

Millions Take the Streets in Upheaval Against Cop Murder Machine To Uproot Racist Oppression: **Socialist Revolution**

**U.S. Capitalism
in Triple Pandemic:
135,000+ COVID Dead
50,000,000+ Unemployed
1,100+ Killed by Cops**

JULY 10 – The wanton murder of George Floyd by a cop in Minneapolis on May 25 set off a wave of outrage that swept across the United States and has continued for weeks. Day after day, night after night, millions of people took to the streets to denounce the racist police murder of black people that has continued unabated for decades. This massive upheaval against racist cop brutality was met by more police brutality, as gangs of cops slammed protesters to the ground, tear-gassed and pepper-sprayed them in the face, fired rubber bullets and bean bag rounds at them and drove police vehicles into crowds. More than 15,000 people have been arrested. Meanwhile, the cop murder machine grinds on: as of July 7, some 1,130 civilians have been killed by police in 2020, 285 of them since George Floyd was slain.

On that day in May and since, millions of people viewed in horror a bystander's video of racist cop Derek



Internationalist photo

Revolutionary contingent in Juneteenth (June 19) march in Brooklyn.

Chauvin digging his knee into George Floyd's neck until his victim was dead. The cop's smug demeanor, as he ignored voices crying out that he was killing Floyd, reeked of impunity. Floyd's gasping pleas of "I can't breathe" were a

haunting reminder of the last words of another black man, Eric Garner, strangled to death by a New York City cop in 2014. For anyone with any degree of political awareness, *continued on page 12*

For Workers Strikes Against Racist Cop Terror! **Fury Over Minneapolis Police Murder of George Floyd**

Only Revolution Can Bring Justice!

MAY 28 – "I can't breathe," George Floyd kept saying as the police officer dug a knee into his neck. This murderous torture continued for 8 minutes and 46 seconds as Floyd, 46, of St. Louis Park, Minnesota, lay handcuffed on the ground. Then he stopped breathing – yet another black man murdered by the racist police. For millions across the country and the world, it hauntingly, unbearably recalls the last words of Eric Garner, the Staten Island, New York man that a cop killed by chokehold in 2014 as Garner kept saying, eleven times over, "I can't breathe." A cellphone video of the police lynching showed Floyd desperately pleading with his killer, a Minneapolis cop: "Please, please, please, I can't breathe. Please, man" (*Star Tribune*, 27 May).

Thousands marched through South Minneapolis Tuesday afternoon and evening, chanting "Black lives matter," "I can't

breathe," and demanding that the four cops responsible for Floyd's murder be arrested and prosecuted. Protesters gathered at 38th Street and East Chicago Avenue, where Floyd was murdered, filling the streets in all directions, and then marched for three miles to the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) 3rd Precinct. There windows were shattered, and a squad car was totaled. Some protesting youth climbed on top of the building. When they were met with riot police, tear gas and rubber bullets, protesters erected barricades with shopping carts from a Target store across the street and fought back with righteous anger. Good!

Large-scale protests continued on Wednesday and are spreading to other cities. In Minneapolis, police swarmed the area where furious protests were taking place. Now Mayor Jacob Frey has requested *continued on page 20*



Carlos Gonzalez / Star Tribune

On May 26, thousands of angry protesters converged on the place where Minneapolis police murdered George Floyd the day before. The Democratic mayor asked for the National Guard, the Democratic governor called it in, Republican racist-in-chief Trump threatened "shooting" of protesters.

CLASS STRUGGLE EDUCATION WORKERS Minneapolis Public Schools Give Cops the Boot

MINNEAPOLIS, June 3 — In an historic move, Minneapolis Public Schools voted unanimously yesterday to cut ties with Minneapolis Police Department. Horrified by the cold-blooded killing of George Floyd by an MPD cop, educators here and throughout the country denounced this racist murder. The next day, the president elect of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, Local 59 (MFT59), issued a statement saying, “whatever the courts decide, our students were just given another terrifying lesson on what it means to be black in Minnesota.”

Students at local high schools and community have been organizing for years to get the misnamed “school resource officers” (SROs) out of the schools. The MPS contract with the police goes back to 1967, at the height the white backlash against ghetto explosions over police violence. In the 1990s, the Democratic administration of Bill Clinton launched a “COPS in Schools” program which doled out millions to local school districts to bring in police. This was further ramped up in the wake of the 1999 Columbine, Colorado, school shooting.

Today, according to National Center for Education Statistics, more than 70% of U.S. high schools have police, many of them armed (London *Guardian*, 3 June). In New York City, there is a veritable army of some 5,000 uniformed NYPD officers (called “school safety agents,” although they can make warrantless arrests and

use deadly force) plus another 200 regular police stationed in schools. Studies have shown that in schools with a police presence, more students are arrested, fueling the racist “school-to-prison pipeline.” Class Struggle Education Workers has long called for police and security guards out of the schools, and out of the unions.

In 2015-16 there were big mobilizations in the Twin Cities over the police killing of Jamar Clark, near the 4th Precinct in North Minneapolis. A few years later, a scandal erupted over a racist Christmas tree display in the same cop precinct decorated with Pop-

eye’s fried chicken buckets and crime-scene tape. In July 2016, Philando Castile, a cafeteria worker in the St. Paul public schools, was shot to death in his car. And now George Floyd, lynched by a cop smugly putting his knee and the full force of his body weight on George’s neck for almost nine minutes while he gasped “I can’t breathe.”

On June 2, MFT59 held a rally outside Minneapolis Public Schools Davis Center in North Minneapolis demanding “No More Police in Our Schools!” SEIU Local 284, representing food service and custodial workers, also called for cops out. Inside, the school board was scheduled to vote on severing ties with the MPD. Supporters of the Internationalist Group (IG) attended the demonstration, with signs commemorating victims of police lynching in the U.S. and calling for “All Cops Out of the Schools and Unions Now.”

At the demo, teachers and parents shared stories about how their African American and Latino kids do not feel safe with MPD officers roaming their hallways. One mother recounted how her daughter, who was also present at the protest, was tackled to the ground by cops, who cut the straps off her backpack and put her in cuffs. A teacher emphasized that George Floyd’s murder at the hands of an MPD officer was a stark reminder that police have no place in public schools. One teacher and a group of high school students did argue for keeping “SROs,” yet of 1,600 students who responded to a survey, 90% wanted the school cops removed

completely.

Democratic representative Ilhan Omar, who has been the object of vituperative racist attacks, spoke at the rally for no more police in the schools. But the fact is, as we have pointed out, in almost every big city in the country, including the Twin Cities, Democratic mayors are the bosses of the police, and therefore responsible for the systematic racist repression. And the city councils here that vote for school and police budgets are entirely Democratic Farmer-Labor, except for a lone Green in Minneapolis. They have also presided over the increasing segregation of the schools. In Minneapolis, the number of schools where white students are less than 10% of the total increased sevenfold since 2000 (*The Atlantic*, 12 July 2016).

Although the number of police in Minneapolis schools is small, the unanimous vote of the school board to remove them has national importance. St. Paul schools are considering a similar motion next week. “Hey New York, hey Colorado, hey Nevada, look at us — we’re making a change with our voices, just like our parents and neighbors are, and you can do it too,” said a student activist. But it remains to be seen whether the school district will sign a contract with some other “school safety” outfit, as the *Star Tribune* reports (2 June): “the district must come up with new safety plan by mid-August.” Replacing the MPD with private security guards or a simply another police department will mean back to business as usual.

What is vitally necessary is to take control of the schools out of the hands of the capitalist state. Class Struggle Education Workers calls for the schools to be governed by councils of teachers, students, parents and workers. Cops are to be kicked out of Minneapolis public schools — and they’d better stay out! ■



Demonstration outside meeting of Minneapolis school board, June 1, calling for police out of the schools. The board voted unanimously to end contract with Minneapolis Police Department.



Minneapolis students demonstrate the day before Superbowl 2018 for cops out of the schools.

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Internationalist Group supporters at June 2 demonstration for police out of the Minneapolis schools.

Mobilize Labor/Black/Immigrant Power Against Racist Cop Terror!

