the genocide of six million Jews, and millions of others (and to excuse its stubborn refusal to compensate Jewish survivors of death camps and forced labor).

After 1945, the “bourgeoisie of Auschwitz” – the Krupp and Thyssen steel barons, the Daimler and Popp auto magnates, the bankers who financed Hitler – continued to rule through their handpicked chancellors, as the “de-Nazified” banker Hermann Josef Abs did with Konrad Adenauer, Alfred Herrhausen with Helmut Kohl and Josef Ackermann with Angela Merkel. The officer corps remained intact and the Wehrmacht was rebuilt as the Bundeswehr, while many of their Nazi henchmen went on to head the federal police (BKA) and foreign intelligence service (BND). And today “Anti-Germans” and right-wing German nationalists use censorship laws against “anti-Semitic” expression to hound leftists and supporters of the Palestinian people. ■

ment their program of mass murder. That also includes their parliamentary arm, the fascistic AfD.

The struggle today must be to bring the power of the workers movement into play such that it can serve as an example, to mobilize trade union contingents to block mass deportations of refugees to Afghanistan, etc., or to actually stop fascist marches. Ultimately, self-defense groups based on the organized workers movement must be built. This is the class-struggle program for which the Internationalistische Gruppe and our sister organizations in the League for the Fourth International stand for, in theory and in practice (see, for example, “Portland Labor

Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation,” in *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017). And as Trotsky emphasized, decaying capitalism, in its final stages breeds the fascist provocateurs and murderers it would use to annihilate the labor movement – even as the bourgeoisie relies on “popular fronts” to keep the proletariat from revolutionary action. However, a lasting victory over the fascists can only be achieved through an international socialist revolution. To achieve this requires the leadership of a revolutionary workers party based on the program of authentic Trotskyism, which tells the truth to the masses, that this is the only way forward. ■

Presentations and Comments at the Trotsky Conference in Havana

We print here English versions of presentations, edited for publication, at the “International Academic Conference on Leon Trotsky” held in Havana, Cuba on 6-8 May 2019. An article on the conference was published in *The Internationalist* No. 57, September-October 2019.

Trotsky in Mexico: Anti-Imperialism and Struggle for the Political Independence of the Working Class

By Alberto Fonseca
8 May 2019

Activist of the Grupo Internacionalista, Mexican section of the League for the Fourth International

Leon Trotsky’s arrival in Mexico in January 1937, during the darkest times of the darkest midnight in the century, gave the Russian revolutionary the opportunity to wage his last battles, which were crucial.

Just four months after Trotsky disembarked at the port of Tampico on 9 January 1937, the turning point in the Spanish Civil War occurred with the defeat of the Barcelona May Days. That was when the Popular Front government put down an uprising of the workers. When the workers took over the Barcelona telephone exchange, the Republic’s bourgeois government sent the Assault Guard and the Republican National Guard to oust them, accusing the workers of being in the service of Franco.

What the Stalinists and the Popular Front Government were really doing, with this repression, was to eliminate the workers control that had been established in the most industrialized part of Spain. So a few months after arriving in Mexico, Trotsky was studying the events in Spain, in particular the causes for the defeat of the revolutionary situation that had opened in 1936 with the massive working-class resistance against the coup headed by Francisco Franco.

What Trotsky formulated very clearly is that the popular front is not a tactic, but the greatest crime, as it directly leads to defeat for the struggles of the working class. This is not just a theoretical topic of only academic interest. The question of the popular front is of fundamental importance – and not in Europe alone. It was here in Cuba as well. Because of the treacherous



Leon Trotsky arriving in Tampico, Mexico on 9 January 1937 together with his companion Natalia Sedova, where they were greeted by Frida Kahlo and others.

strategy of the popular front, the Partido Socialista Popular, as the Stalinist party was then known, supported the regime of Fulgencio Batista during World War II and joined his cabinet. In Mexico, the politics of the popular front led to the Communist Party turning over the leadership of the newly-formed CTM labor federation to the government of General Lázaro Cárdenas. This ultimately meant integrating the unions into the capitalist state. What the popular-front policy means is collaborating with the class enemy.

In Mexico, Trotsky also had the opportunity to study a country of belated capitalist development, in which a bourgeois-democratic revolution had begun less than three decades previously. The fact that the Mexican Revolution that began in 1910 remained within the limits of capitalism meant that the democratic tasks that led to it could never be carried through. Today, it is interesting to recall the demands that the revolutionaries in early 20th-century Mexico raised. Take the motto of Francisco I. Madero, “Effective suffrage, no re-election” (in other words, no to electoral fraud): what has happened is that

nowadays Mexico is world champion of electoral fraud. Take Zapata's motto, "Land to the tiller": the indigenous peasants who got land (overwhelmingly low-quality lands) now have to work as day laborers for the agrobusinesses in northern Mexico, and also on the other side of the border in the United States. Take the always-pending need for the country to free itself from domination by the United States: today Mexico is a U.S. neocolony.

The democratic demands were not fulfilled in Mexico. The Mexican Revolution was aborted. This shows, albeit in a negative way, the validity of the theoretical-programmatic perspective of the permanent revolution. Again, this is not just some theory. In 1938, the government of Lázaro Cárdenas undertook the expropriation of the oil industry. This essentially consisted of expropriating the British companies that extracted oil in Mexico. The British imperialists declared a boycott against Mexican oil. They accused the Mexican government of being in the service of Hitler, since it had to sell oil to Nazi Germany.

Trotsky called on the workers of the world to defend this nationalization carried out by Mexico. He considered it an elementary measure against imperialism. He pointed out the importance of defending this semi-colonial country against imperialist reprisals. Did this mean that Trotsky supported the Cárdenas government? No. To the contrary, he insisted on the need to build an independent, revolutionary workers party. He emphasized the ABC of Marxism: the workers maintain complete class independence from the bourgeoisie. This was precisely the *opposite* of the policy put forward by the Stalinists, who were forming a popular front, an alliance of class collaboration with the Cárdenas government. In fact, the Stalinists wanted to join the ranks of the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (PRM), as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) was called under Cárdenas. The PRM, to be clear, was a party of the bourgeois state. Since Cárdenas did not allow the Stalinists to join the ranks of his party, the Communist Party acted as an external satellite of the PRM/PRI.

We see the popular-front policy at work again in Mexico when left organizations support one or another bourgeois *caudillo*: Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, Andrés Manuel López Obrador...

Trotsky, in this period, put forward the concept of bonapartism *sui generis* (bonapartism of a unique kind). For Trotsky, the Cárdenas government was bonapartist (Cárdenas himself was an army general), but given the pressure of imperialism he had to balance between the classes and make concessions to the workers.

The concept of bonapartism *sui generis* continues to be fundamental for understanding some present-day phenomena. We have a number of bourgeois regimes in countries of belated



Poster for event at the Trotsky Museum in Coyoacán, Mexico City.

capitalist development that, under certain circumstances, find themselves obliged to make some concessions to the workers, and it is crucial to uphold class independence *vis à vis* these regimes. There are situations in which a semi-colonial country, including under a bourgeois government, faces an imperialist invasion. Trotsky insisted that revolutionaries take a side. In Mexico City there is a subway station named Etiopía. The symbol of the station is a lion's head, representing Haile Selassie, who was the emperor of Ethiopia. The reason there is a station with that name is that Cárdenas' government backed Ethiopia against Mussolini's invasion in 1935, and also politically supported the emperor. Trotsky insisted on the need to defend Ethiopia, but he did not give any political support to Haile Selassie. This difference is extremely important.

Today, we face this question with the imperialist attacks against Venezuela.

It is very important to understand that against this imperialist onslaught, revolutionaries take a side: for the military defense of the besieged South American nation, without giving any political support to the bourgeois bonapartist government of the Chavista president Nicolás Maduro.

Now I will briefly discuss Trotsky's last battle. This battle too is one he waged when he was in Mexico. It was the fight he carried out against the petty-bourgeois minority in the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which – after the Hitler-Stalin Pact was signed, when defending the Soviet Union was quite unpopular – demanded that the party renounce this fundamental class position. Instead, this minority put forward the sham of the "third camp." The petty-bourgeois faction, led by Max Shachtman and James Burnham, claimed not to side either with imperialism or with the USSR, but with a phantasmagorical "third camp." In reality, this just disguised the support it wound up giving to imperialism. At the beginning of the anti-Soviet Cold War, the third-campists not only refused to defend Korea against the imperialists that devastated this Asian country, but collaborated with them directly.¹ It would be interesting if the partisans of the "theory" of the "third camp" visited North Korea today and saw the remains of the destruction caused by the hundreds of thousands of tons of napalm that the "democratic" imperialists used against it.

So, for Trotsky, was there a solution to the situation of the Soviet Union? Yes: he considered it vital to fight for a proletarian political revolution and to extend the revolution internationally. The Stalinist bureaucracy had usurped the political power of the

¹ With the support of the State Department, Shachtman helped write anti-Communist propaganda leaflets that U.S. bombers dropped during the war (see the Internationalist Group pamphlet, *DSA: Fronting for the Democrats*, 2018).

working class, and followed a petty-bourgeois nationalist program diametrically opposed to Marxism. However, the collectivized property forms had not been destroyed, and it was necessary to defend them, while fighting to reestablish proletarian democracy.

Let's take a step back. It was fundamental to defend a semi-colony like Mexico against imperialism. To fight imperialism, it was necessary to defend the Soviet Union too.

The History of Bolivian Trotskyism

By S. Sándor John

8 May 2019

Author of Bolivia's Radical Tradition: Permanent Revolution in the Andes (2009) and El trotskismo boliviano: Revolución permanente en el Altipano (2016); Class Struggle Education Workers activist.

Holding this conference in Cuba is enormously important. And in light of the most recent measures, it is crucial to highlight the need to fight in defense of Cuba. Down with the Helms-Burton Act! It necessary to fight for the defense of the Cuban Revolution, and to defeat Trump's and the Democrats' attempted coup in Venezuela. This bears a real relation with the perspective of Trotsky, and of Trotsky's Fourth International, of fighting for a Socialist Federation of the Caribbean and the Socialist United States of Latin America. [Applause]

I also want to say that workers democracy is a fundamental part of genuine Bolshevism, that is, Trotskyism. This involves debate, at times the heated debate, of political differences, because we know that theoretical and programmatic political differences have real consequences in real life. Bolivia is an example of this.

There have been many revolutionary movements in Latin America, but there have been three big Latin American revolutions in the 20th century: the Mexican Revolution, the Bolivian Revolution and the Cuban Revolution. Only one of those, the Cuban, wound up breaking with capitalism. But the Bolivian Revolution of 1952 is connected with another triad: that there have been three countries in the world where Trotskyism acquired a mass influence on a national scale for a significant time. Those three countries were Vietnam, Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Bolivia.

How is this to be explained? Is it just some kind of historical curiosity, perhaps a folkloric kind of thing? No, that is not the case. A journalist from the imperialist U.S. magazine, *Life*, visited Bolivia in 1960, at a time when the Soviet Union was offering to build a tin smelter for Bolivia, since Bolivia had no way to refine its own tin. (For free – by the way, that's not "imperialism.")² When the Soviet delegation arrived at Siglo XX, the most important mine in the country, hundreds of Bolivian miners gave a warm welcome to the Soviet comrades. On their brown helmets, the miners had the symbol of the Fourth International, and the slogans on their banners talked about Lenin and Trotsky.

So what the imperialist journalist told his readers in the U.S., who know nothing of all this, was: you've got to understand that the Bolivian miners are all illiterate, and they don't even know that these mythic guys Lenin and Trotsky are dead,

² A reference to our polemics at the conference against the theories of Tony Cliff, Max Shachtman *et al.* about so-called "Soviet imperialism."

Today, you cannot defend Venezuela without also fighting for the defense of Cuba which, at bottom, is the real target of imperialism. Trump has made this very clear. [Applause]

Trotsky's last battles, in the darkest part of midnight in the century as was stated in a previous talk, do continue to be very bright stars. They can be our guides in this new midnight in the century that has arrived so early. However, we can – and we must – fight.