ILWU Shutdown of West Coast Ports Points the Way Forward

On June 19, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shut down all 29 ports on the West Coast against police brutality and systemic racism. The ILWU's action on Juneteenth, the day that is commemorated as the official end of slavery in the U.S., was widely applauded as another example of solidarity with Black Lives Matter protests that have swept the country in the last few weeks. But it was much more than that. Shutting down international commerce across the Pacific, even briefly, was a dramatic demonstration of workers' power in defense of the oppressed. The police murder machine can only be checked by mobilizing a greater power, that of the multiracial, multiethnic working class.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, the port shutdown was accompanied by a mass rally and march of thousands through the port and on to Oscar Grant Plaza in front of Oakland City Hall, named after the 22-year-old black man murdered by a Bay Area Rapid Transit cop on New Year's Day 2009. At the port, the rally was addressed by leaders of ILWU Locals 10 and 34, and by veteran black leftist activists Angela Davis and Danny Glover. Also speaking was Boots Riley, filmmaker and leader of Occupy Oakland, which sparked a port shutdown in 2011. At City Hall, speakers included the father of Mike Brown, killed by a cop in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014. There was also a march in Seattle of 1,000 or more union members, family and community supporters led by ILWU Local 19.

Today, when the Democratic Party is desperately trying to divert protests into the safe channels of bourgeois politics, demagogically using vague demands to "defund" or even "abolish" the police, there is an urgent need for revolutionary leadership. At the port, Davis (who recently came out for voting for Democrat Joe Biden in November) called for "abolishing the police as we know them" and "re-imagining the meaning of public safety and security." Instead, the key task is to break from the Democrats and fight for a socialist revolution, the only way to put an end to the endemic racism of U.S. capitalism. At the rally in Oscar Grant Plaza by Jack Heyman, a retired Local 10 member, class-struggle longshore activist and one of the organizers of the June 19 shutdown. Heyman told the crowd:

"We are here today to stop police terror and systemic racism. The name of that system is capitalism, racist capitalism. This country was founded on the genocide of the Native Americans. It was built on the blood and sweat of black slaves from Africa.... The workers of the world have power to change the capitalist system. What we did here today is an example, it's a step forward. We are going beyond protest to resistance to the capitalists."

He noted that American capitalism has an Achilles heel: "In the cities of this country, all of the transit is run by black

and brown majority workers. They have a stake in this fight. We can shut the whole damn country down." He added, as the crowd cheered, "We need a revolution." Referring to Democratic primary candidate Bernie Sanders' call for a "political revolution," Heyman said this amounted to "changing one capitalist party for the other. Now if you think that Biden is going to end police killings, you're fooling yourself. Joe Biden wrote the 1994 Clinton crime bill that reinforced mass incarceration and militarization of the police. That's what we're facing today." He ended, saying: "There is no justice under capitalism. We don't need a 'political revolution,' we need a social revolution to replace the capitalist class with the working class."

The Internationalist Group sent a team from Los Angeles and Portland to the Bay Area port action, and also to Seattle to join the protests there. (See the report, "ILWU Port Shutdown: Bay Area March/Rally Against Racist Police Brutality" on our blog "Revolutionaries in the Class Struggle.") In New York City on Juneteenth, the IG organized a revolutionary contingent of dozens marching under a banner declaring: "Democrats Are the Bosses of the Racist Killer Cops/The Police Can't Be 'Reformed' For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution." From the outset of protests over the murder of George Floyd, as in the past, the IG has sought to bring about workers strikes against racist repression, including the ILWU coast-wide shutdown, calling to mobilize labor/black/immigrant power against racist cop terror.

At demonstrations in New York, Los Angeles, Portland and Seattle the IG and

Revolutionary Internationalist Youth distributed hundreds of copies of the leaflet printed below:

JUNE 16 – The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) has announced that it will shut down all 29 ports on the U.S. West Coast on June 19, in honor of George Floyd and to protest "police brutality and systematic racism." This is a big step forward, as daily and nightly mass protests of thousands continue in city after city as well as small towns across the United States three weeks after Floyd was brutally murdered by a Minneapolis cop. Earlier, on June 9, ILWU members stopped work and laid down their tools at the time of Floyd's funeral for a symbolic 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the length of time that killer cop Derek Chauvin dug his knee into his victim's neck, as George Floyd gasped "I can't breathe."

From the outset of the protests, and for many years leading up to the current crisis, the Internationalist Group has called to **mobilize labor/black/immigrant action against racist police terror**. The present

protests, bringing out hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands of demonstrators, are larger and more integrated than the Black Lives Matter marches that arose in 2014-15 after the police murders of Eric Garner, Michael Brown and many others. But the largely spontaneous upheaval has generally put forward vague demands, such as "defund the police." Now the Democratic Party, whose mayors and governors ordered the brutal repression of protests by police and the National Guard, is attempting to coopt those demands, seeking to channel and contain the mass outrage.

While the outcome of the earlier BLM protests dissipated amid toothless reforms and more cop terror, the ILWU's action points to the need for *class struggle against racist repression*. The latest police murders have come at the start of what looks to be a long hot summer: *cops have already killed another 150 people in the three weeks since George Floyd was murdered*. To put a stop to this killing spree, we need to bring out the tremendous power of the multiracial and multiethnic working class. While police terror cuts short the lives of an unending list of black and brown people, these doubly-oppressed sectors are a key part of the workforce in strategic sectors like manufacturing, communications and transport. The next time police carry out a racist murder – and you know there will be a next time, and then another – we need a **mobilization of working people, young people, African Americans, Latinos, Asians, immigrants and all the oppressed, to shut the cities down**.

The West Coast dock workers union has a long history of action against police attacks. The ILWU was born out of the 1934 San Francisco general strike, launched in response to the "Bloody Thursday" massacre in which cops shot two strikers in the



Thousands marched through the Port of Oakland as the giant cranes in the distance stood idle with their booms up, June 19.



Press conference announcing ILWU shutdown of all West Coast ports on Juneteenth against police terror and systemic racism, Oakland, June 16.

back. That's a reason why the constitution and bylaws of ILWU Local 10 in the SF Bay Area, which spearheaded the push to shut down the Coast on June 19, ban police from membership. In October 2010, Local 10 shut down the Port of Oakland and led a rally at City Hall to protest the slap-on-the-wrist "involuntary manslaughter" verdict against the cop who murdered Oscar Grant. And on May Day 2015, after the murder of Freddie Gray by police in Baltimore, Local 10 shut the port and led a march of thousands to City Hall behind an ILWU banner saying, "Stop Police Terror!" And in August 2017, the fascist "Patriot Prayer" scurried out of SF, cancelling its planned rally after Local 10 passing a motion to shut down the port and march to stop their dangerous provocation.

At a press conference today announcing an ILWU-sponsored demonstration in conjunction with the port shutdown on June 19, Local 34 president Keith Shanklin emphasized that the struggle against racist police brutality is not just political but also personal: his nephew was shot in the back twice by Oakland police. Local 10 president Trent Willis noted that his brother was killed by MPs at a base in Colorado. At the press briefing, Jack Heyman, who was introduced by Willis as a retired Local 10 member and "freedom fighter," noted that in 1984, longshore workers took action "against a ship from apartheid South Africa, to protest racist repression there, with people being shot down like dogs. The same thing is happening today in this country, which is why we're shutting down every port on the West Coast to protest these murders by the police."

In addition to the outrage over the police murder of Floyd, the initiators of the ILWU port shutdown were impelled to take action by President Donald Trump's threats of gunfire against protesters, and Democratic and Republican governors calling in the National Guard to suppress demonstrations. This posed the urgent need for action by both the West Coast union and the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), representing East and Gulf Coast ports. Heyman reports that efforts to bring out the ILA on June 19 have not borne fruit, but the pandemic of police killings will surely continue. A shutdown of all U.S. ports would be history-making, and could serve as a clarion call to all of labor that the time to act is *now*.

Many in the left, and many in the labor movement, will no doubt see the ILWU's port shutdown as just one more sector joining the struggle, simply a welcome addition to the "chorus of voices speaking out" against police brutality. They fail to see the



Internationalist Group banner as the June 19 march proceeded through Oakland to City Hall.

strategic importance of what is probably the most powerful union in the United States demonstrating its ability to shut down international commerce. They are willfully blind to the fact that the fight over racist police murder is a fight for *power* – class power. The rulers, however, understand this well, which is why Democrats and Republicans alike called in military forces – whether the Guard or the 82nd Airborne – to brutally clamp down on demonstrations.

Donald Trump understands, the police understand, racist reactionaries understand and even some liberal Democrats understand that no amount of "reforms" can alter the fact that the police inevitably carry out racist repression, because American capitalism cannot exist without it. From the slave patrols to the mass incarceration and wanton slaughter by kill-crazy cops on the streets of the U.S. today, the enforcers of "law and order" are the armed fist of capital. Their job is to "serve and protect" the bourgeoisie by keeping the exploited and oppressed down, in order to keep the profits flowing. The capitalists are acutely aware that amid the mass unemployment occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic, their rule rests on shaky foundations.

The ILWU action has been called for Juneteenth, which celebrates the day – 19 June 1865 – that slavery was formally abolished in Texas, the last of the Confederate slave states to be occupied by the Union Army, bringing the Civil War to a close. Although the Emancipation Proclamation was issued two years earlier, it was only enforced by the army that for the first time included African American soldiers – some 180,000 – and carried out the Second American Revolution. Unlike the first, this was a (partial) social revolution, putting an end to the chattel slavery on which the U.S. economy was built. Yet the slave masters kept the plantations, and slavery outside the secessionist states was not abolished until the 13th Amendment was ratified in December 1865.

But the legacy of slavery lives

on, and not only in the statues of leaders of the Confederate slavocracy that litter the South (and the U.S. Congress), some of which are now finally coming down amid the upheaval over the murder of George Floyd. That bloody heritage continued with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, the institution of Jim Crow segregation, the thousands of lynchings, the denial of voting rights to African Americans, the racist death penalty and the mass incarceration and militarized police occupation of black neighborhoods today. This systemic racism is built into the structure and fabric of U.S. society. It is, as we have written, part of the DNA of American capitalism and cannot be extirpated short of a socialist revolution.

Today around the country there have been a number of important cases in which workers have refused to go along with the police repression – like bus drivers in Minneapolis and New York who refused to transport arrested demonstrators. In NYC, the Transport Workers Union declared: "TWU Local 100 Bus Operators do not work for the NYPD. We transport the working families of NYC, all TWU Operators should refuse to transport arrested protestors." So far, these are still isolated instances. What is needed is far more, workers action to bring the cities to a screeching halt against racist repression. And above all, this class battle must be waged politically against all capitalist parties and politicians, to *build a revolution-*

ary workers party.

While the labor tops and reformist left fall into line behind presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, who helped write the 1994 Clinton crime bill that escalated racist mass incarceration, working-class political independence is crucial for unchaining workers power. In the lead-up to the 2016 elections, comrades of the Internationalist Group and Class Struggle Workers – Portland (Oregon) initiated a resolution passed by the local painters union (IUPAT Local 10) to "call on the labor movement to break from the Democratic Party, and build a class-struggle workers party." Later that year, the CSWP won the painters, stage hands (IATSE Local 28) and a total of seven area unions to call for labor and its allies to mobilize against racist/fascist threats. The IG and the League for the Fourth International have also fought for over two decades to oust cops from the unions – a demand now becoming increasingly popular – which our Brazilian comrades uniquely carried out, and for which they faced heavy repression.

Labor/black/immigrant mobilization against racist police terror, the struggle for cops out of the unions, workers defense against racist attacks – these are key immediate tasks today. To be successful, they must open the way to ending systemic racism by overthrowing the capitalist system that breeds and enforces it. The only way to break the death grip of the killer cops is to *smash the whole racist police/prison/judicial apparatus of the capitalist state through socialist revolution*. On June 19, the IG and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth will be marching in New York, together with Class Struggle Education Workers, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas and the CUNY Internationalist Clubs in a revolutionary contingent behind the banner:

Democrats Are Bosses of Racist Killer Cops

THE POLICE CAN'T BE "REFORMED"

BLACK LIBERATION THROUGH SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

Capitalism is killing us. This decrepit system spreads death and destruction everywhere as it sinks further into terminal decay. We urge you to join us in the liberating struggle for the future of all. ■



During march in the Port Area.



Speakers at the rally in Oscar Grant Plaza in front of Oakland City Hall.

No to Military/Police Rule: Mobilize Workers Power

Trump and Democrats Stage Ominous Trial Run for Martial Law

In the days following the May 25 murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis cop, furious protests spread from coast to coast, including right in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. As the outrage escalated, massive marches across the country were met with violent attacks by cops beating protesters and carrying out mass arrests. The media broadcast images of police cars trashed and torched. At the seat of presidential power on Friday night, May 29, as protesters surged outside, the Secret Service rushed Donald Trump and his family to an underground bunker. Racist-in-chief Trump let loose a barrage of tweets vowing that protesters would be met with “vicious dogs” and threatening that “when the looting starts, the shooting starts,” echoing a Southern sheriff’s threats to shoot black youth in 1960s protests.

With military vehicles in the streets of Seattle, the National Guard patrolling Minneapolis and police clashing with demonstrators across the street in Lafayette Park on Sunday, Trump hunkered down in a largely deserted White House with external lights dimmed. Angry that word had leaked of his time in the bunker, the next morning, June 1, he was determined to look tough. In a conference call he vituperated against Democratic governors, saying “most of you are weak” and that if they didn’t crack down they would “look like a bunch of jerks.” The demonstrators are “terrorists,” he declared, calling to track “trouble makers” and “put them in jail for ten years.” He ended saying, “the word is dominate.... wait till I get in Washington and D.C., we’re gonna do something that people haven’t seen before. But you’ve got to have total domination.”

Next was a Rose Garden press conference, where Trump issued a *pronunciamiento*, that “mayors and governors must establish an overwhelming presence until the violence is quelled.” If not, “then I will deploy the United States military and quickly solve the problem for them.” “I am your president of law and order and an ally of all peaceful protesters,” he declared,



Alex Brandon / AP

Squads of police and federal agents brutally push protesters out of Lafayette Park for Donald Trump’s photo op, June 1.

while on the other side of the White House, his black-uniformed SS (Secret Service) thugs and military police launched pepper gas against peaceful protesters and bashed journalists with riot shields. All so the commander in chief could march across the park, with his attorney general Bill Barr, “defense” secretary Mark Esper and the chairman of the joint chiefs, General Mark Milley (in battle fatigues), in tow, to St. John’s Episcopal Church to pose for photos with a bible as a prop.

In his photo-op at the church, which was angrily denounced by the Episcopal bishop, Trump announced, “As we speak, I am dispatching thousands and thousands of heavily armed soldiers, military personnel and law enforcement officers to stop the rioting, looting, vandalism, assaults and the wanton destruction of property.” Earlier, in the call with the governors, Esper declared, “We need to dominate the battlespace” of the streets. Senator Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas) called for Trump to invoke the 1807 Insurrection Act to deploy active-duty military to cities, “the 10th Mountain, 82nd Airborne, 1st Cav, 3rd Infantry – whatever it takes to restore order. No quarter for in-

surrectionists, anarchists, rioters, and looters.” This is a call to commit war crimes, to take no prisoners, kill them all. Trump retweeted Cotton’s bloodcurdling call, saying “Thanks, Tom.”

The response of the Democratic governors to Trump’s threats was a limp “no thanks” to his “offer” to send in the troops. They treated it as one more example of Trump’s bluster. New York governor Andrew Cuomo called it “shameful.” Minnesota governor Tim Walz said putting the military in the streets was “unsustainable militarily,” and socially, “because it’s the antithesis of how we live.” No emergency press conferences, no resolutions from the Democrat-controlled U.S. House of Representatives against Trump’s ominous threat of imposing direct military rule. And for good reason: the Dems were *already using military force to suppress protests*. “How we live” in Minnesota was that Democrat Farmer-Labor governor Walz had the National Guard in the streets of Minneapolis and St. Paul, for which he earned Trump’s praise.

But the threat of doing “something that people haven’t seen before” to quell protests was more than the usual bully-boy boasting

from the racist in the Oval Office. Donald Trump did, in fact, bring into the Washington area troops from the 82nd Airborne Division, headquartered in Fort Bragg, North Carolina (named for Confederate general Braxton Bragg), along with over 4,000 National Guard troops. Florida sent 500 Guardsmen to D.C., Idaho contributed 400, Indiana 300, Maryland 120, Mississippi 400, Ohio 100, South Carolina 445, Tennessee 1,000 and Utah 200. That’s in addition to 1,200 District of Columbia National Guard troops, who are under direct presidential command. Eleven of the 13 states that sent troops had Republican governors. In effect it was a Republican military occupation of 93% Democratic D.C.

In the U.S. capital, National Guard troops quickly set up a perimeter around the White House, lining up troop transport trucks and armored personnel carriers in front of government buildings and stationing Humvees at key intersections. A new eight-foot tall black fence was erected to prevent protesters (and anyone else) from even entering Lafayette Park. Hundreds of masked federal agents in black and camouflage uniforms with no name tags, no badges, no identifying insignias of any kind, took up position around the city, refusing to say what agency they were with. Some were later identified as being riot police from the U.S. Bureau of Prisons. In addition, at least a dozen other federal agencies were mobilized to “dominate” protesters, including the FBI, DEA, I.C.E., FPS, TSA, PFPA, Border Patrol, Capitol Police, Park Police and Secret Service.