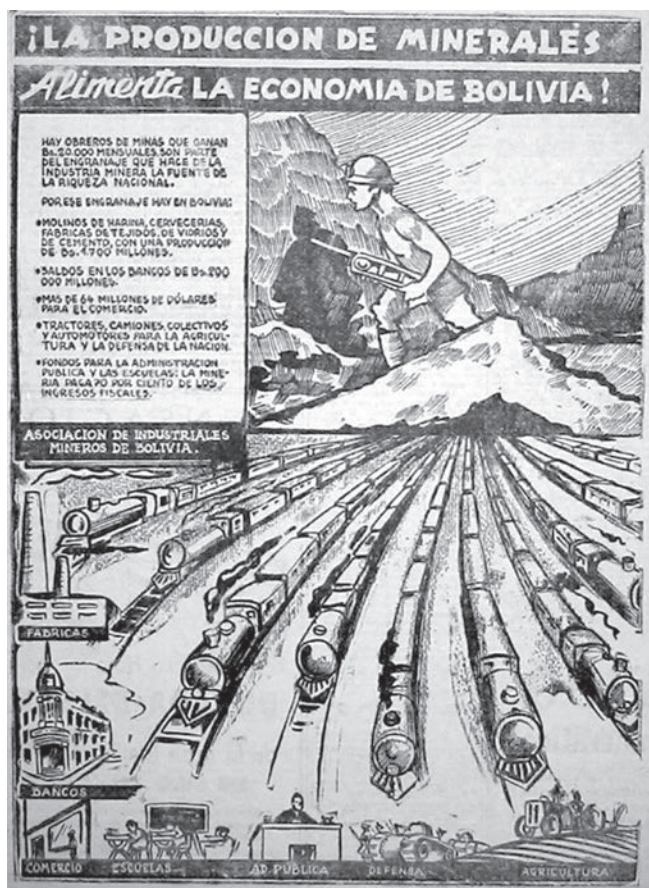
Sándor John

Mural by Bolivian Trotskyist painter Miguel Alandia Pantoja, "Education and Class Struggle," at the Monument of the Revolution, La Paz.

they think they're still alive. No, that wasn't what was going on. Instead, it was because for these Bolivian miners, the permanent revolution made sense. Trotskyism made sense for them: it helped their lives and their struggles have meaning; it helped them understand the world they lived in.

In the three countries mentioned previously, there was still no structured Communist Party, and the mass of the working class acquired political consciousness at a time when the Communist International had adopted the policy of the popular front. For the workers of colonial countries like Vietnam (which was a French colony), Ceylon (a British colony) and Bolivia (a neo-colony of the U.S. and to some extent of Britain), the popular front meant supporting their slave-masters. So in those three countries there was an opportunity for Trotskyism, in some form, to become the political expression of the working masses.

In Bolivia there were "democratic prices" for tin during the



Mine association ad underlining the importance of mineral production for the Bolivian economy.

Second World War. What did that mean? “Democratic prices” for Bolivian tin were low prices, since tin was a strategic material for the imperialist war. The Japanese had captured Malaya, which was a British colony, and tin prices had to kept low, which meant using U.S. machine guns to massacre the miners when they went on strike for higher wages. And the minister of labor who ordered the massacre was from the Stalinist party that had arisen by then, the Partido de la Izquierda Revolucionaria.

So the theory of permanent revolution was not some exotic thing arriving by chance on the Bolivian Altiplano. The theory and program of permanent revolution held that the proletariat would be the leading force of social revolution in a country of belated capitalist development like Bolivia. And even the advertising materials put out by the “tin barons” in Bolivia reflected this, in their own way, with images like this ad [indicates projected photo above] in the bourgeois press, showing tin as the center of the economy. A minority class, the mining proletariat, becomes a giant, generating the greatest part of the hard currency acquired by the country, and has the destiny of the nation in its hands – which was quite true.

But for these miners this meant inhuman, infernal super-exploitation in the mines, in a racist society in which *pongueaje* continued to exist, that is, obligatory service by the Quechua and Aymara peasants to the *gamonales*, the owners of the large estates. It was out of this peasantry that there emerged the Bolivian proletariat, maintaining its intimate ties with the peasant

villages, particularly when mass layoffs – called “white massacres” in Bolivia – occurred. When they were laid off, as in the case of one of the great heroes of world Trotskyism, César Lora, they went back to the villages and organized peasant unions.

The founders of Bolivian Trotskyism sought, also in their own way, to integrate this reality into their political perspective, as racist oppression of the indigenous majority was a fundamental trait of that society, expressed linguistically, culturally, ethnically and racially against this peasantry. In terms of “uneven and combined development,” this was manifested linguistically: the language of Bolivian mining is a curious mix of words from English (like *sink and float*, *block caving*), Spanish (like *minero* and *sindicato*, the word for union), together with Quechua and Aymara, like words for certain perforation techniques, and certain jobs (like *chasquiri*, related to *chasqui*, the Inca term for messenger).

The Bolivian Trotskyist party, the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR–Revolutionary Workers Party), was founded in 1935, with the particularities I have sought to address in my book. A few years later, two of the figures who had participated in its founding visited Trotsky in Mexico. The visit occurred during the Inter-American Indigenist Congress [held in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán in 1940]. The indigenous cultural context and its relation with revolution was also expressed in the art and culture that Bolivian Trotskyists were deeply involved in. You can get an idea of this, for example, in this picture of the “goddess of education” – one particularly relevant to those of us trying to make a living in the education field – in the mural “Education and Class Struggle” (1957) by the great Bolivian Trotskyist muralist Miguel Alandia Pantoja, who played an important role in the POR and in the foundation of the COB labor federation.

To the Bolivian miners, the idea that they themselves would be the ones to head up the overthrow of the regime of the tin barons and landowners – the élite known as the “Rosca” – did not seem strange or exotic. The idea that the miners would lead the revolution in Bolivia was a perspective put forward in the famous Thesis of Pulacayo, which was approved (to the surprise of many) by the Miners Federation in 1946. The Pulacayo Thesis was written by the POR, who wanted it to reflect the theory of permanent revolution.

And in fact, it was precisely the Bolivian miners who toppled the government of the Rosca in April 1952. The Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR–Revolutionary Nationalist Movement) – the bourgeois-nationalist party, which was frequently involved in coup-plotting – scheduled a coup for April 1952 together with the head of the Carabineros (élite police force). But when the army put up much more resistance than the MNR had foreseen, the Carabineros pull out and the MNR leaders say, “all right, let’s make peace with the government.” But the miners literally come down from the mountains surrounding La Paz. With Trotskyists in the front lines, they take the arsenal by assault, seize mortars and other weapons and confront the army, defeating and smashing it in the “April Days” (9-11 April) of 1952.

Trotskyist militants who were part of these events relate that the crowd approached the government palace, the Palacio Quemado; they pound on the door, but no one answers, nobody opens it. They keep on pounding on the door and finally a “solda-

dito” (soldier), as they say in Bolivia, comes out, scared out of his wits. Trembling with fear, he opens the door; the government has made a run for it. So they all go in, with the miners carrying their leader Juan Lechín on their shoulders, and they tell him: “Juancito, Juancito, you should be president, because we miners, our comrades are the ones who died to overthrow the Rosca.” But Juan Lechín, the Miners Federation leader, who was a member of the MNR at the same time as he flirted with the POR, gets on the phone and calls the “subjefe” (second in command) of the MNR, Hernán Siles Suazo. He says, “come down to the Palace,” and turns government power over to the MNR.

At that point, the only effective armed force was the miners’ militias. In these conditions, control of the situation depended fundamentally on the political leadership, which was in the hands of the MNR. The French imperialist paper *Le Monde*, whose correspondent was quite intelligent, published a front-page headline on the first anniversary of the revolution in April 1953: “The Bolivian Revolution Between Wall Street and Trotsky.” What happens then, and why are political differences so important? There was enormous political disorientation – there’s a lot to say and I’m running out of time.

But one of the most exciting things about this kind of research is that sometimes someone tells you something that can seem almost mythological, but later you’re digging around in a pile of old documents half-buried in some basement, and you untie some old strings and you find proof that it’s true. In Cochabamba in 1992 I met an old Quechua peasant Trotskyist. We were discussing political differences and then he asked me: “Do you believe the MNR was bourgeois or petty-bourgeois?” The interview *per se* had ended, and I said, “in my view, bourgeois.” And he started to cry.

I asked him, “comrade, why are you crying?” He said, in the Quechua accent he spoke with: “We had another faction, a third faction, here in Cochabamba, and we said the MNR was bourgeois. Our faction was the only one that defended the Trotskyist theory, stating that it was necessary to defend Bolivia against imperialism, but not politically supporting the government, not even critically. And because of this our faction was broken up and repressed by the bourgeoisie, and the foreign comrades were expelled from the country.”

The MNR reestablished the massacring army, and in 1964 that army carried out a coup under René Barrientos, a name everyone in Cuba knows, since Che Guevara went to Bolivia seeking to overthrow that bloody “gorila” (military dictator).

So political differences have real consequences. Political differences are a question of life and death. And this was shown not once, not two or three times, but countless times in the struggles of the Bolivian Trotskyists. My time has run out, but I want to note that one of the things you also really see



Gabriel García Higuera

Sándor John speaking on the history of Bolivian Trotskyism at conference on Leon Trotsky in Havana, Cuba.

when studying the history of the Bolivian Trotskyist movement is the heroism, in fact, of the militants of all of the factions.

Summary

During the discussion round, three participants asked Sándor questions. These are his responses.

First, I want to call people’s attention to the events of August 1971, in which there was yet another bloody coup in Bolivia, which brought yet another brutal dictator to power: Hugo Banzer Suárez, who was included in the Hall of Fame of the infamous School of the Americas. The politics of the popular front meant that the workers movement was literally disarmed, both militarily and politically, when the workers and the miners in particular sought, in the most heroic way and against terrible odds, to defeat that coup.

I brought some copies of my book on Bolivian Trotskyism, to donate to libraries. Among other things it discusses the “Quechua-Swiss faction” that arose in Cochabamba in the mid-1950s, which in my opinion had a position that in general terms was more correct than that of the two dominant factions of the POR, regarding the MNR and the bourgeois-nationalist government.

To address the questions that were raised:

The Brazilian comrade commented on the view of a writer who stated that the question of the Bolivian Revolution marked the destruction of the Fourth International, and that the Fourth International no longer exists. I agree that the Fourth International does not exist at present. In my opinion, it ceased to exist organizationally in 1951-53, due to the crisis of Pabloism, and the split and dispersion this created. I think it has to be reformed. I don’t agree with the writer you mentioned, nor the current he was part of – led by the British Workers Power group – basically putting an equal sign between both sides, the Pabloists and anti-Pabloists, in

the 1953 split.³

The question of Bolivia did not cause the destruction of the Fourth International. Rather, the crisis of the Fourth International was reflected and manifested in the lack of real participation by the other sections in the political life of the Bolivian section, and in the fact that the Pabloist leadership backed the line of political support and adaptation to the MNR. This position was echoed by the SWP leadership, which unfortunately was not thinking much about or questioning this policy.

There was a question about the *mita*. *Mita* is the word the Incas used for their obligatory labor system. In Bolivia it became a synonym for a day's pay. When Che Guevara was in Bolivia, he essentially told the miners that they should leave the mines and go to Ñancahuazú [the guerrilla base camp]. Few of them did that, since they knew that their power resided in being mine workers, whose labor kept the country going. But the miners wanted to show their solidarity, and they voted that they would donate a "mita" for the guerrillas. To punish the miners for this, the dictatorship of René Barrientos carried out the massacre of the Night of San Juan, on the 24th of June 1967, machine-gunning the miners for showing their sympathy and solidarity with the guerrillas who were courageously seeking

³ That is, the International Secretariat headed by Michel Pablo, Ernest Mandel and Pierre Frank, on the one hand, and the anti-Pabloist International Committee initiated by James P. Cannon's Socialist Workers Party on the other.

to fight the U.S.-backed military dictatorship.

Lastly, I'd like to thank the comrade who asked the question about the left wing of the MNR. This is a complex and very important topic which I did not have time to really develop here, but it is key to the argument put forward in the book.

The faction of the POR that carried out "entrism" entered the MNR as such, in other words the MNR as a party. (The faction that did this was the one built by Guillermo Lora, although Lora himself did not go with them.) That party, the MNR, had a left wing, which was headed by Juan Lechín, leader of the Miners Federation and, once the revolution occurs, of the COB labor federation as well. The left wing of the MNR was the mechanism through which this nationalist party and its government controlled the masses.

The POR, its leaders, wrote speeches for Lechín and acted as his advisors for years. When Lechín is made Minister of Labor, the *poristas* – of both factions – continued writing speeches and documents for him. And enormous illusions were sown in the MNR's left wing.⁴

I think this was a really catastrophic and disastrous policy. Lechín was very popular. He was also one of those who signed the decree to reestablish the bourgeois army. The MNR left was the mechanism subjugating the workers movement and the peasant movement to the bourgeois state.

⁴ An example of how this was manifested was the slogan, raised over and over again, of "All Power to the Left" (i.e., Lechín's MNR Left).

Comments from the Floor at Havana Trotsky Conference

On Imperialism and on Divisions in the Trotskyist Movement

The following comments were made during the discussion period after a series of presentations on imperialism, the history of the Fourth International and other topics on the first day of the conference (May 6). Given that they were made in Spanish, with only a brief English summary, we provide a full English translation here.