There was an outcry over the incident on the night of June 1, when two military helicopters tried to intimidate protesters who defied the curfew ordered by Washington’s Democratic mayor, Muriel Bowser. A Black Hawk combat copter and a Lakota medevac helicopter hovered over marchers in the streets, their rotors producing deafening noise, breaking tree branches and battering protesters with tropical storm-level winds. The medevac copter (with its Red Cross) was as low as 45 feet above



Protester confronts Trump’s SS (Secret Service) blackshirts outside the White House.



Sam Ward

D.C. National Guard medevac helicopter flying below rooftop level over protesters, battering them with gale-force winds on the night of June 1.



Minnesota National Guard occupied south Minneapolis, called in by Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party governor and mayor, May 29.

ground, well below rooftop level (“A low-flying ‘show of force,’” *Washington Post*, 25 June). Yet Pentagon tops claimed not to know who ordered this maneuver, until Army secretary Ryan McCarthy admitted he had ordered it to “observe” the demos. So Trump, who is formally commander of the D.C. Guard, had created his own chain of command.

Meanwhile, despite assurances to Congress from top Pentagon intelligence officials that the military was not spying on demonstrators, Air National Guard units were doing just that. RC-25 surveillance aircraft from the West Virginia and Pennsylvania National Guards were in the air for hours above demonstrations in Washington, despite the statement by Pennsylvania’s Democratic governor Tom Wolf that he would not send Guard units to D.C. at Trump’s request. RC-25s from the Arkansas and Wisconsin Guards did the same over protests in Minneapolis, at the request of Minnesota’s Democratic governor Walz. The FBI had one of its most sophisticated spy planes in the air over Washington. And that is surely just the tip of the iceberg. The mobilization of military assets in response to Trump’s demand was *a serious attempt to impose martial law*.

As for the 700 troops from the 82nd Airborne, they were held at Joint Base Andrews and Fort Belvoir outside Washington, along with another 1,400 soldiers (including the 16th and 91st Military Police Brigades) ready to be deployed on an hour’s notice. They were armed with automatic weapons, supplied with riot gear and issued bayonets. According to army chief McCarthy, Pentagon leaders “came right up to the edge” of sending those troops into D.C. (*Stars & Stripes*, 8 June). What stopped them was not any outcry from Democrats, but disagreement by top military leaders, past and present, with Trump’s stratagem to suppress protests by invoking

the Insurrection Act, which had been used against Nat Turner’s 1831 slave rebellion and 1968 ghetto revolts in D.C., Baltimore and Chicago following the assassination of Martin Luther King.

Trump’s move was no spur-of-the-moment reaction to Black Lives Matter protesters facing off with the cops, but is part of a drive – shared with the Dem-

ocrats – to beef up military/police power. This push toward bonapartist¹ rule is international in scope as decaying capitalism increasingly requires a “strong state” to keep order. From the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, we have noted that key sectors of the U.S. imperialist ruling class would use this crisis to try out plans for martial law. On March 16, even as Trump was merrily predicting that COVID-19 would “disappear ... like a miracle” come spring, his administration chartered a Joint Task Force National Capital Region (JTF-NCR) in order to secure Washington, D.C. in case a devastating epidemic threatened to cripple the government.

Less than a week later, an exercise, “Falcon Virgo,” was held in the skies over El Paso, Texas, at an Army range over Ft. Bliss that was “gridded out to simulate the airspace of Washington, DC,” in order to train a unit of the Mississippi National Guard “for the upcoming deployment in the nation’s capital” (“As Washington D.C. Faces Coronavirus Spike, Secret Military Task Force Prepares to Secure the

¹ Marxists use the term *bonapartism* to refer to regimes based on military and police power masked by “democratic” trappings. After the most radical leaders of the French Revolution of 1789 were ousted in 1794, the period of revolutionary turmoil was finally ended with the 1799 coup by army leader Napoleon Bonaparte, who used pseudo-democratic plebiscites (vote yes or no) to disguise what was in fact a dictatorship. In his article “Bonapartism and Fascism” (July 1934) analyzing the governments that led up to Hitler’s seizure of power in Germany the year before, Leon Trotsky wrote: “A government which raises itself above the nation is not, however, suspended in air. The true axis of the present government passes through the police, the bureaucracy, the military clique. It is a military-police dictatorship with which we are confronted, barely concealed with the decorations of parliamentarism. But a government of the saber as the judge arbiter of the nation – that’s just what bonapartism is.”



Trump’s secret army: federal agents without name tags, badges or any identifying insignia occupy the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, June 2.



Donald Trump cowered behind barrier of military troop transports as thousands of Black Lives Matter protesters demonstrate, June 3.

Capital,” *Newsweek*, 16 April). A second “Falcon Virgo” exercise was held in D.C. on April 7. The JTF-NCR is commanded by Major General Omar J. Jones IV, with 10,000 troops at his orders, including the Army’s 3rd Infantry Battalion. In his leisure time, *Newsweek* reported, Gen. Jones had just read the book, *Nation on Fire* (2009), about the “riots” that led police to flee Washington after King’s assassination.

Already under Democrat Barack Obama, a Pentagon directive stated that “Federal military forces shall not be used to quell civil disturbances unless specifically authorized by the President in accordance with applicable law ... or permitted under emergency authority.... In these circumstances, those Federal military commanders have the authority, in extraordinary emergency circumstances where prior authorization by the President is impossible and duly constituted local authorities are unable to control the situation, to engage temporarily in activities that are necessary to quell large-scale, unexpected civil disturbances” (DoD Directive No. 3025.18, 29 December 2010). Under Republican Trump, in October 2018 the Joint Chiefs of Staff codified these directives for imposing martial law to put down mass protests.

So when Trump boasted on June 1 that he would “do something that people haven’t seen before,” the groundwork had already been laid. All that was required was his invocation of the Insurrection Act. But there he ran into a problem: opposition from the Pentagon top brass. Joint Chiefs chairman Milley was reportedly against it, although defense secretary Esper went along. A day later, Esper changed his tune and declared that active-duty troops should not be used to put down protests, saying: “I do not support invoking the Insurrection Act.” The *New York Times* (4 June) reported: “Mr. Esper’s comments reflected the turmoil within the military over Mr. Trump, who in seeking to put American troops on the streets alarmed top Pentagon officials fearful that the military would be seen as participating in a move toward martial law.”

What Trump was doing was a trial run at what in Latin America would be called an *autogolpe* (or “self-coup”) such as Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori engineered in 1992, freeing himself from any parliamentary restraint. The presidency has always had strong powers in American bourgeois “democracy,” made even stronger in the imperialist epoch as the U.S. has sought to rule the world (what liberals like Gore Vidal have called the “national security state”). These powers were further expanded after the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Trump needed no approval of any person or body to decree his authoritarian rule. But he had to have someone to carry it out, and the generals balked. Instead, they sent in the National Guard, and instructed them to defend Lafayette Park as “the Alamo,” as Brig. Gen. Robert K. Ryan of the D.C. National Guard told the troops.

The turmoil at the top was so great that at one point, Esper ordered 200 rapid deployment troops of the 82nd Airborne back to Bragg, only to have Trump angrily order him to reverse it. (When asked if the president still had confidence in the defense chief, the White House press secretary replied that, “as of right now, Secretary Esper is still Secretary Esper.”) Gen. Milley issued a directive to top military leaders saying that “Every member of the U.S. military swears an oath to support and defend the Constitution,” based on “the essential principle that all men and women are born free and equal, and should be treated with respect and dignity” including the “right to freedom of speech and peaceful assembly.” He added pointedly that the National Guard was still operating under the authority of state governors (i.e., not the president).

continued on page 21



Internationalists at June 2 protest in NYC call for workers strikes now against racist terror and martial law threats.

“Only Revolution Can Bring Justice”

The following is the edited presentation by Tristán at a June 10 online forum of the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth on “Which Way Forward in the Struggle Against Racist Police Terror.”

I want to make two points, the first being the urgent question of reform or revolution and what our slogan, “Only revolution can bring justice,” really means.

The police are the professionals of racist repression and daily enforcers of capitalist law and order – this is a seemingly simple concept, and yet it is difficult for many to fully grasp. The idea that the police exist in order to repress us comes up in sharp contrast against the dominant capitalist ideology that police are here to “protect and serve the community.” Experience with the police in the United States, the endless list of names of those murdered at the hands of the police, all clearly refute this lie. And yet, there exists a contradiction imbued in the nation-wide and international protests – that it’s possible to reform the police. That the police can adopt a function other than as the defenders of private property is illusory, and yet it still permeates protests. An example is when protesters ask police to march and kneel with them, as if this false act of solidarity will prevent their pepper spraying, rubber and bean bag bullets, and their swinging clubs. So, we get a litter of demands to *reform, redesign, reimagine, reconstruct*, and *reinvent* the police. All the “re-s.”