Sándor, May 6:

I have some brief comments, first on the question of imperialism, and secondly on the question of the splits in the Fourth International.

The question of imperialism is of great importance, as U.S. imperialism is seeking to crush the Cuban Revolution, which is a conquest for all of humanity, and is also attacking Venezuela, where – despite the fact that there has not been a social, or socialist, revolution, in the real sense – it is important to defend Venezuela against the onslaught of U.S. imperialism.

The question of the "theory of imperialism" has, in my opinion, enormously important political ramifications. One of the fundamental points in the break between the Second International and the Third International, that is, when Lenin and Trotsky led the founding of the Third International, had to do with radically breaking with the attitude of the Second International, of the social democracy, toward the struggles

of the colonial peoples. The Third International said that the revolutions of the oppressed peoples, the colonial revolution, is part of the world socialist revolution. It said that it was necessary to militantly support the struggles of the colonial peoples.

This is of enormous importance. In the Fourth International, as part of the program of permanent revolution, Trotsky fiercely defended this position, including against some who found themselves accidentally in its ranks and who rejected, for example, the defense of Ethiopia against Italy, or who neglected the importance of the national struggles of colonial peoples.

Thus Trotsky and the Fourth International militarily defended China – we're talking now about bourgeois China, in the 1930s, that is, even before the Chinese Revolution [of 1949] – against imperialist Japan, making the very important distinction between military defense of colonial and semicolonial countries against imperialism and political support to their governments. This distinction is a fundamental one for Trotskyism: defending countries attacked by the imperialists, while this does not necessarily mean giving political support or political confidence to their governments or leadership. This distinction is of great importance. For example: calling for the independence of Puerto Rico, demanding and intransigently standing for the independence of Morocco, including during the Spanish Civil War, when this was also extremely important

in terms of turning Franco's Moroccan troops against him.

The second point has to do with the splits in the Trotskyist movement after the war. This is not just some cloud of data; there is a meaning there. So I think there is a connection with what we heard this morning regarding the annihilation of the Trotskyists in the Soviet Union, in the Vorkuta camp and others, as well as the extermination of many other Trotskyist cadres during the Second World War.

This is one of the elements that set the stage for that crisis. Another is that the Trotskyist movement faced an unforeseen situation: revolutions that were carried out generally by military-bureaucratic means in the case of Eastern Europe, with the formation of bureaucratically deformed workers states, which had to be defended against imperialism without giving political support to their governments, fighting for the proletarian political revolution; and also the revolutions in Yugoslavia and China, Cuba, etc.

So the Fourth International found itself very disoriented. And it split [in 1951-53]. For some who are not intimately familiar with this history, the divisions might seem exotic, esoteric, like the "invisible committee" mentioned previously.⁵ But in

⁵ Ironical reference to one of the presentations which mentioned a French semi-anarchist grouping that refers to itself in this way.

reality, the two standpoints, of the Pabloists and of those who opposed Michel Pablo,⁶ expressed fundamental differences on the party question: the conscious construction of a revolutionary Marxist leadership based on the working class, to lead socialist revolution on a world scale as the conscious act of millions and millions of proletarians and the oppressed.

There were many excellent revolutionaries among those who found themselves in the ranks of the Pabloists, and the Posadasites,⁷ but Pabloism suffered from what, in the Trotskyist movement, is called "objectivism," as if the revolution makes itself, as if the revolution were like an unstoppable tide, which even makes the Stalinist bureaucracy become revolutionary. So this difference, I would argue, was a fundamental divergence on the question of building a Leninist party, the international proletarian, revolutionary party, or tailing after the existing leaderships and forces. This is an enormously important difference.

⁶ Michel Pablo (Michalis Raptis, 1911-1996) was the international secretary of the Fourth International after World War Two. The term "Pabloism" refers to his political outlook and that of his political successors (Ernest Mandel and others), characterized by adaptation to the existing leaderships of the workers movement and of the colonial peoples.

⁷ Followers of J. Posadas (Homero Cristalli, 1912-1981), a lieutenant of Pablo who, expressing an extreme version of Pabloism, wound up establishing his own "Posadista Fourth International" in the 1960s.

About What Trotskyism Is and Isn't

On the second and third days of the conference (May 7 and 8), some speakers put forward positions derived from the so-called "Third Camp socialism" of Max Shachtman and Tony Cliff, who broke from the Fourth International against the position that the Trotskyist movement had always upheld, of unconditional military defense of the USSR against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution.

Shachtman broke from Trotsky at the outbreak of World War Two, whereas Cliff's break from the FI occurred during the Korean War, when he refused to side with the Korean and Chinese forces fighting U.S. and British imperialism, branding them as pawns of "Russian imperialism."

In one of the presentations the argument was made that in the late 1920s in the Soviet Union, Trotsky and the Left Opposition should have united with Nikolai Bukharin, theoretician of the Right Opposition, against Stalin.

Sándor, May 7:

My comments are largely directed to the Cuban compañeros and compañeros present here. I came to Cuba for the first time in 1967 as a child. Like many others, I really liked Coppelia, where they had so many flavors of ice cream.⁸ Sometimes it might seem as Trotskyism, the Trotskyist movement, is like a lot of different flavors of ice cream. But that is not the case. The debates are about very real issues. For example, the issues we have heard about today, regarding the class nature of the Soviet Union and of other countries where capitalism was destroyed, the question of Bukharin and Trotsky, the question of the orientation of the revolutionary movement – these are

⁸ Coppelia is the famous state-owned ice-cream emporium in Havana.

questions of life or death for millions and millions of people.

Trotskyism is not just any old thing. Trotskyism was born from the defense to the bitter end of the October Revolution and its conquests. So – should Trotsky and Bukharin have gotten together in the Soviet Union, against the Stalinist center, for "democracy"? Was or was not the main danger the capitalist right – is this a question, for Trotskyists? Under Gorbachev, upholding Bukharin was a trademark of many of those seeking a path toward capitalism in the Soviet Union. This question should be quite clear.

Who was Bukharin? We oppose the show trial and execution of Bukharin, but Bukharin was the theoretician of "socialism in one country"; Bukharin was the theoretician of the political bloc with the Guomindang, that is, the subordination of the Chinese Communist Party to the national bourgeoisie, which led to the destruction of the Chinese Revolution in 1927. That's who Bukharin was. So we are talking about real things.

Democracy. Is Trotskyism the champion of democracy "in general"? Does Trotskyism want democracy "in general" in a state where capitalism has been abolished, in a bureaucratically degenerated or deformed workers state? Does Trotskyism call for freedom for all political parties in states of that type? Not according to Trotsky. Not according to Lenin. According to Lenin, if you read his "Theses on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" [1919], you'll see that democracy "in general" means bourgeois democracy. We stand for proletarian democracy. What is bourgeois democracy, the call for bourgeois democracy, in a bureaucratically degenerated or deformed workers state? It means capitalist counterrevolution. *Capitalist counterrevolution.*

And this is not an asterisk or a footnote for Trotsky. He wrote many polemics and whole books on these topics. Comrades should know that there was a fundamental split in the Trotskyist movement between those who upheld the program of the Fourth International, of unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism, and those who rejected this program, such as Max Shachtman.⁹ That meant that Shachtman refused to defend the Soviet Union in World War Two.

Where did Shachtman end up? I'll say it: supporting the Bay of Pigs invasion. And those who upheld the defense of the Soviet Union? Maintaining the unconditional military defense of all the states where capitalism was overthrown, together with the program of the proletarian political revolution.

Democracy has a first and last name, as they say in Mexico. Workers democracy versus bourgeois democracy. There is no democracy "in general." That is a cover for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It can disappear like *that*, as in Chile, with the illusions in the institutions of the bourgeois state. I was here in Cuba building schools as part of the Julio Antonio Mella Brigade of the Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo while that was happening in Chile.¹⁰ If bourgeois democracy is faced with a rightist coup, as in Chile, or the Francoist attack in the Spanish Civil War, for example, we fight to defeat the rightist attack without politically supporting the bourgeois regime. But in a bureaucratically degenerated or deformed workers state, bourgeois democracy is the face of counterrevolution.

Trotsky's last battle was against diluting or discarding the defense of the first workers state from its enemies. This is not an abstract question but very concrete. It is not different flavors of ice cream. It is a matter of revolution or counterrevolution. Trotskyism was the defender, to the last barricade, of the conquests of the revolution, and that is still the case today. Without that, there is no Trotskyism. [Applause]

Irina, May 7:

My name is Irina. I'm not an academic. I am very excited to be here in this conference on Leon Trotsky, in Cuba.

I was born and grew up in the Soviet Union in the late 1950s and the '60s. The first time I heard of Trotsky was from my father. I remember being very excited about the Cuban Revolution, as a Young Pioneer and as a Komsomol [Communist Youth Union] member, and we had special songs about Cuba at the time. My mother, when she learned that I was coming to Cuba now for the first time, reminded me of

⁹ On the last day of the conference, Canadian historian Bryan Palmer, biographer of founding U.S. Trotskyist James P. Cannon and author of *Revolutionary Teamsters* on the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis strikes of 1934, gave a talk "On Cannon, Shachtman and Early U.S. Trotskyism," available on line at: <http://links.org.au/node/5408>. Trotsky's key writings in the 1939-40 struggle against Shachtman and his allies are collected in Trotsky's crucial book *In Defense of Marxism*.

¹⁰ Named after Julio Antonio Mella, a student leader and founder of the Cuban Communist Party, this was a construction brigade of Cuban youth, in which a small number of young volunteers from other countries participated as guests.

one of those songs.¹¹

When my father told me about Trotsky, he used to remind me not to talk about it in kindergarten, because even though I was born shortly after Stalin died, people were still afraid to talk about certain things or tell jokes about them in the Soviet Union.

Trotsky's role as the founder of the Red Army and one of the leaders of the Russian Revolution was not an abstract thing to us, and it was not an abstract thing to my father. My father was 19 years old when he joined the Red Army in 1941, and he fought in the Second World War and lost an eye. My grandfather and my uncle lost legs.

He fought to defend the workers state, the USSR, and along with other people he was captured by the Nazis, twice, and twice he escaped. Within the first hours of the Second World War, my father saw the results of Stalin's sabotage, as Stalin did not believe that Hitler was going to attack the Soviet Union; and he carried one of his comrades who was mortally wounded.

We also knew and understood Stalin's dealings when my father's uncle, my great uncle, who was in the Spanish Civil War in 1936, was thrown in jail by Stalin. After my father went to school after the war, he was often visited by NKVD officers who questioned him because he was captured by the Germans, and Stalin believed that this way people would be brainwashed into enemies.

So, a few things were quite clear for my father and for those like him, and for Trotskyists, like myself. One of them is the class nature of the Soviet Union as a workers state. Another one is who betrayed the USSR: it was Stalin, and not Trotsky, who betrayed the USSR.

And lastly, I want to say that the defense of the workers state of the Cuban Revolution is the task of all the workers of the world. [Applause]

Irina, May 8:

I have some comments about the characterization of the class nature of the Soviet Union as "state capitalism."

As a former Soviet citizen, I find these positions ridiculous – and dangerous. Ideas like these serve political purposes and can also only help Stalinism discredit Trotskyism.

The "Third Camp" literally means not to defend the USSR in the war against the Nazis. These theories, that we just heard, mean opposition to the USSR getting the weapons it needed to defend itself.

These positions also mean that Tony Cliff was literally saying that the Korean War was an inter-imperialist war, that it was a war between U.S. imperialism and so-called "Soviet imperialism." The Soviet Union materially and militarily aiding Cuba was not "Soviet imperialism," but a crucial part of the struggle against imperialism. [Interjections: Right on!] [Prolonged applause]

Lastly: the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union was a terrible defeat for the entire world's working class – and nobody can deny this fact today. ■

¹¹ This refers to "Kuba Liubov Maia" ("Cuba, My Love," 1962).

Marxism, Education and Women's Liberation

By Cecilia Araújo de Braz

The following is a contribution by our Brazilian comrade prepared for the conference on “Communism as Horizon,” held in Havana, Cuba this past November 2019. Unfortunately, she was unable to attend the conference because of travel regulations, but it was read to the conference by a comrade from Mexico.

Good morning. My name is Cecilia, I'm from Brazil, a teacher at a public school in the state network of Rio de Janeiro, and I am part of the collective leadership of the SEPE-RJ, the State Union of Education Professionals (RJ). I am also a member of the Class Struggle Committee, which presents a revolutionary perspective at the union level.

It is a great honor to be in the country that has the merit, due to its revolution, of putting an end to illiteracy and which to this day is considered to have one of the finest education systems in Latin America. It will be my mission to bring to my country, my organization and my union all the knowledge



Cecilia speaking with teachers in São Paulo during April 2013 strike.

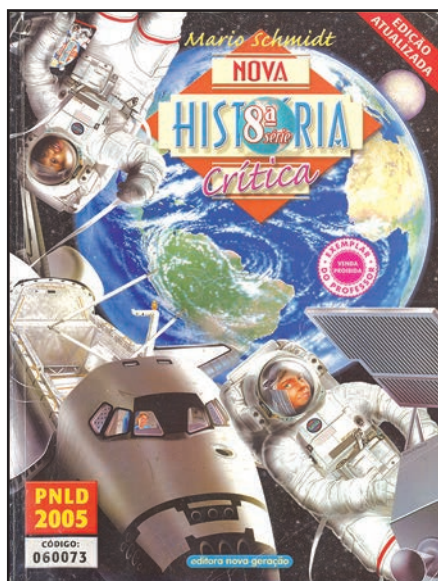
that I will learn here about the advances that Cuba has made since the beginning of the Revolution, with emphasis on health and education. I hope that with this historic event we can influence each other, our minds and hearts, and grasp the need for revolutionary processes to liberate humanity from the capitalist yoke.

My topic is “Marxism, Education and Women’s

Liberation.” A very timely and contemporary theme, but one that encompasses a great challenge, with advances, although insufficient, as I hope to demonstrate, since there are frightening figures registering the oppression in this capitalist system. The industrial revolution and the fantastic developments in technology it has offered us – for example, the washing machine and the refrigerator – has not, however, been able to lift the immense burden of suffering from the hunched shoulders of women. So we will have to continue to address this issue over and over.

My country for example, has unfortunately been one of the champions in aggression against women, although women constitute the majority of the working class and of the general population. However, the oppression of women goes very far back, it is all-encompassing and international in scope, because as the utopian socialist Charles Fourier said: “The degree of emancipation of women is the natural measure of emancipation in general.” However, while other indictments and theories left out many aspects, it was Marxism that most comprehensively described the oppression and exploitation of women. Above all, it gave a historical and materialist analysis of women’s subjugation.

Take, for example, what Karl Marx’s comrade Friedrich Engels wrote about this in his brilliant book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* [1885]. There he analyzed that ever since when in the prehistoric era man acquired wealth and property, women lost their most important rights and became subjugated. Engels points out that “this revolution [was] one of the most decisive ever experienced by humanity,” in a negative sense, and that “The overthrow of mother-right



Anti-communist censorship didn't begin with Bolsonaro. This history textbook was banned by popular-front government.

was the world historical defeat of the female sex.” He added that “This degraded position of the woman ... has gradually been palliated and glazed over, and sometimes clothed in a milder form; in no sense has it been abolished.”

This subjugation persists today in the capitalist world. But in locating the origins of women’s oppression in the introduction of private property, Engels also indicates the only way to overcome it: the liberation of women through socialist revolution. Only in this way can the material bases be established, with the socialization of production and the growth of abundance with the international extension of the revolution, to replace domestic chores, or what Lenin called the domestic slavery of women, with high quality, voluntary social institutions.

It should be noted that once again Marxism triumphs over other theories by its praxis, as was applied in an unprecedented way by the Bolshevik Party in the October 1917 Revolution in Russia. Nowhere else on the planet have women had more far-reaching social achievements. It is well-known that the Russian Revolution commenced on 8 March 1917, when women textile workers started a strike “for bread and peace” with the participation of more than 90,000 workers. And it resulted seven months later in the seizure of power by the soviets, under Bolshevik leadership, in the October Revolution, which gave rise to the first workers state in history.

The young Soviet republic immediately legalized abortion and divorce, establishing the legal equality of women and more importantly began to build the economic bases that would make the liberation of women possible (daycare centers, restaurants, collective laundries). Soviet Russia also was the first country to abolish retrograde laws against homosexuality. The Communist International adopted the Bolsheviks’ practice of creating special bodies for the work among women, to win the best fighters for the revolutionary cause.

What is less well-known in this story is all the preparatory work carried out by the female Bolshevik leaders who were great revolutionary fighters, among them Alexandra Kollontai, who wrote crucial Marxist texts such as “The Social Basis of the Woman Question” (1909) and “Communism and the Family” (1920),¹ and who together with others published the magazine *Rabotnitsa* (Woman Worker). Another of these communist women leaders was Nadezhda Krupskaya. She is remembered mainly as Lenin’s companion, but she was also an educator. Indeed, the topic of Marxism and education was one of her main interests. In the period before the revolution, she made a study of the main educational reformers, which was published in the first months of 1917 under the title *Democracy and Public Education*.²

After taking power, Krupskaya together with Anatoly Lunacharsky was one of the main people responsible for the educational policy guidelines of what was then the People’s Commissariat for Enlightenment, or Narkompros. A couple of

years ago, the book *The Construction of Socialist Pedagogy* was published in Brazil for the first time, which contains a collection of 24 texts by Krupskaya. This book shows all the challenges faced by the founders and builders of socialist pedagogy and the teaching profession, in order to create, through their practice, a new school designed to train fighters and builders of the future opened by the revolution. One of the first texts of the living thought of this great revolutionary woman, “Concerning the Question of Socialist Schools” (1918),³ explains:

“the government of workers and peasants must break the schools’ class character and make schools at all levels accessible to all sections of the population. It must do this not in words but in deeds.”

The purpose of the school would be to train “people who are prepared both in theory and in practice to undertake all types of labor, both physical and mental, and who are able to construct a meaningful, rational, beautiful and happy life in society. Such people are needed in a socialist society, for without them socialism cannot be fully achieved.”

However, Krupskaya insists in the same text, “Socialist schools are conceivable only in specific social conditions, for they are made socialist not by the fact that they are directed by socialists but by the fact that their objectives correspond to the needs of a socialist society.” And “since socialist schools could not be viable institutions in a capitalist system, they could at best only be interesting pedagogical experiments.” This is an expression of the fundamental truth elucidated by Karl Marx in his manuscript, *The German Ideology*, from 1847: “The ideas of the ruling class are the dominant ideas in each era.”

In this conference, we are discussing the theme, “Communism as Horizon,” and that materialist principle laid out by Marx is fundamental for us as educators in the capitalist system. It explains that there are limits to what can be done in the narrow limits of the classroom, that our struggle for education and the interests of working people and the oppressed has to go through the struggle in the streets, in the factory, in the countryside and in the schools in order to carry out the socialist revolution. This revolution has to be international, and internationalist.

As Lenin said, theory must be a guide for action. So I want to talk a little bit about some practical realities of the current class struggle over the question of education. In Brazil, many teachers dreamed of providing a liberating education, but today we are living, in brutal form, the revenge of the bourgeois ruling class determined to impose their ideas – that is, their oppressive dogmas – in the schools.

Their instrument is a bill titled “*Escola sem partido*” (Schools Without Parties), which expresses the policy of the reactionary bonapartist government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro. But even prior to approval by the federal congress, the effects of this law are already being felt. Teachers are denounced by students to school and political authorities for allegedly “ideologizing” education, for introducing Marxism. For this “crime” they are fired, which creates an environment of fear and dread in the classroom. This is the chilling reality, but what I want to explain and underline, is that

¹ These texts and others are available in the Internationalist Group pamphlet *Bolsheviks and the Liberation of Women* (2011). To obtain a copy, send US\$3 to Mundial Publications, Box 3321, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008, U.S.A.

² Excerpts are published in *Marxism and the Battle Over Education*, *The Internationalist* special issue, January 2008. To obtain a copy, send US\$4 to Mundial Publications at the above address.

³ The excerpted essay is published in *Marxism and the Battle Over Education*.



Krupskaya speaking to Red Army soldiers during the Civil War.

this control of the content of public education by the bourgeoisie was already imposed by previous governments, of the popular front, which claimed to be progressive.

Now, women's liberation is closely related to the issue of education. First of all through exclusion. In all capitalist countries there was great resistance to the entry of women in higher education. In Brazil, there persists to this day a fascist and monarchist "integralist" current (this was the name of the fascist party in the 1930s), *Tradição, Família e Propriedade* (Tradition, Family and Property), which opposes public education in general, and education of young women in particular.

However, exclusion is not only formal. A report released by UNICEF says that one in seven adolescents in Brazil is out of school. Among the main reasons for dropping out of school in Brazil, the report points to two: the need to work and pregnancy. Among girls, about 28% of students between 12 and 17 years of age stopped attending classes because they were pregnant.

Faced with the serious problem of early pregnancy, Marxist teachers have been fighting for SEPE-RJ, the largest union with a majority of women in the state, serving around 3,000 schools with 2 million students, to provide information on abortion, a subject of great sensitivity and fundamental importance for young women in marginalized neighborhoods.

The struggle for the right to free abortion on demand is made more difficult by the actions of the state that seeks to criminalize it. I was a representative of my union at a public hearing in the city council of Volta Redonda to denounce the lack of proper medical conditions and the unsanitary situations in which abortion is currently practiced, which due to the absence of proper conditions causes the death of thousands of women.

So, it must be underlined that we cannot defend our female students, and ensure that they have a future outside the home, without fighting for the abolition of all laws against the right to abortion, laws that are supported in Congress by all the powerful reactionary parliamentary fractions – those of the bible (that is, of religious fundamentalists), beef (large agribusinesses) and bullet (supporters of the police and the military) – but also by a large part of the parliamentary representatives of the popular front.

We are also fighting, as I said, against the conservative project of imposing a supposedly apolitical school, which does

not stimulate critical thinking and restricts teachers. Not only that, the bill also aims to eliminate all teaching on gender issues, and all sex education. Its origin dates back to 2014, when a state legislator in Rio de Janeiro, Flávio Bolsonaro, suggested to the creator and coordinator of the "Schools Without Parties" movement, Miguel Nagib, then the attorney general of the state of São Paulo, that he draft a bill to make this official policy.

Flávio Bolsonaro is the son of the current Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro who, among various measures attacking progressive education, announced cuts of up to 30% in three federal universities. This measure generated a huge protest, thousands of students and teachers demonstrated on May 15 in several cities in Brazil against cuts in the education budget.

This "Schools Without Parties" bill seeks to impose anti-communist prejudices in schools and to prohibit all activism among teachers. That is why it is known as the "Gag Law," that is, a law whose objective is to silence us as education workers. But much earlier, the same political forces unleashed hysteria against a textbook, *A nova história crítica* (The New Critical History), written by Mario Schmidt, who was then a teacher in Niterói, in the state of Rio de Janeiro. I have here a copy of the 2000 edition for 8th grade students; there was also a 5th, 6th and 7th grade edition and a concentrated volume for high school. It was very popular. The editor wrote that it was "the biggest success in the educational publishing market in the last 500 years." The books were used by 30 million students. Students and teachers loved them.

It is easy to understand why. It has lots of pictures and graphics (which was one of the complaints of the textbook censors). It is written in a popular style. But above all, it dealt with many subjects about which textbooks are normally silent, notably political doctrines. In addressing the theme of the First World War, the author of the book writes about monopoly capitalism, about imperialism, disputes over markets, mass murder. It has everything, Einstein, Freud, Hollywood, German Nazism, Italian fascism.

On the Russian Revolution, he not only repeats the dates, but also analyzes the 1905 Revolution, the division between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks. He has pictures about Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and writes about "permanent revolution or socialism in one country." It talks of the communists in Brazil, the march of the Prestes Column in the 1920s.⁴ About the

⁴ Luis Carlos Prestes was a lieutenant in the Brazilian army, trained in military engineering, who became the head of the Communist Party. After a revolt by middle-class officers broke out in the mid-1920s against the oligarchical dictatorship of the large landowners in the *República Velha* (Old Republic), Prestes led a military column of 1,500 fighters on a march of 25,000 kilometers (15,000 miles) through the hinterlands of Brazil. One of the main demands of the Prestes Column was for defense of public education and making secondary education obligatory for the entire population. This was a deeply felt issue as a majority of the members of the column were illiterate and semiliterate rural workers.



Banned textbook by Rio teacher Mário Schmidt. Above: box on “Permanent Revolution or Socialism in One Country?”

Cuban Revolution it has several pages, saying: “Cuba is a poor country that has achieved good results in the field of education and health. Why has Brazil, which has a more industrialized economy and a per capita income higher than that of Cuba, not yet achieved these results?”

It is not surprising that such claims and questions were denounced by right-wing sectors as “Marxist indoctrination.” I do not agree entirely with the author’s analysis, it has perhaps a left-wing social democratic perspective, but it is quite objective and offers material for discussion. This is what the new inquisitors object to. Instead, they want to introduce the typical anti-communist ideology of traditional textbooks. Nor is it surprising that Schmidt’s books were removed by the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, they were banned not in 2019 by the Bolsonaro government, but in 2007, under the government of the popular front, yielding to pressure from the right.