For those of us who were involved in the 2014-2015 Black Lives Matter protests against the racist police, many of the demands for reform we heard then, we hear today; and many of the supposed reforms that were implemented at that time, including in Minneapolis after the shooting of Jamar Clark, such as mandatory police body cameras and implicit bias training, did not stop the strangulation of George Floyd and have not diminished the steady number of *over 1,700 civilians a year murdered by the police*. That’s almost 5 people a day. As of today, 889 people have been murdered by the police this year. Nothing has changed.

Today, the call to “defund the police” is extremely popular. This fundamentally means that the police as an institution *should* remain because *systemic racism* can supposedly be abolished under capitalism if you tinker with this, that or the other thing, like its “culture” or budget. Nancy Pelosi just referred to it, positively, as “to shuffle some money around.” Bernie Sanders, however, is hard-lining his opposition even to the term. Instead, his so-called police reform proposal calls for *more* money for the police and paying them more, while making social workers and EMTs “supplement law enforcement.” He calls this “humanizing the police.”

Many so-called police reform plans call for community oversight or community control of the police – in other words, to make the “community” co-responsible for administering police repression. Many of the demands in the celebrity-endorsed “8 Can’t Wait” campaign detail proposals that essentially amount to this, including a call for the police to police the police. This is absurd. And in fact, such proposals would make up the defense brief for the next cop that mur-

ders the next black woman, man, or child.

So, No. 1, the function of the police cannot be reformed away. It is the armed fist of the capitalist state. You can’t take repression out of the police and you can’t take repression out of capitalism. The verbiage about supposedly abolishing the police and abolishing the jails under capitalism is liberal utopian make-believe put out by people who claim the capitalist state can reform itself away. That’s a dangerous illusion. As Marx and Lenin insisted, the capitalist state must be smashed in a workers revolution that sets up a new state of the working class to do away with oppression and lay the groundwork for a stateless, classless society.

No. 2, when we say that racist oppression is *systemic*, that is, *part of how this society works*. Racism is written into the DNA of U.S. capitalism. Each time there is an explosion of indignation, the ruling class comes up with these cosmetic solutions. When the ruling class declares that “black lives matter,” they whisper in the same breath, “only insofar as black people can be continuously used as an expendable source of labor integrated into the bottom of society to generate capital.” So when the world’s richest man, Jeff Bezos, chimes in on the slogan, while firing workers who call for a union and personal protective equipment (PPE), you can see how capitalists are always seeking new ways to fool and deceive the oppressed.

Now, what way forward? Anything that makes it more difficult for the police to do what they do – good. Repeal 50-a [the New York state law shielding discipline records of police from public scrutiny]? Good. Do away with qualified immunity [which under Supreme Court rulings has enabled police to kill or injure civilians with impunity]? Good. Cops out of the schools? Hell, yes! Our organization has been in the forefront of fighting for that for decades. Teachers and students everywhere should organize to do it *now*. I’d also like to ask everyone to learn about the historic struggle that our Brazilian comrades waged in 1996 to remove police from the unions,¹ and the workers strikes for the freedom of former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal and against the racist terror of the police in Brazil, in Mexico, in the U.S.² That’s internationalism in practice.

So unlike liberals and reformists, revolutionaries tell the truth about what’s needed to uproot racial oppression. That’s a question of revolution. The liberal conception is that change is internal – change within the self and change within the system . . . but please keep the system. This poses another contradiction: rebukes against the police . . . plus calls to vote for the Democratic Party. Let’s be clear. It’s Mayor Bill de Blasio’s NYPD and in Minneapolis it’s liberal Democratic mayor Jacob Frey’s MPD. These mayors are some of the liberal faces of racist repression.

Revolution requires breaking with the Democrats and all capitalist parties and forming a revolutionary workers party to

¹ See the Internationalist dossier, *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (February 1997).

² See “ILWU, SEPE: First Labor Stoppages for Mumia – Brazil Education Workers Stop Work Demanding: Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!” (*The Internationalist*, May 1999).



Internationalists in May 31 protest in New York City over the racist police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

smash the capitalist system. What kind of revolution? A socialist revolution. A real one. “Only revolution can bring justice” means there is no justice in the capitalist courts and that black liberation can only be realized through a socialist revolution. In other words, eradicating the system of capitalist private property and racist exploitation. Anything other means the cooptation of the mass movement into the Democratic Party just like the initial BLM movement, and continued racist repression.

Secondly, our slogans “George Floyd, Michael Brown, shut the whole system down” and “For workers action against racist terror” both reference the same point; that the key to toppling the racist capitalist system is the power of the multiracial working class, which can literally shut down the system. For example, New York City transit workers in 2005 went on strike, breaking the state’s Taylor Law, which bans strikes by public employees. That strike brought the center of finance capital to a grinding halt for three days. This is what I’m talking about. However, the way that many understand the slogan “shut the system down” is that the spontaneous upsurge of unorganized masses can potentially shut down a highway, bridge or tunnel to attract attention and highlight an issue. These actions can be powerful messages. In fact, my first BLM protest back in 2014 was at Herald Square where protesters stopped traffic on Broadway and then we flooded Times Square.

But what is lacking is revolutionary class-struggle leadership. To get out on the streets to march and protest against racist terror is crucial. But power must be met with power – a stronger power. That is the organized power of the working class under *its own* revolutionary party. Key to this are black workers. This system doesn’t give a damn about them or their lives, as we’ve witnessed yet again with the coronavirus, which is disproportionately affecting black, Latino and immigrant workers. While treated as expendable, they’re a large part of what’s classed as “essential” workers, because the same system needs their labor. That means power.

In 2017, members of the Class Strug-

gle Workers – Portland (CSWP) and Internationalist Group presented motions in the painters and stage-hands unions for “mobilizing against the clear and present danger that the KKK and other racist organizations provocations pose to us all.”³ The motions passed, and then almost identical ones were passed in other unions. This laid the basis for the June 4, 2017 Portland Labor Against the Fascists mobilization, which brought out 300 unionists and supporters.⁴ It is part of what inspired the ILWU Local 10 (these are the dock workers in the Bay Area) to pass a motion to shut down the ports and march to stop a fascist provocation a couple of months later, and that sent the fascists scurrying out of town.⁵ We emphasize that workers strikes must be carried out today against racist cop terror. Trump threatened to deploy the military and Cuomo and de Blasio enacted racist curfews – and the working class should also use its organized power against such police-state measures.

Now, admittedly, I was not a science major, but it is the job of revolutionaries to tap into that potential and latent energy of the working class and help transform it into revolutionary kinetic energy. The capitalist politicians and the reformist groups are constantly injecting the working class and oppressed with political and ideological novocain to numb our consciousness. Instead of riding a never-ceasing pendulum swinging between the Democrats and Republicans, we call on those who want to end racist repression to join us in building a revolutionary workers party organizing for socialist revolution here and around the world. This is a fight for clarity and action, it involves education, which is what we are doing today, and class struggle. I hope many of you will join us in this fight. ■

³ Read the motion at “Portland Painters and Drywall Finishers Say: Mobilize Labor to Stop the KKK and All Racist Groups” on the CSWP website (<https://csw-pdx.org/>).

⁴ See “Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation,” in *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

⁵ See “ILWU Local 10 Moves to Stop the Fascists in San Francisco” and “Fascists Forced to Flee San Francisco – A Significant Victory,” *The Internationalist* No. 49, September-October 2017.

Bad Apples, Broken Windows and Other Myths About the Police

From www.internationalist.org, February 2016.

There is lots of talk today about the police and race in America, prompted by the continued killing with impunity of unarmed black men, women, and children by cops in Ferguson, Chicago, New York, Baltimore, Cleveland, and elsewhere. Some of these legalized murders have been caught on video for all to see. This national “conversation” will not change the fundamental injustice of the capitalist system’s racist enforcement on the streets. Even the large and inspiring protests in city after city against transparent murderous police brutality and its cover-up in cop-rigged grand-jury and court systems will not result in the justice that so many idealistic young protesters desperately desire and demand.

The goals of the protesters are undermined by a number of dominant liberal illusions that support the racist status quo. First is the common sense story that “of course, there are good cops and bad cops.” There is hardly a person-on-the-street interview or a pundit or politician on TV who does not refer to this distorted individualized construction of the situation. It is a convenient fable that shifts the political focus away from the role of the police as an *armed institution* of the capitalist state apparatus to a consideration of individual attitudes. This logically leads to ideas of getting rid of “bad apples,” improving police training, establishing “community policing,” etc.

Of course, it is often the case that cops are personally racist, it’s part of cop culture that views the black population as “perps,” “animals” and at least proto-criminals. Darren Wilson, the cop who shot unarmed Michael Brown in Ferguson, for instance, said he saw Brown as a “beast.” This is a linguistic holdover from chattel slavery. But the most revealing statement in Wilson’s released testimony was that he knew he was doing his job. Doing what he was supposed to do, trained to do. This is basically what all the cops say when they are

perfunctorily called upon to explain why they shot or beat someone. Cops understand the great leeway they have legally. The oppressed bear the suffocating weight of the institutional barrel that contains plenty of bad apples, but mainly all kinds of apples that are just doing their jobs.

The fundamental job of the cops is to maintain brutal social control over the urban ghetto. They are supported in this purpose by the myth of “broken windows policing.” According to this “theory” cops are charged with enforcing “quality of life crimes” such as “loitering,” public drinking and begging. This was the original rationale for the racist “stop and frisk” policies of the New York Police Department. It was certainly the motivation in the NYPD’s strangling to death of Eric Garner in Staten Island. Garner was on the street selling “loosies” – single cigarettes. Of course “broken windows” is enforced only in poor, black and Latino neighborhoods. The famous dictum of Anatole France applies here: “The law in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.”

The liberals’ emphasis on a racially diverse police force is a result of the idea that racism is a personal and psychological characteristic rather than a structural buttress of U.S. society. But in Baltimore, for instance, where the cops’ “rough ride” killed Freddie Gray, the mayor, the prosecutors and the entire criminal justice establishment are African American. NYC has one of the most diverse police forces in the world. As a result of decades of protest, a majority of NYC’s 35,000 cops are African American, Latino, or Asian. That didn’t help Amadou Diallo, Abner Louima, Sean Bell, Eleanor Bumpers, Eric Garner and many others.

Today the cop who beats the kid in his hoodie, or stops, frisks, harasses and drives the kid into the criminal data base is a lot more likely to look like a member of the “community” than the racist PBA head, Patrick Lynch, who lives up to the older cop ste-



Robocops impose curfew in Baltimore on 1 May 2015 following police murder of Freddie Gray. Police are armed and armored for civil war.

reotype. But Lynch’s philosophy dominates cop culture and sets the real informal initiation rules for becoming a conscious agent of “law and order” in capitalist society. In defending the interests of capital, the “community” that cops represent is the “blue community” of occupation and oppression.

For the ruling class the problem is one of public relations: how to get the oppressed to trust the cops. The more far-seeing capitalist rulers know that their supremacy depends upon efficient control of the oppressed. That is why liberals are wringing their hands over the “lack of trust between police and communities of color.” But for the cops the problem is one of fear: who owns the streets?

Liberal illusions divert attention from the historically developed role of the capitalist state as an instrument of racist and class control and coercion. Besides the constant drumbeat for generalized gun control, we now also hear references to the implicit racism held throughout the U.S. population. Social science research has certainly demonstrated that this is widespread. As a legacy of slavery and ghetto compaction, the dominant capitalist ideology perpetuates the perception that black bodies are suspicious and dangerous. In this view the murderous cops are just like any American except that they have a gun.

Everyone is guilty in this alibi for intentional cop terror. A cop feels threatened when he sees a black man holding a toy rifle in the toy section of a K-mart, and shoots him dead (in a suburb of Dayton, Ohio in August 2014). Even a recent *New York Times* (30 December 2015) editorial notes that the shooting of Tamir Rice – a young boy with a toy gun on a playground – would not occur “in just about any middle-class neighborhood in the country.”

But the focus on the fact of widespread implicit racism tends to sidestep the role of the cops as lethal enforcers of the racist status quo. The cops’ rules of engagement are different. The racism of the cops is not simply implicit – it is central to their historically developed function as the truncheon of the capitalist state against the population of impoverished ghettos.

Many of the youthful protesters have

inherited the debilitating illusion that the federal government can be relied upon to reform the local, militarized and out-of-control cops. Their illusory hope that the federal government will right the wrongs of state and local authorities is a holdover from the civil rights movement when national political opposition to *de jure* legal segregation did temporarily ameliorate the most egregious examples of Southern legal apartheid. At the same time, the feds occupied cities like Little Rock and Birmingham to *put down black resistance* to the racist nightriders.

So today, in response to civil rights complaints, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) comes to town pretending to reform and modernize police practices. The DOJ has issued reports on Ferguson, Cleveland, Chicago and elsewhere. We have seen decades of “agreements” between local cops and the DOJ promising to reform the police in Detroit, Baltimore, Los Angeles, New Orleans and other major cities. In the last two decades DOJ has launched 67 civil rights investigations of police departments. It doesn’t work. It can’t work.

As the *Washington Post* (“Forced Reforms, Mixed Results,” 15 November 2015) reported, police departments get new equipment and lots of money, but cop violence often gets worse. The *Post* reported that in the ten cities where they investigated DOJ agreements, not one showed a decrease in the “use of excessive force.” In five police departments excessive use of force stayed the same, and “in five of the 10 police departments for which sufficient data was provided, use of force by officers *increased* [our emphasis] during and after agreements.”

This is the same federal government that supplies the local cops with military hardware. The same federal government that launches “signature” assassination drone strikes (based on patterns of behavior that suggest “terrorist activity”) using the same kind of “pre-cog” (predictive) crime profiling that targets black people and Latinos in the U.S. The same DOJ that designed the legal cover for the sick, medieval torture of perceived enemies. The same federal government that supports the racist death penalty, and that expanded prosecutorial reach under Democrat Bill Clinton.



Brooklyn, New York, 30 May 2020: Outraged over the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, tens of thousands took part in daily protests and marches against racist cop terror. NYPD cops brutalized protesters with tear gas, pepper spray, batons and even their squad cars.

Jim Crow “Justice” and the Capitalist State

From www.internationalist.org, February 2016.

The denial of access to legal redress in the courts is part and parcel of lynch-law “justice.” It is a system born in the toxic cauldron of chattel slavery, brutally maintained by the slave patrols, and expressed in the notorious “black codes.” African Americans were not regarded as fully human under the law. For decades after slavery, the lynch rope hung between African Americans and their “day in court.”

Police terror has always been a crucial device in America’s white supremacist history. Under Jim Crow segregation in the South, it was well understood that the local police departments were often synonymous with the local Ku Klux Klan. The nightriders took off their blue uniforms and put on their white ones. Far from protecting African Americans, the cops more often worked gun-in-glove with white racist mobs.

In one infamous example, Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921 was the site of one of the worst racist pogroms in U.S. history. Mobs burned down the entire vibrant black community of Greenwood – destroying more than 1,000 homes and businesses – and murdered hundreds. Precipitating the spasm of racist terror was a white mob howling to lynch an innocent black man being held in the local jail. Black veterans of WWI came armed to the jail to offer their services in defense of civic order against lynch-mob fury. Their offer was rebuffed by the authorities; instead the police deputized the lynch mob terrorists.¹

This history is still with us today. Just look at the proliferation of “neighborhood watch” patrols such as the one George Zimmerman coordinated as he was “patrolling” a gated community in Sanford, Florida

¹ See “Black Self-Defense Against ‘Ethnic Cleansing’: Racist Hell in Tulsa, 1921,” *The Internationalist* No. 22, September-October 2005.



Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1 June 1921: Hundreds of black men were seized at gun point and marched to detention centers while vigilantes burned down the black community of Greenwood.

where he shot Trayvon Martin dead.²

The racial character of mass incarceration is not merely the result of excessive penal policies instituted since the election of Ronald Reagan, as many liberal reformers suggest. The policies that created urban ghettos started long ago and were intensified with industrialization and under the liberal New Deal.

As African Americans were driven into blighted areas of industrial cities by conscious policies of housing and employment discrimination, the capitalist state’s coercive machinery – the cops and prosecutors, the courts and prisons – were given the green light to be the blunt instruments of social

² See “Lynch Law U.S.A.: State Defends Murderer of Trayvon Martin,” *The Internationalist* special issue, May 2012; and “Workers Revolution Will Avenge Trayvon Martin,” *The Internationalist* No. 36, January-February 2014.

control of that oppressed population. The niceties of rights were simply disregarded as the cops rode roughshod over the residents who were viewed as actual and potential criminals. That’s how a 12-year-old boy, Tamir Rice, gets gunned down in Cleveland by a cop who starts shooting as soon as he sees the child. The cop knew he would get off – not even a trial.³

The too-familiar sociopathic cop culture is largely the institutional reflection of their legal immunity – the implicit understanding that there will be no legal accountability for the brutal actions of the “thin, blue line.” With impunity, police stop, frisk, bust and generally terrorize the young black men who inhabit urban ghettos built to contain and control them. In

³ See “Baltimore, Cleveland: ‘The System Is Rigged’,” *The Internationalist* No. 42, January-February 2016.

this sense, the cops are the contemporary iteration of the slave patrols of the antebellum South.