To conclude: Marx was right. The ideas of the ruling class – in our case in Brazil, of the bourgeois class – are the dominant ideas in capitalist society, under governments of both the right and the left. Even before the arrival of the current president in the Planalto Palace, complaints against teachers and official inquiries were multiplying. An extensive report on the Internet Group site was titled, “From Fear to Self-Censorship: Symptoms Show that ‘Schools Without Parties’ Is Becoming

‘Law’” (iG, 1 June 2019), where they give many examples of how prohibitions are preventing any discussion about racism or the oppression of women.

Today the dilemma is posed: How to teach about the liberating goals of communism where this is strictly prohibited? Good question. Part of the answer is that education is a democratic right, not even socialist in itself, but it is being attacked by the bourgeoisie around the world, partly because they want education to exist only as a commodity, only to generate profits. But I believe, as part of this theme of “Communism as Horizon,” that it must be made very clear that we can only defend this fundamental democratic right to education for the exploited and oppressed masses in Brazil and around the world with a program of class struggle.

As a Marxist, I bring revolutionary ideas to my union, the State Union of Education Professionals of Rio de Janeiro, SEPE-RJ, in fighting the authoritarian schemes of the government. We fight for schools to be governed by councils of teachers, students, parents and workers. We call this organization the quadripartite school government, as it was practiced in the young Soviet republic.

The key is to integrate the struggle of the teachers with other sectors that have social power, through transitional demands that go up against the limits of capitalism. We have expressed and practiced our solidarity with Mexican teachers, especially the combative teachers from the state of Oaxaca, who have combined their struggle with the defense of indigenous peoples. We in Volta Redonda, Brazil’s “Steel City,” have always been oriented to mobilizing metallurgical workers, who are fighting for the six-hour workday.

We support students and parents. An example was our victorious struggle to prevent the imposition of an exclusionary exam in public schools in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the SAERJ, which would have severely limited access of students from poor families to higher education institutions. And in 2016, teachers, students and staff managed to stop an attempt by the government to drastically reduce the number of classrooms in public schools, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the students who occupied the schools.

Thus, for Marxist educators, defense of public education is inseparable from the struggle for socialism, and this is even more so when it comes to liberating women from their age-old oppression. We defend the Cuban Revolution, even against the prohibitions of government officials who seek to censor the truth, who want to “blot out the sun with their finger,” as the Spanish phrase says. We fervently defend the achievements of education in Cuba, and we stand in solidarity with any initiative to defend free, high quality education and public health for all, and not just for the few who have money, as is the case in Brazil. We fought against the plans of privatizing phony “educational reform” sponsored by the World Bank, OECD and other sacred temples of the new Torquemadas, the bonapartist inquisitors and their imperialist masters.

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Alliance with Cuomo Hurts Transit Workers, Riders

Transit Workers Screwed by No-Gain Contract

NYC Labor Needs a Fighting TWU



Mark Kauzlarich/Mail Street Journal

Thousands of TWU Local 100 members rallied outside 2 Broadway on October 30 to let the transit bosses know they were ready for a fight.

On January 9, the Local 100 website reported that the contract was approved by a vote of 10,112 in favor and 5,176 opposed.

JANUARY 3 – Let’s start with basics: transit workers are the powerhouse of New York City labor. The 40,000-strong membership of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 is the key force that can defeat the bosses and defy anti-labor legislation, like New York’s no-strike Taylor Law – as the 2005 NYC transit strike showed, although it was ultimately sold out. All NYC municipal unions, and all working people in the Big Apple, are affected by what happens with the TWU.

So after months of high-profile wrangling between Local 100 President Tony Utano and MTA head honcho Pat Foye, a tentative agreement between the union and management was reached on December 4. Touting his confidence in the deal, Utano declared: “I believe Local 100 membership will ratify in overwhelming fashion.” Transit workers had been without a contract since May and the membership was eager for a good deal this time around.

But when details of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) came out, it became clear this was a no-gain contract. With pay raises barely keeping up with inflation (and possibly amounting to a pay cut if other factors are taken into account), a hike in ER and Rx copays and no progress on issues of worker safety, this deal amounts to a wasted opportunity – especially after membership had been energized for a fight.

Thousands of Local 100 members rallied outside MTA headquarters at 2 Broadway on October 30, letting management know they were united and ready for a brawl. Many told us they were fed up with negotiations with the transit bosses and ready to walk out. Even the union tops raised the spectre of a strike, as Utano declared, “We could stop the city if we wanted to, and maybe we will.” So what happened? Answer: rather than waging class struggle to win big gains for the rank-and-file and transit passengers, the leadership was mainly concerned to stay in the good graces of Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo, the dictator of the MTA.

Break with the Democrats – Build a Class-Struggle Workers Party

What Happened to Safety?

Worker safety has always been a key issue for transport workers, particularly in a system with such antiquated infrastructure as New York's, and should be front and center in any contract negotiation. In the lead-up to the last contract fight in 2016, track worker Louis Gray was pinned and killed by a G train. Local 100's then-president John Samuelson (now head of TWU International) said that an average of five transport workers *per day* are injured badly enough to miss work. Just last year, 23-year-old union brother St. Clair Richards-Stephens died after falling from the upper level track bed at the 125th street 6 train station.

As we wrote in 2016: "There is no reason workers have to die on the tracks. Technology that can greatly increase track worker safety already exists." We cited the Tracksafe system developed by Bombardier, which has long supplied subway cars to New York City, in which workers on the tracks would have an RFID chip embedded in their badge and which has been tested in Atlanta (see "NYC Transit Workers: Fight for Track Safety and Free Mass Transit!" *The Internationalist* No. 46, January-February 2016). The Maryland Transit Administration is testing a system in Baltimore called ZoneGuard that can track work crews on the tracks.

But New York City Transit has systematically shortchanged workers safety in favor of "efficiency." There is almost nothing in the MOU pertaining to worker safety, save for a clause promising to notify Local 100 when new chemicals or tools are to be introduced. And there were no changes to improve safeguards and provisions for women workers, particularly pregnant and nursing women in RTO (Rapid Transit Operations), despite complaints of dangerous conditions and constant write-ups that were raised by TWU sisters at the October 23 MTA meeting. Members should be outraged!

Local 100 should be demanding *union safety committees with the power to shut down any unsafe part of the system.*

Cuomo, Cops and Class Collaboration

Instead, the union bureaucracy repeated Cuomo's line about hiring 500 more police to fight increased crime in the subways. More cops in the system means more racist repression against union brothers and sisters and against the riding public in general. Local 100 members recall how in 2017, black 27-year station agent Darryl Goodwin was arrested, hit with frame-up charges and suspended from work for not having immediately stopped helping a passenger instead of instantly opening a gate for a gang of cops pursuing a suspect. He died as a result of merciless persecution by the NYPD. The year before, an off-duty officer assaulted conductor Kiyra Rivera when she asked him not to block the door to her cabin.

Already in May, Cuomo was setting the stage for a fight with transit workers and MTA employees generally over phony allegations of "overtime fraud." MTA chairman Pat Foye wanted to use transit police on the LIRR to monitor workers as they punched in and out of work until TWU International leader Samuelson slammed the use of "beakies and Pinkertons" to spy on workers (*Daily News*, 10 May 2019). Samuelson, who sits on the MTA Board, supported the decision to beef up police presence in the system, saying it would "hold riders accountable." And Utano, in response to police monitoring workers, called on Foye to instead use the cops to "collect the damn fare."

"Fare evasion" is exactly what the cops used to justify their

criminal assault on 19-year-old Adrian Napier on October 25. In a viral video that sparked massive protests against cops in the subways, Napier can be seen sitting on a train with his hands up, as police wait for doors to open with their guns drawn, proceeding to viciously drag him to the ground while a dozen cops pile onto him and cuff him. The next day, another video went viral showing a gang of cops punching black youth in the Jay St. Metrotech station. See the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth leaflet "Cops Off the Trains and Out of the Stations!" (November 2019).

The union leaders' support for Cuomo's order to flood the subways with police is a betrayal of their class brothers and sisters, who are being targeted by the racist enforcers of capitalism for being too poor to pay \$2.75 a ride on the subway or buses. What's more, the MOU includes a provision for the union to collaborate with management "on new initiatives as may be mutually agreed upon to aid the MTA in reducing fare evasion." This is a slap in the face to the poor and working people of New York City, particularly those most in need, who should have a *right to mass transit*, whatever their economic circumstances.

Also: for years management has been hiding behind the system's outdated signals to explain away delays, overcrowding, etc. Even with the existing infrastructure and equipment, more trains could be run during off-peak hours and on weekends. And as the union pointed out when being accused by Cuomo of being fraudsters, overtime is the result of understaffing by the bosses. Yet rather than demanding a massive effort to fix the transit system and relieve the overburdened workers, the contract deal calls for a car equipment "productivity committee" that would come up with "mutually agreed upon productivity gains with the goal of achieving savings...." A Subway Stations Deep Cleaning agreement allows outside contractors (who regularly ignore safety standards) to set the work standard for union cleaners. What does this mean? It means making the union tops complicit in any resulting job cuts and speed-up.

Meanwhile, at a time when drastic *increases* in service are needed, particularly in the underserved, heavily black and Latino neighborhoods of Brooklyn and Queens, bus service is being cut! In January, the MTA has announced that it will drastically slash the number of buses per hour on the B46 select and local lines (the second busiest line in the city) on Utica Avenue in Brooklyn. And fares continue to increase, seemingly without limit. All this so the MTA can continue to pay off the banks to the tune of \$2.54 billion in debt service, amounting to 28% of its total revenues of \$8.77 billion in 2018. This debt – now at \$34 billion – has been skyrocketing in recent years as a direct result of the slashing of state aid.

Blaming transit workers for the sorry state of the NYC subways is a favorite pastime not only of the gutter press like the *New York Post* but of all the capitalist politicians, including the TWU tops' favorite, MTA overlord Cuomo. Preferring class collaboration to class struggle, the union leadership takes aim at the riding public. The Internationalist Group calls instead for the TWU to demand *cops out of the subways*, and to call to *rip out the turnstiles* and *make mass transit free!* To fix the sorry state of the subways, *several thousand more transit workers should be hired* to improve service *now*. If the union came out for these demands, *and fought for them*, millions of working-class New Yorkers would back transit workers to the hilt.

For Workers Mobilization Against Racist Attacks!



IUPAT, IATSE and Class Struggle Workers – Portland at August 17 protest against fascist provocation.

Across the United States white supremacists have unleashed murderous violence against immigrants, African Americans, Latinos and those who fight back against racist terror. On August 17, a rally of these sinister forces that was promoted nationwide by the “Proud Boys” and other fascist outfits descended on Portland, Oregon. After briefly congregating on the Willamette River waterfront, thousands of riot police opened a bridge for around 300 racist scum to cross the river and disperse.

A liberal counterprotest was ten times more numerous, but as in the past, did everything possible to avoid confronting the fascists, much less seek to shut down the racist provocation. Organized by the “Portlandia” hipsters known as the “Pop Mob,” organizers (including the usual reformist leftists) called for all and sundry to “come out with the biggest, weirdest, most spectacular costumes, performances, and other fun activities.” Revelers in banana costumes, musical acts and street preachers joined the carnival. The “anti-fascist” coalition included endorsements from local churches, bourgeois politicians and some unions.

But the racist terrorists are not a laughing matter to be

made fun of. And while the fascists sport regalia hailing white-supremacist Republican president Trump, they are protected by cops, the armed fist of the capitalist state, under orders from the liberal Democratic mayor. What didn’t happen on August 17 is what’s desperately needed: to send the fascist mob packing.

A group of union activists came out with a sharply counterposed message: rather than a “fun fest” of class collaboration, it’s necessary to mobilize labor/black/immigrant power to smash the fascist threat with class struggle. The labor militants held the banners of Class Struggle Workers-Portland, IATSE Local 28, and a banner from the IUPAT’s District Council 14 (Chicago) in solidarity of the Portland Painters Local 10 for adopting a resolution calling for labor mobilization against the fascists.

The resolution has since been adopted by other local unions and by the IUPAT nationally at its convention in July. But to make these resolutions real will require forging a class-struggle leadership of labor. It will take a mass mobilization led by the powerful multiracial labor movement to wage an effective struggle against resurgent fascist threats. ■

For Workers Control of Mass Transit

The MTA is currently run by and for the benefit of NYC’s powerful real estate sector, which is a major financial donor to Democrats Cuomo and NYC mayor Bill de Blasio. The IG calls for transport workers to fight to take control of the transit system for the benefit of working people – which can only come about by *overthrowing the dictatorship of capital* and installing a *workers government*. In order to do that, transport workers need to forge real alliances with riders and mobilize the power of all NYC labor. In particular, the TWU should ally with the well over 150,000 yellow and green cab, black car and Uber/Lyft/app-taxi drivers who are victims of the same finan-

cial cultures who have starved the transit system for decades (see “Taxi Workers Under Siege,” on page 35 of this issue).