With the civil rights movement and radicalization of the 1960s and early ’70s, both capitalist parties instituted the “war on crime” backlash that murdered Black Panther Party leaders in their beds in Chicago, set up the COINTELPRO spying apparatus, and illegally imprisoned the most radical elements of the “black power” movement on all manner of trumped-up charges. In 1994 the Clinton Administration passed the Omnibus Crime Bill that provided millions of dollars to expand state prisons, put 100,000 additional cops in the streets and expanded the death penalty to cover more than 50 federal crimes. On the streets, the target expanded to entrap and imprison thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of youth, including those trying to survive like [Pennsylvania frame-up victim] Corey Walker, in the only employment available to them: the underground drug trade.

The Internationalist Group opposes all laws criminalizing or regulating drugs (as well as alcohol, tobacco or other substances). Repealing those laws would put an end to the “drug wars” that have jailed hundreds of thousands of young people, devastated African American and Latino communities in the U.S., and laid waste to much of Mexico. Many defenders of democratic rights recognize that the outlawing of drugs has not stopped their use but only turned users and dealers into outlaws, while generating police and gang violence. Following the end of Prohibition in the 1930s, the organized crime associated with bans on alcohol was drastically reduced.

Modern mass incarceration in the U.S. is the result of a long racist history. Racism is tightly woven into the fabric of American capitalism. A distinctive characteristic of the U.S. capitalist state is that its concrete and coercive state institutions – its standing army, cops, court system and prisons – are forged in a crucible of official and unofficial racist terror. Although the forms may differ, this is true today no less than 100 years ago. It will take nothing short of a socialist revolution to put an end to the living legacy of slavery and the lynch law justice that lives on, half a century after the formal abolition of Jim Crow segregation. ■

It’s the same government that runs the torture prison at Guantanamo Bay where prisoners are held for years without charges and force fed. There is no accountability for torturers at the federal level – not one torturer, or the lawyers who justified it legally, or the psychologists who consulted on it, will ever face charges. As President Obama said in his home-spun way, “We tortured a few folks.”

Taken together these illusions generate an ideological fog that makes it nearly impossible for many young protesters to recognize the essential materialist class character of the state – born out of irreconcilable class conflict – and the institutions that embody and carry out its coercive purpose. In the United States, where racism is deeply baked into the development of capitalism, that coercion is necessarily racist. It is the entire barrel – the structure of capitalist class justice – that is rotten to the core.

These illusions, particularly as expounded by the Democratic Party, overshadow the current protest movement be-

cause of the weakness of the U.S. left and the dominance of middle-class politics in U.S. political life. The bloody class line between cops and workers has been a lot clearer in Appalachian mining towns like Harlan County, for instance, where generations of workers have fought the bosses’ gun thugs and cops. They posed the proverbial and sometimes musical question, “Which Side Are You On?” Everybody in town understood the social and political role of the cops.

There is also clarity on militant picket lines – workers’ necessary tool for organized survival – where the cops try to herd the scabs through the pickets. It’s easy for strikers to see that all the cops are following orders. “Good cops” and “bad cops” are part of the same strikebreaking armed force. In black ghettos across the globe where the cops regularly occupy and “control” the population through brutal harassment bordering on terror, and often legalized murder, there is little confusion about the cops’ social function.

But among the liberal and reformist left, the role of the cops has been obscured by loyalty (sometimes unstated) to the capitalist state and an individualist ideology that supports it. Sometimes this loyalty is primitively expressed as the false assumption that cops are “workers in uniform” – part of the “99 percent.” Sometimes the justification can be sophisticated and theoretical. But by creating illusions that the police could somehow “serve the people” the result is to divert struggle into a dead end of attempts to reform the unreformable. Everywhere and always,

the political stance toward the cops is the touchstone that defines allegiance or opposition to capitalism and its state. ■

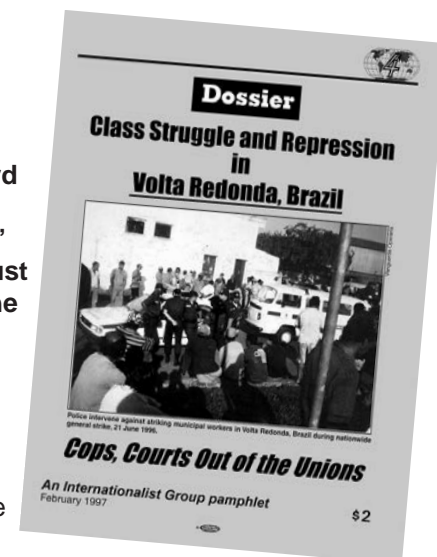
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Shutting Down 24/7 Service Is No Answer to NYC Subway Crisis

MAY 11 – On May 6, the New York City subway system began shutting down daily for four hours, from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. It is the first scheduled cancellation of late-night service in the system's 115-year history. According to the announcement by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), the aim is to "intensify disinfecting operations, cleaning its fleet of thousands of cars and buses every night" amid the coronavirus pandemic. The actual purpose is to eject homeless people who have increasingly been camped out on the trains during the crisis. To that end, the city deployed 1,000 police to nearly every one of the 472 stations in the system, the largest in the world, to carry out the removals.

Since the shutdown would cause turmoil for the 11,000 riders who have been using the subway during those hours lately (normally it is 75,000), among them many "essential workers" heading for early morning shifts, an "Essential Connector" program was set up using app-taxis like Uber and Lyft. While that might get nurses and other staff to hospitals, the workers heading to jobs like bakeries, grocery stores, distribution warehouses or construction sites would have a hard time getting a free ride. They would have to rely on the 344 additional buses the MTA put on the road. But that will mean more pressure on bus drivers, at least two dozen of whom have died from COVID-19 in the last six weeks.

This is all part of gearing up to "reopen the economy" after the unprecedented quarantine that for the last six weeks has brought the "city that never sleeps" to a virtual standstill, as much of the rest of the country has shut down as well. Despite the "shelter in place" order that emptied Manhattan streets, the virus has raged through NYC. With 175,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 (in reality surely many times more, as relatively



Subway worker disinfecting subway car at the Coney Island Yard in Brooklyn, March 3. Shutting down late night service won't help cleaning cars, there's nowhere to park the trains.

few have been tested) and 20,000 deaths, the city is the epicenter of the pandemic in the United States and worldwide. Yet while the numbers of new cases reported and of people dying have been declining, lifting the stay-at-home orders, even gradually, could lead to a new surge.

In New York City less than half of all families have a car and a large majority of workers commute by mass transit. To get people back to work with the virus as dangerous as ever, the authorities will have to again pack the subways, where "social distancing" is impossible. So in addition to requiring face covering on public transit, they are focused on forcing the homeless off. At his daily coronavirus briefing on April 28, New York governor Andrew Cuomo held up a front-page photo of people sleeping in the cars, declaring "This is disgusting, what is happening on those subway cars." He added, "It's not even safe for the home-

less people to be on trains." So the state and city shut down the system overnight, and call out the cops to roust the riders.

So what is "disgusting"? Cuomo blames the homeless themselves. But the fact that large numbers of people are forced to ride the trains because they have no other safe place to go is disgusting. The fact that there is no network of public toilets and showers where they can clean up is disgusting. The fact that tens of thousands of apartments stand empty while thousands have no bed to sleep in is disgusting. The fact that the shelters are jammed, often violent and now hotbeds of COVID-19 infection is disgusting. And that's a main reason why the homeless are avoiding them, feeling safer riding the rails for a fitful sleep. As a subway conductor remarked, "They need to have some type of place for people to go that isn't the buses" (*The City*, 5 May).

He's right. City officials know this well, which is why the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) sent 100 social workers to 30 stations on the first night of the shutdown. But they had nothing to offer but virus-impacted shelters. Yes, there is a problem of large numbers of homeless camped out in the subways, affecting other riders and workers. Want to solve it? Provide everyone who needs housing a comfortable, safe place to stay, and plenty of social services. Start with the thousands of rooms standing empty in NYC hotels. DHS leases 2,500 rooms, a drop in the bucket. Transit unions and the rest of the labor movement should call to put up everyone needing shelter in the hotels, and to occupy the thousands of vacant second homes in NYC, as many as needed. But the late-night shutdown is ultimately not about the homeless.