If transport workers and cab drivers engaged in joint class-struggle action against the diktats of Wall Street, they could bring the hub of the whole NY-NJ-CT tri-state area to a screeching halt. Standing in the way of all this is a pro-capitalist union bureaucracy that is tied by its umbilical cord to the Democratic Party. Against these “labor lieutenants of capital,” a real *class-struggle union leadership* must be forged and a *revolutionary workers party* built to wage a class fight against all the capitalist parties and politicians, who are ones running the transit system into the ground. ■

Whitewashing American History: The WPA Mural Controversy in San Francisco

By Jack Heyman

21 JULY 2019 – There has been a controversy percolating the last couple of years over protests against the 13-panel “Life of Washington” murals painted in 1936 by Works Progress Administration (WPA) artist Victor Arnautoff that are on display at George Washington High School in San Francisco. These murals dared to challenge the patriotic stereotype of Washington, instead portraying him as a slaveholder and military commander overseeing the genocide of American Indians. This radical artist was in many ways far ahead of his time, seeking to portray the brutal reality of U.S. history not the myth ensconced in school textbooks and the national anthem by the ruling class.

Yet now the San Francisco Board of Education has voted to obliterate this militantly anti-racist artist’s depiction of history that the racist rulers always sought to deny. The argument justifying this censorship is that the images were “disturbing” to students. The threat to freedom of expression and free speech is real, and its real targets are the left, labor and those who understand that historical truth is a weapon for the oppressed and exploited. Here it’s being undermined not only by white supremacists and Trump

but by “identity politics” Democrats and “progressives.”

A petition signed by more than 400 academics and educators from across the country and around the world calls for saving the Arnautoff murals. Historian/activist Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, author of *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States*, warned, “The liberal campaign to destroy the Arnautoff timeline parallels the age of Trump that has found liberal Democrats invoking founding fathers,

the Constitution, American values, as patriotic ‘Hamilton: The Musical’ has been introduced at a lightening rate into public school curricula. I think it possible that there is actually a deep well of U.S. patriotism that lurks behind the anti-mural campaign.”

Defending the Arnautoff Murals

Every year in San Francisco during the entire month of July, Labor Fest (www.laborfest.net) celebrates workers history and culture. At International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 34 on July 9, Labor Fest held a panel discussion on the controversy over the Arnautoff murals including S.F. State University history professor emeritus Robert Cherney, Washington High School Alumni Association Vice President Lope



Yalonda M. James / San Francisco Chronicle

Part of a panel of the mural “Life of Washington” (1936) by radical artist Victor Arnautoff depicts George Washington as military commander overseeing genocide of American Indians. “Identity politics” liberals claim the murals are “violent images that are offensive to certain communities,” and the San Francisco Board of Education outrageously voted to obliterate them. In August the Board of Ed voted to conceal with boards, rather than destroy, Arnautoff’s murals, still a reactionary act of censorship.



Yalonda M. James / San Francisco Chronicle

Part of another panel of “Life of Washington” mural depicts black slaves and white indentured servants on “founding father” George Washington’s plantation.

Yap, Jr., and African American art professor and muralist Dewey Crumpler who painted the “response” murals in 1968-1974. All of the panelists were opposed the destruction of the Arnautoff murals. (See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZEMpyvdAXQ> for the powerful commentary by Crumpler, who states that obliteration of the Arnautoff murals would render his own “irrelevant.”)

Describing in detail how Arnautoff’s murals “critique the mythology of George Washington, in a moving KGO (24 June 2019) radio interview in June Crumpler recounts how as a six-year-old boy living in the then-segregated Hunters Point neighborhood of San Francisco, he was horrified seeing the image in *Jet* magazine of the grotesquely disfigured corpse of 14-year-old African American Emmett Till lynched in Mississippi for “offending” a white woman. That image was “indelibly imprinted in my head” Crumpler declares. “That trauma worked its way through me and made me into an artist.” “I showed that image to my children because like my mother, I wanted them to confront this horror....” Disturbing? Yes. But the image of Emmett Till’s body is “why black people all over America got in the streets and made it better for every person in this country.”

When Professor Cherney, who wrote a biography of Victor Arnautoff, began speaking at the panel discussion at Local 34, a handful of people who favor destroying the murals harangued and disrupted the meeting for 20 minutes. The standing room only audience of mostly older leftists, veterans of labor, anti-war, anti-apartheid and civil rights struggles responded with “Shame, shame, shame!” The mainly white disrupters con-



Arnautoff depicted proud Native Americans defending themselves against colonists’ slaughter.

tinued grotesquely smearing those opposed to destruction of anti-racist art with shouts of “white supremacists!”

San Francisco’s Board of Mis-Education Teaches Identity Politics, Political Correctness and “Safe” Spaces

At the start of the June 25 San Francisco Board of Education meeting, President Stevon Cook purloined and misused a quote from literary giant and activist Alice Walker. Had he known that Walker, a defender of freedom of expression, had written a letter to the Oakland School Board in 2014 objecting to their capitulation to the Oakland police demanding the censorship of a new curriculum on the writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal and the racist death penalty, perhaps he would not have cited her. Cook’s criticism of the Arnautoff murals as “violent images that are offensive to certain communities” sounds perversely like the OPD slanders of Mumia.

First to speak during the discussion were those who supported maintaining these historic murals, including Choctaw Indian elder Tamaka Bailey, Lope Yap, Jr., vice president of the GW High School Alumni Association, artists, a librarian and a number of trade unionists. The Board turned a deaf ear to those defending Arnautoff’s radical murals and voted unanimously to paint them over in line with the argument that students need to be sheltered from images such as that of a dead Native American at Washington’s feet. The Board is reviving the work of right-wing predecessors who did not want students to learn about the historical truths that Arnautoff and other leftist artists sought to expose.



Dewey Crumpler in front of African American history panel of his response murals, painted between 1968 and 1974, at George Washington High School in San Francisco. Crumpler denounced plans to obliterate the Arnautoff murals, which would make his own work “irrelevant.”

A committee, the Reflection and Action Working Group, has been selected to determine how to destroy the mural. But the Alumni Association is collecting donations reportedly for a court suit to stop the removal and destruction of the murals.

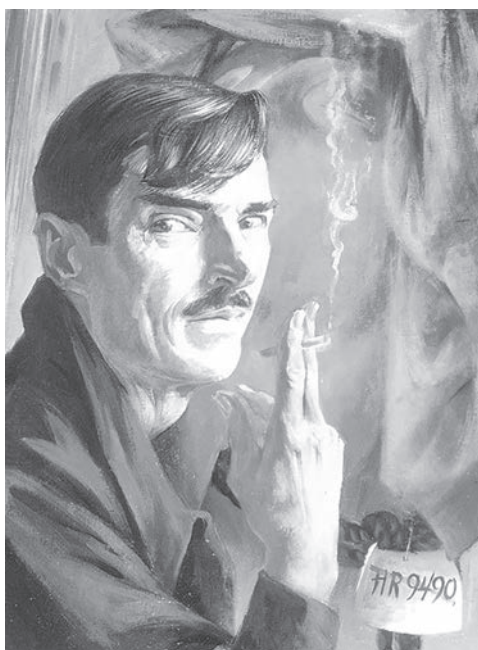
Radical Murals Rooted in Class Struggle

This is not the first time radical murals have been under attack. The same year as the 1934 San Francisco General Strike, capitalist titan Nelson Rockefeller was destroying a mural, "The Future of Mankind" painted by communist muralist Diego Rivera at New York's Rockefeller Center. Why? Because it prominently featured Lenin and Trotsky, the leaders of the Russian Revolution, as well as Karl Marx. In Mexico, however, classrooms go to view and study the Diego Rivera murals which show the bloody suppression of the indigenous people.

Also in 1934, there were two other militant strikes that caused the pillars of the Pacific Stock Exchange and Wall Street capitalists to shake, the Minneapolis Teamsters strike and the Toledo Auto-lite strike. All three of these strikes had things in common: avowed communists were in the leadership of the strikes; the National Guard was called out to bolster police forces suppressing the strike; workers were killed by police and martyred in these strikes overwhelmingly supported by working people. Additionally, the Minneapolis Teamsters subsequently organized workers defense guards to stave off attacks by the fascist Silver Shirts (who copied Hitler's Brown Shirts in Germany). Roosevelt had the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters jailed during WWII.

During the anti-red McCarthy witchhunts, Victor Arnautoff, a professor at Stanford and avowed Communist, was called before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). His HUAC dossier was read into the *Congressional Record* by California Congressman Donald L. Jackson, representing Santa Monica and replacing future president Richard Nixon on the committee. Why was Arnautoff brought before the witch-hunters? Because he was defending his comrade, Anton Refregier, who was under attack for his Rincon Annex Post Office murals in San Francisco. These are seen as subversive because they depicted Chinese workers building the Trans-Continental Railroad and later under attack by racist, xenophobic mobs. These murals showed longshore workers fighting for a union hiring hall, and a commemoration of the two strikers killed by police in the '34 maritime strike, precipitating the San Francisco General Strike.

The Refregier murals were targeted by HUAC, claiming they "tend to promote racial hatred and class warfare." (See Gray Brechin, *The Trial of the Rincon Annex Murals* at http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Trial_of_the_Rincon_Annex_Murals).



Victor Arnautoff, a self-portrait. H.R. 9490 was the Internal Security Act of 1950, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act, which among other things established concentration camps for communists in the U.S.

[foundsf.org/index.php?title=Trial_of_the_Rincon_Annex_Murals](http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Trial_of_the_Rincon_Annex_Murals). The longshore union organized black workers into the union, showing class solidarity 30 years before the Civil Rights Act (which long-time Dixiecrat Lyndon Johnson signed in 1964, while escalating U.S. imperialism's war on Vietnam). "Racial hatred?" This was how red-hunters smeared radical artists' depiction of militant struggles *against racial oppression*. Arnautoff's mural in Richmond, California, painted in 1936, just two years after the tumultuous maritime strike, prominently shows an integrated longshore work force which made class struggle possible.

Defending the Refregier murals that told the true history of those strikes were the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the ILWU, which denounced the "Hearst-inspired attempt to suppress the work of art" (ILWU's *The Dispatcher* 2 April 1948). The Young Democrats of San Francisco charged the murals with being "little short of treason," while the

American Legion expressed concern that the murals would "expose thousands of school children" to "communistic propaganda" from which they needed to be protected.

What and Who Is Behind the "Paint It Down" Crowd? School Privatizers and Guilty White Liberals

Vince Matthews, the privatizing superintendent of the San Francisco School District, is front and center in today's anti-mural campaign. He was the principal of the notorious Edison Schools Inc.'s for-profit San Francisco charter school that was forced to close in 2001 because of opposition from the community and the school board. A school district investigation found evidence the public school run by the Edison privatizers had been purging its student body of black kids, poor kids, special-needs kids. And now he has the nerve to present himself as being "sensitive" to the needs of minority children.

From 2007 to 2009, Matthews was the third and last state administrator of the Oakland Unified School District under state takeover. A union buster, he took a hard line in bargaining with the teachers union (OEA, the Oakland Education Association), as he insisted on no pay raise for the lowest paid teachers in the county and demanded larger class sizes. When the state takeover ended, he stayed on as state trustee with power to veto contracts. He continued to insist on a hard line in bargaining, which led to the district imposing hard terms on the teachers in spring 2010. Throughout his tenure as state administrator and state trustee, he approved outsourcing to private consultants at a per capita rate double that of the average California school district. Matthews has caused chaos for students, teachers unions and



May 1948 protest against government censorship of Anton Refregier murals in Rincon Annex post office.

the community in every California district he has administered.

Along with hard-core privatizer and union-basher Matthews, Stevon Cook, president of the SF Board of Education, opines that Arnautoff's 13 mural panels contain "violent images that are offensive to certain communities." Board vice president Mark Sanchez has used a program, "peer assisted review," which was supposed to have been set up to help teachers; instead he has used it as a tool to target black, Latino, senior and dissident teachers. He justifies this saying it's legal – meaning he can get away with it – echoing other notorious union busters from Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair to Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Now Sanchez is pushing for the school board to spend \$600,000 to "paint it [the Arnautoff mural] down." Meanwhile, the state is 41st on spending per student, but first in per prisoner spending.

Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) is a "progressive" group that has been organizing to rid the school of these "dangerous" murals. On their web page they pose for a photo of about 100 people (overwhelmingly white except for one black man) with signs reading "End White Silence." Yet, they are helping to silence and eradicate the anti-racist voice of a red painter who was an artistic pioneer in speaking and showing the truth of how U.S. capitalism was rooted in slavery and genocide.

Ironically, this site of the photo which illustrates SURJ's "Open Letter on the Life of Washington Murals" is Harry Bridges Plaza in front of the Ferry Building in San Francisco. It's named for one of the longshore leaders of the 1934 "Big Strike" that gave rise to the ILWU, a momentous class struggle which was won through the unity of white and black workers. The longshore union, one of the first to integrate, has been a supporter of Arnautoff's murals from the beginning. In 2017, the ILWU newspaper, *The Dispatcher*, (November 2017) ran an article highlighting the artistic contributions of Arnautoff before an exhibition of his work at SF State. In fact, the artist's two sons became members of the longshore union.

In SURJ's "Open Letter," they call for schools to be made "culturally safe" by not exposing students to images where "Indigenous people are portrayed as shirtless savages and Black people as meek slaves." This willful distortion smears

Arnautoff's work in the service of "safe space" guilty white liberalism, which is counterposed to militant struggle to uproot racial oppression. Actually, Arnautoff's critical murals depict just the opposite, proud Native Americans in war dress defending themselves against colonists' slaughter and the first president Washington's slaves working his plantation.

Black muralist Dewey Crumpler notes that the image of a murdered Native American "represents all those Native Americans who died at war" against genocidal "founding fathers" like Washington. Crumpler stated clearly, "I cannot abide by the destruction of art... in order [to] ...remove all those things that are traumatic in our lives, so that "then when we argue for remedy... we have no history to prove the murderous process" (24 June 2019).

Defending Art That Seeks to Tell the Truth About History

Arnautoff, who became a Stanford professor, had been an assistant in Mexico to the communist muralist Diego Rivera, who not only influenced his work – as vividly shown by the murals – but also his politics. Victor Arnautoff, who in his youth had fought on the wrong side in the Russian Civil War after the Bolshevik Revolution, under Rivera's tutelage became a Communist. Like other performing artists Paul Robeson and Woody Guthrie, who were his comrades, he would doubtless be standing shoulder-to-shoulder with those defending his murals.

The ILWU had a close relationship with the work of WPA artists since the '30s. While the union bureaucracy has worked overtime to tame it in the service of the bosses' rules and Democratic Party, longshore workers' militant tradition of fighting the capitalist bosses and racists continues to reverberate today. We've marched for immigrant workers rights and shut down ports against U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and an end to racist killings by the police.

In 2016, a contingent of longshore workers from West Coast ports traveled to the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota to stand strong with the Sioux people against the Dakota Access Pipeline. The following year the longshore union voted to mobilize to stop the fascist Patriotic Prayer group from rallying in San Francisco, a union stronghold. The fascists called off their rally. Liberal white guilt groups like SURJ certainly won't stop the fascists and defend Native Americans and African Americans by seeking "culturally safe" schools (!) through censoring radical anti-racist art.

To stop the mural-destroying liberals, there needs to be an outpouring of opposition, particularly from students and teachers and transport unions, like the demonstrations in 1948 that saved the Refregier murals at San Francisco's Rincon Annex Post Office. It should demand "Hands Off the WPA Murals!" and "Don't Whitewash Our Militant History."

Jack Heyman, a retired Bay Area longshore activist, was radicalized in the '60's while working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Atlanta to integrate restaurants and to stop the Ku Klux Klan. When he got up to defend the Arnautoff murals at the June 25 SF school board meeting, speaking about the 1934 general strike, he was cut off after one minute by the would-be mural censors. ■

Italy: Anti-Capitalist...

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basis of a reformist lowest-common-denominator minimum program. The term “anti-capitalist” here does not denote the revolutionary *overthrow* of capitalism but instead a variety of reformist criticisms of the *effects* of capitalism, just as the labels “anti-imperialist” and “anti-fascist” are tacked onto political alliances with petty-bourgeois and bourgeois forces.

As we have written before, the genuine tactic of the united front, is quite different. As put forward by the Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky, the workers united front is a proposal for agreement on specific *actions* by different political forces of the working class based on the watchword, “march separately, strike together.” Examples of united-front actions are to carry out strikes, trade-unionization of workplaces, actions to stop racist terror and mobilizations in defense of our class against repression by the bourgeois state. But what forces like the Fronte Internazionalista Rivoluzionaria (FIR), Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori (PCL), Prospettiva Socialista and some cadre of the SI Cobas⁸ are calling for are ongoing political coalitions, which some see as a new organization in the process of being built.

As the League for the Fourth International (of which the NId'I is the Italian section) has written, such coalitions often are the antechamber to a “popular front” with sections of the bourgeoisie. And, in fact, most of the “far left” involved in these “anti-capitalist fronts” has a long history of supporting bourgeois popular fronts. Case in point: most of them supported the PT-led popular-front electoral coalition led by Fernando Haddad in Brazil in the 2018 elections in order to “fight the right” represented by the militarist Jair Bolsonaro. This is like politically supporting the bourgeois Unidad Popular coalition headed by Salvador Allende in Chile from 1970-73 in order to “defeat the right.” We saw how that finished.

It's also akin to giving “critical support” to the bourgeois provisional government in Russia in 1917, the policy of the Mensheviks and many “Old Bolsheviks,” including Stalin. Lenin fought against this in his famous “April Theses,” laying the basis for the October Revolution. The Mensheviks and other popular-frontists ended up on the other side of the barricades during and after the revolution, while Stalin's repetition of this policy in China (1927) and Spain (1936-39) led to the defeat of workers revolutions there. Political support to any popular front is class betrayal, it is the policy of the Mensheviks, Stalinists and social democrats. It subordinates the workers movement to bourgeois forces. That's where an “anti-capitalist” coalition is headed.

Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers Party

The heterogeneous forces involved in the different initiatives for an “anti-capitalist front” are well aware that they would be at loggerheads if there was any serious talk of political program. So

⁸ The FIR, associated internationally with the Trotskyist Faction, is a 2017 split from the PCL, which was formerly part of the international grouping led by Jorge Altamira in Argentina; Prospettiva Socialista is a more recent split from the PCL in solidarity with Altamira; SI Cobas is a syndicalist “rank-and-file” union.

they assiduously avoid the issue. For example, on what position to take toward popular front electoral coalitions (the LFI opposes voting for candidates of any party, including workers parties, in such class-collaborationist coalitions). Or what about the populist “Yellow Vests” movement in France? Most of the Italian left uncritically cheered it on, despite the presence of fascist and other anti-immigrant forces in its midst, whereas the LFI called for workers mobilization to transform the axis of the struggle.

In Italy, a key question is on what basis should opposition to the pro-capitalist bureaucracy in the trade unions be organized? The common denominator of competing groupings like Sindacato é altra cosa (PCL), “No Austerity” (PdAC) and similar formations is simple trade-union militancy. The NId'I and LFI call instead to build a class-struggle, revolutionary opposition in the unions: for communists in the trade unions, not trade unionists in the party. Or what about the current popular mobilizations in Hong Kong? Most of the “far left” effusively praises them as a “democratic struggle,” just as they hailed Solidarność in Poland in the 1980s, whereas we in the LFI opposed that CIA-financed anti-Soviet movement just as we oppose the U.S.-financed anti-communist “movement” in the capitalist enclave that is being used as a battering ram against the Chinese deformed workers state today.

About the only things that the various forces in an eventual “anti-capitalist front” can agree on are trade-union militancy (Lenin had some sharp words to say about that in *What Is To Be Done?*) and refusal to defend the deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba against imperialism and internal forces of capitalist counterrevolution. No amount of “anti-capitalist” rhetoric can hide the fact that this is no basis on which to build combative workers actions against the current PD/5 Stelle government or the fascistic Lega and its Mussolini loving allies. Even less is this the foundation for forging a genuinely communist vanguard to lead the struggle to overthrow capitalist rule through international socialist revolution.

The only real answer to the all-sided bourgeois offensive must be to forge a revolutionary international workers party based on the internationalist program of Lenin and Trotsky. We of the Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia/League for the Fourth International are working for the creation of this party. ■

France Strikes...

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should be to make some bourgeois-democratic adjustments to the Fifth Republic of French capitalism (see “The Opportunist Left Hitched to the Yellow Vests,” *The Internationalist*, No. 56 May-June 2019).

When the outbreak of powerful workers' struggle this fall quickly drew in the remaining Yellow Vests, and a couple of “surprise strikes” broke out in rail, FT/CCR honcho Juan Chingo penned an article enthusing over “Wildcat Strikes, or the Yellow-Vestization of the Workers Movement” (*Revolution Permanente*, 3 November 2019). Noting that “since the 2008-09 crisis, the strategy of pressuring the union leaderships has not been able to pull off a single victory, however minimum,” the article contrasted this to the Yellow Vests “who have been

Marxism, Education...

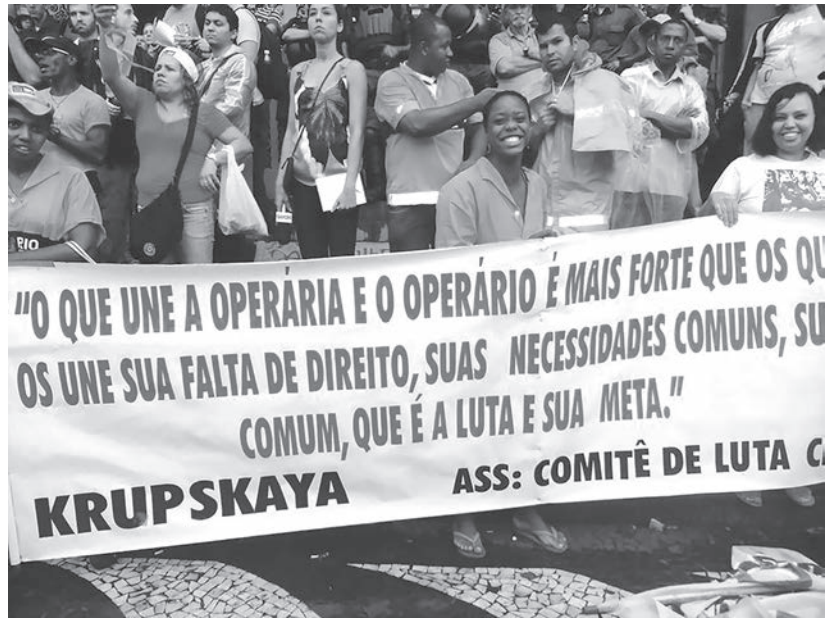
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Because we know: without a socialist revolution, there can be no socialist education.

With respect to feminism that teaches that the liberation of women is a battle against men, every March 8, International Women's Day, we go out with our banner quoting the words of our dear Nadezhda Krupskaya: "What unites the men and women working people is stronger than what divides them. They are united by their lack of rights, their common needs and their common situation, which is the struggle for their goal."

Long live communism! Long live the Cuban Revolution! Socialism will win. ■

CLC banner with Krupskaya quote: "That which unites women and men workers is stronger than what divides them...."



the only ones, up to now, to force Macron & Co. to partially retreat." Having noted the bankruptcy of the "far left" policy of tailing after the bureaucracy, the FT turned its back on the unions altogether, instead looking to the petty-bourgeois populist Yellow Vests, which includes substantial numbers of anti-immigrant supporters of Le Pen's fascist RN.

So while the rest of its colleagues in the NPA and other pseudo-Trotskyist outfits sought to pressure the trade-union bureaucracy, the FT/CCR sought to go around it. The key task, however, is to wage a political fight within the mass organizations of the workers movement for a revolutionary to break with reformism, reject class collaboration and wage sharp class struggle on program leading to socialist revolution. As Trotsky pointed out in his *History of the Russian Revolution*, the steam, i.e. the energy of the masses, that really does drive the piston, also has to be enclosed in a piston-box, i.e., workers organizations, from trade unions under capitalism to factory committees and workers councils (soviets) in times of mass upheaval. Meanwhile, another article on the *Revolution Permanente* (23 November 2019) website sneers at "old recipes" and calls for a new organization embodying the "radical spirit" of the Yellow Vests, a "broad party" of the "far left."

This elixir has been peddled by just about every centrist opportunist since the dawn of the Trotskyist movement in France (and not only France). For the Mandelites, it was a party of the "new mass vanguard," which ultimately meant junking the Revolutionary Communist League (and any reference to revolution or communism) in favor of the New Anticapitalist Party. It was in the France of the 1930s that Trotsky denounced such "broad" initiatives with amorphous programs in his writings on *The Crisis of the French Section [1936-36]*. In fact, Trotsky's trenchant critique of inveterate maneuverers like Raymond Molinier and his schemes for a "mass paper" apply quite well to the FT and its web of internet "web newspapers" like *Révolution Permanente*, *Izquierda Diario* in various

Spanish-speaking countries, *Left Voice* in the U.S.

Going around the unions is just as much a diversion as endlessly seeking to pressure the pro-capitalist bureaucracies. Wildcat strikes can an important element in a developing confrontation with capital, but to be successful they must lead to a mobilization of the entire workers movement. *The current situation is proof positive that the workers movement is far from dead or moribund, but for it to succeed requires a sharp struggle for leadership on the basis of a revolutionary program, including key demands of Trotsky's Transitional Program, including factory committees, labor-immigrant defense guards, a sliding scale of wages and hours and other demands that would point the defensive struggle over attacks on pensions to a proletarian counteroffensive leading to the revolutionary fight for power.*

As we in the League for the Fourth International wrote after the last round of major struggles in France, in 2010:

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

— "Focal Point Europe: Capitalism in Crisis, Class Struggle Erupts," *The Internationalist* no. 32, January-February 2011 ■

¡Resistencia obrera contra el golpe derechista en Bolivia!

La siguiente declaración de la Liga por la IV Internacional fue emitida el 11 de noviembre de 2019.

Ayer domingo, 10 de noviembre, se consumó el golpe de estado en Bolivia que se ha tramado desde las elecciones del 20 de octubre y, de hecho, desde mucho antes. El detonante del derrocamiento del gobierno fue el siniestro motín de la policía, seguido por la declaración de los jefes de las fuerzas armadas instando al presidente Evo Morales a renunciar. El golpe “cívico-policial-militar” tiene un marcado carácter derechista y racista en contra de la población indígena que ha sido la principal base política del Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) liderado por Morales. Un papel clave han jugado elementos fascistoides de la ultra racista élite de Santa Cruz. Todos los que busquen defender los derechos fundamentales de los trabajadores y los oprimidos corren peligro ahora frente a esta embestida reaccionaria.

A lo largo de América Latina, políticos de “centro-izquierda” (como Lula en Brasil) están alabando a Morales, a quien los golpistas quieren eliminar. El gobierno mexicano ha concedido asilo a varios miembros del gobierno derrocado. La capitulación al golpe por parte del presidente Morales —que junto con su vicepresidente Álvaro García Linera y múltiples funcionarios de MAS ha renunciado— expresa el carácter burgués de este partido y su sumisión a los dictados de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), el tristemente célebre ministerio yanqui de colonias. De nuevo, como en Chile en 1973, se muestra el peligro mortal de las ilusiones sembradas por las direcciones populistas y reformistas en la “unidad del pueblo” con las FF.AA. y la policía.

Nosotros de la Liga por la IV Internacional nos oponemos tajantemente al golpe derechista, luchando por la plena independencia política del proletariado con respecto a todos y cada uno de los partidos y políticos burgueses, incluido el MAS, que ha cooptado a la dirigencia obrera y campesina y reprimido a los trabajadores en lucha. Contra el golpe boliviano, insistimos en la necesidad de una política proletaria revolucionaria, luchando por un gobierno obrero-campesino-indígena.

Asimismo llamamos a organizar la autodefensa de organizaciones y comunidades de los trabajadores urbanos y del campo, en contra de los ataques de los golpistas derechistas, que ya han comenzado. Y por sobre todo luchamos por echar a los imperialistas yanquis, los principales autores de los golpes de estado en todo el continente, fuera de Bolivia y de América Latina.

Urge sacar las lecciones de toda esta experiencia. Para hacerlo es necesario forjar un genuino partido de vanguardia, leninista y trotskista. Las secciones y los grupos locales de la LIVI, así como sus partidarios y simpatizantes, participan en las protestas de emergencia que se están organizando para el día de hoy, con las siguientes consignas:

Contra el golpe derechista:

Luchar por un gobierno
obrero-campesino-indígena
revolucionario

clasista revolucionaria
Ningún apoyo político al
MAS

Trabajadores bolivianos:
¡aplastar el golpe!
Imperialismo yanqui
¡fuera de Bolivia
y de América Latina!
Contra el golpe: Política

Por la autodefensa
obrero-campesina-indígena
contra ataques
derechistas racistas

Oposición proletaria...

sigue de la página 80

Europea, quienes se ofrecieron a “mediar”) que pretenden que lo ocurrido en Bolivia es cualquier cosa menos un golpe de estado, son de hecho cómplices de la racista toma del poder, y del imperialismo norteamericano que está metido hasta el cuello en la trama. La LIVI recalcó esto al llamar por “Imperialismo yanqui ¡fuera de Bolivia y de América Latina!”

El miércoles 13 de noviembre, miembros del Internationalistische Gruppe acudieron a una protesta convocada por el Anti-NATO Gruppe Berlin-Brandenburg [Grupo Anti-OTAN Berlín-Brandemburgo] frente a la embajada de Bolivia para repudiar al golpe de estado derechista en Bolivia. Los partidarios del IG sostuvieron pancartas llamando por “Trabajadores bolivianos: ¡aplastar el golpe!”, “Por la autodefensa obrera-campesina-indígena contra ataques derechistas racistas” y combatir al golpe con una política obrera y revolucionaria, independiente de todos los partidos de la burguesía, entre ellos el MAS. El IG llamó por la defensa incondicional de los manifestantes anti golpistas, incluidos los miembros del MAS, en contra de los ataques de los golpistas.

En esta protesta, miembros del Anti-NATO Gruppe vinculados al Partido Comunista Alemán (DKP) se aproximaron a los partidarios del IG de manera amenazadora, acusándolos de estar en contra de la protesta, y a favor del golpe. Acto seguido, intentaron expulsarlos de la manifestación. Esto fue una acción deliberada para excluir a los trotskistas, quienes se oponen al golpe con una política proletaria e internacionalista en lugar de una política burguesa y nacionalista. Los partidarios del IG fueron excluidos físicamente de la manifestación entre difamaciones y calumnias de racistas debido a nuestra negativa a dar apoyo político al MAS — una calumnia particularmente vil dado nuestro llamado por la autodefensa obrera, campesina e indígena y nuestro llamado a conformar un gobierno obrero-campesino-indígena.

En una manifestación subsecuente en contra del golpe en Bolivia, el sábado 16 de noviembre frente a la puerta de Brandemburgo, miembros del Anti-NATO Gruppe y del DKP

se abalanzaron de inmediato sobre el contingente del IG más para decirles que “no eran bienvenidos” a la manifestación, que fue públicamente convocada. Uno del grupo quien se identificó como organizador del mitin comenzó a empujar físicamente a los miembros del contingente para excluirlos de la manifestación y amenazó múltiples veces con llamar a la policía si no se retiraban del área.

Después de empujones y gritos de parte de los organizadores, el contingente del IG fue echado a un costado de la protesta, mientras explicábamos nuestro programa revolucionario para aplastar al golpe a las personas ahí presentes, y distribuíamos nuestros folletos. Un integrante del grupo organizador de la manifestación arrancó los folletos de la mano de un partidario del IG y los desgarró. Este acto de censura de parte de los organizadores de la manifestación podría haber dado lugar a la intervención policiaca, abriendo las puertas a la represión por el estado burgués contra todos los militantes de izquierda presentes, sin mencionar a todos los que no son ciudadanos alemanes.

Este episodio es sólo otro ejemplo de una cínica colaboración de clases. Los organizadores se presentan como contrarios a la OTAN, pero no dudan en correr por la ayuda de la policía de la burguesía alemana – que tiene en sus filas a no pocos fascistas – para excluir a otros grupos de izquierda de sus eventos. Justificaron esto diciendo que éste no era un momento para criticar al MAS. Pero ellos no estaban llamando por la unidad en la acción en contra del golpe, sino por el apoyo político al gobierno derrocado. Ellos están *siempre* en contra de la oposición por la izquierda a los nacionalistas burgueses. El tipo de “unidad” que estos estalinistas quieren es el frente popular; esto es, encadenar a la clase obrera a la burguesía.

Esta política frentepopulista y populista es exactamente la que abre la vía para tales golpes de estado. La sumisión de Evo y su vicepresidente Álvaro García Linera a los dictados de la OEA, también conocida como el “ministerio yanqui de colonias”, muestra el peligro que esto significa para los oprimidos. Los seguidores del MAS fueron abandonados por sus líderes. Y aún cuando Evo goza de un amplio apoyo entre la población indígena de Bolivia, él también ha atacado a las luchas de la clase obrera, como la represión que desató en 2013 en contra de la movilización de los mineros, obreros industriales y trabajadores de la salud y de la educación.

De hecho, desde el momento en el que asumió la presidencia en 2006, Morales ha predicado la traidora “unidad” con el ejército y la policía. A su arribo en el exilio en México, hizo notar que él había proporcionado a la policía 25 helicópteros cuando sólo había uno, y esos helicópteros ahora están disparando a los manifestantes indígenas. Y aunque rompió con el Fondo Monetario Internacional, Morales nunca rompió con el capitalismo (García Linera llamaba por un “capitalismo andino”).

Asimismo, al enfrentar la hostilidad del imperialismo norteamericano, el presidente boliviano buscó apoyo de otros imperialistas. Notablemente, negoció un acuerdo con la compañía alemana ACI Systems (ACISA), con el gobierno de Angela Merkel como garante, para construir una planta

de baterías por una empresa mixta con propiedad estatal de 51%. La planta es para industrializar litio, un metal vital del cual Bolivia tiene las reservas más grandes del mundo. Por la presión de la derecha (que quería una planta completamente privada para poder vivir de sus regalías), en vísperas del golpe, Morales anunció que se cancelaría el contrato.

En contra de los masacradores derechistas, un regreso a la política populista que los generó no representa salida alguna. La Liga por la IV Internacional se pronuncia a favor de política revolucionaria y clasista en contra de la colaboración de clases frentepopulista. El golpe presenta una amenaza de vida o muerte a los trabajadores, campesinos y la población indígena. Lo que se necesita para aplastar al “gobierno de transición” ultraderechista es luchar por la revolución socialista, dirigida por un partido de vanguardia leninista-trotskista y que se extienda de los países semicoloniales a los centros imperialistas. ■

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Contra la exclusión estalinista

Oposición proletaria al golpe de estado en Bolivia

BERLIN, 20 de noviembre de 2019
– El domingo 10 de noviembre fuerzas de ultraderecha llevaron a cabo un golpe de estado en Bolivia, desatado por la policía y las FF.AA., que destituyó al presidente Evo Morales. El Internationalistische Gruppe (IG), sección alemana de la Liga por la IV Internacional, se sumó a las protestas en contra del golpe como parte de las movilizaciones internacionales de las secciones de la LIVI.

El golpe ‘cívico-político-militar’ fue instigado por elementos ultraderechistas, y hasta fascistas, cuyos líderes se dejaron fotografiar arrodillándose ante la Biblia, puesta sobre la bandera de Bolivia en el parlamento después del golpe. Dirigida por la élite burguesa ultra reaccionaria de la ciudad de Santa Cruz, en la parte oriental de Bolivia, la derecha religiosa se muestra virulentamente racista en contra de los pueblos indígenas que constituyen una amplia mayoría de la población del país, y que son la principal base del populista Movimiento



Natacha Pisarenko / AP

Manifestante con la wiphala, la bandera de los pueblos indígenas de Bolivia que ha sido quemada por los golpistas, pasa delante de la policía que impide la entrada a La Paz de manifestantes indígenas, el 15 de noviembre.

al Socialismo (MAS) de Morales.

El carácter racista del golpe quedó claramente manifiesto en videos que mostraban a los golpistas quemando la wiphala, la bandera multicolor que representa a la población multiétnica, y que desde 2009 es símbolo oficial de la República Plurinacional de Bolivia en pie de igualdad con la bandera tricolor. Los ataques a la wiphala incitaron marchas de miles de indígenas furiosos, desde El Alto hasta La Paz, y en Cochabamba, la región donde se concentra la base política de Morales. Ahí los manifestantes fueron acibillados por fuerzas militares, con un saldo de al menos nueve muertos y decenas de heridos. Recientemente, el “gobierno de transición” dio luz verde a más masacres mediante un decreto que exime a los militares de cualquier responsabilidad por estos crímenes.

La proclamación de parte de los golpistas de la ultra racista Jeanine Áñez como “presidenta” está siendo celebrada en Washington como un primer paso hacia la toma del poder en Venezuela. Aquellas fuerzas (incluyendo al jefe de la Organización de los Estados Americanos, quien acusó a Morales de fraude electoral, y a altos oficiales de la imperialista Unión

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Foto: The Internationalist

Internacionalistas en protesta contra el golpe en Bolivia frente a la Torre Trump en Nueva York, 11 de noviembre.