Nor is it about cleaning the trains, which shouldn't just be once a day – or once in three days, as it's been lately. The MTA made a show of sending 500 workers to clean cars on the first night. Yet it doesn't have yards big enough to park the entire fleet. Even amid the shutdown it ran 135 trains all night for the use of police and transit workers. Cleaning should be staggered throughout the day. The unions should demand that the MTA hire *several*

thousand union cleaners to disinfect every train car and bus after every run, as most Chinese cities do. It could buy some of those robots (cost: \$129,000 each) used on the Hong Kong subway to spray hydrogen peroxide inside train cars. The fact that this *isn't* being done points to the real issue – money, and profits.

Leading capitalist spokesmen in New York have long called to get rid of all-night subway service, as part of an overall plan to make the transit system more "cost-effective." The head of the Regional Plan Association (whose board includes real estate moguls, a top Google executive and NYC mayor Bill de Blasio's former deputy mayor), told WCBS (30 November 2017) that the "era of 24-hour subway service is over," that late-night service should be replaced by buses and app-taxis. RPA boss Tom Wright added: "We think that the city subway system needs shock therapy." Meaning what? The RPA's *Fourth Regional Plan* he introduced calls to "to change the responsibilities of MTA's workers" or ... "reduce the number of those positions." So that's it.

This would mainly be accomplished by going over to one-person-train-operation (OPTO). Ultimately, "A driverless subway will save the agency billions of dollars annually," said the RPA report, *Save Our Subways: A Plan to Transform New York City's Rapid Transit System* (June 2018). The report hailed the "fully unattended train operations" on the Paris Metro's Line 1, which incidentally was the only line that kept up full service in the recent month-long strike by Paris transit workers. How very cost-effective: lower wage costs and no strikes! But passenger safety? Like during derailments, of which the aging NYC subways have had quite a few. As we wrote of an earlier (2014) RPA call for OPTO and "full unattended train operations":

"This is a recipe for a deadly disaster. Imagine what the casualties from the June 27 [2017] derailment of the A train at 125th Street would have been if there had been no transit workers to guide passengers through the smoke-filled tunnel. Luckily, in the past TWU Local 100 has resisted such moves."

–"NYC Transit Summer of Hell? What about Winter, Spring and Fall?" (August 2017), reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 50, Winter 2017

Late-night NYC subway service has been deteriorating for years. It used to be that the worst was getting stuck behind the garbage train. But since subway "modernizers" launched their "Fastrack" program a few years ago, it has gone to hell, with half-hour waits (or more) between trains. When the RPA first called for shutting down overnight service, Mayor de Blasio said that for New Yorkers, "Twenty-four-hour subway service is part of our birthright. You cannot shut down the subway at night . . . this is a 24-hour city." Now he says he only agreed to shutting down late-night service on the basis of Governor Cuomo's assurance that it was only "temporary." You think? Look at the last sentence of the MTA announcement:

"The MTA will resume overnight service between the period of 1-5 a.m. when customer demand returns, and innovative

Transit Workers Don't Work for the LAPD

The following leaflet was issued by Joseph Wagner, a member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1277 in Los Angeles, on June 4.

Bus operators in one city after another have refused to transport protesters arrested by the police, during the ongoing righteous protests against the racist police murder of George Floyd. Here in Los Angeles, Metro abruptly cut bus and train service, and then offered the transit system to the LAPD to carry out their curfew sweeps. Our union local needs to take a strong stand against that now.

In Minneapolis, ATU Local 1005's members refused to work with police. ATU International President John Costa condemned the use of buses to transport arrestees, stating: "This is a misuse of public transit...." This came after, and in defense of, union members who refused to do the bidding of the police by driving their prisoners.

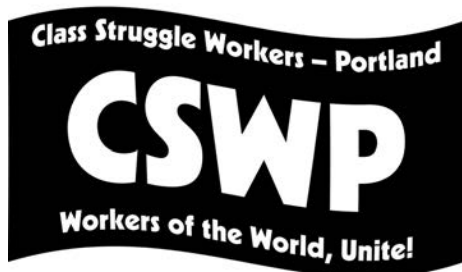
In Washington, D.C., ATU Local 689 issued a statement in solidarity with the protests, and wrote: "We follow in the footsteps of our International Union and

fellow transit workers and pledge that our members will not put themselves in danger by transporting arrested protesters for the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) or any other law enforcement services."

TWU Local 100, which represents public transit employees in New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority, said its members "do not work for the NYPD" and that union bus operators "should refuse to transport arrested protesters."

Here in Los Angeles, it is extremely important that ATU Local 1277 show solidarity with the protests against racist police terror; our union local should make an unambiguous statement against the Metro bosses offering up buses for police round-ups of protesters as they cut service to the public. We in ATU and sister SMART and TCU locals work for the multiracial workers and passengers, not for the police. Just as an injury to one is an injury to all, solidarity against repression is part of showing young people and all our fellow working people what the principles of labor stand for. ■

Cops Out of the Unions – Now!



The following statement was issued by the Class Struggle Workers Portland on July 7.

The racist police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and so many others have highlighted why police of all kinds have no place in the labor movement. Time and again, the cops have responded to mass protests against racist police murder and brutality by unleashing more racist police brutality and murder. The demand “Police Out of the Unions” is a crucial aspect of bringing the power of the working class into the fight against racist oppression today.

The police, modern descendants of slave patrols, are the armed fist of racist, anti-worker repression. Using the tools and armaments of their trade as professionals of repression, they carry out their job and their function: upholding the interests, property, wealth and power of the ruling class.

The Juneteenth International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shutdown of all West Coast ports pointed to the need to spread workers strikes against racist police terror. It was carried out in memory of George Floyd and against endemic racism. The police, armed enforcers of that endemic racial oppression, are also the bosses’ frontline forces against labor struggles, breaking up pickets, assaulting and arresting strikers and escorting strike-breaking scabs across picket lines.

In Minneapolis, when the city banned “warrior training” for the cops, their “union” stepped in to provide it for free. Such training, also known as “killology,” includes lethal choke holds and restraints like the one Minneapolis cop Derek Chauvin, backed by three other officers, used when he murdered George Floyd. After Floyd’s killing, the fascistic head of the local police “union” called protesters a “terrorist movement” and stated that he was “work[ing] with” the attorneys for the

four cops, to “fight for their jobs.”

George Floyd’s last words, “I can’t breathe,” hauntingly echoed those of Eric Garner in New York. There, the police “union” vociferously defended the killer cop, while launching racist smears against his victim. For its part, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) campaigned for years for world-renowned radical black journalist Mumia Abu-Jamal to be executed. As for supporters of the former Black Panther, who has now spent almost four decades in prison on frame-up charges, the FOP called for them to be executed as well, on an “electric couch.”

Recently, the Writers Guild of America – East called for the removal of the International Union of Police Associations from the AFL-CIO. But the labor bureaucracy has brought the class enemy’s thugs into our labor movement through many doors. The Service Employees International Union includes thousands of police through its affiliates the International Brotherhood of Police Officers and International Brotherhood of Correctional Officers, while the Teamsters represent tens of thousands of police and sheriffs through the Teamsters Law Enforcement League. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union organizes port police and “harbor guards.”

Also, agents of Immigration and Customs and Enforcement, who round up immigrants for deportation at gunpoint; the Border Patrol, who run detention centers where immigrants, including children, are held in cages; and the Federal Protective Service, who have been used to defend racist mobilizations in the Portland area, are part of the American Federation of Government Employees. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Communications Workers of America and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers also include police. Class Struggle Workers – Portland demands that ALL police “unions” and locals or affiliates of other unions be removed from the labor movement.

It is also important to emphasize that policing is not solely relegated to police departments. It is also carried out by prison guards, like those who pepper-sprayed federal jail prisoner Jamel Floyd to death on June 3 in New York. Additionally, private security guards and agents have a long history as paid strikebreakers going back to the infamous Pinkerton labor spy and union-busting agency. (Now called Securitas, it is one of the world’s largest security-guard companies.) Killer cop Derek Chauvin was a Wackenhut security guard as a step to becoming a Minneapolis police officer. Rent-a-cops are still functionally cops, serving a repressive function. Often they are used as a cheaper and more loosely regulated substitute for police, employed by government agencies, companies, schools or in privatized prisons. Many unions, from the SEIU to the ILWU and Transport Work-

ers Union include security guards whose job is to protect property, who can be armed and who could be used against fellow union members. Defenders of labor and the oppressed must demand that prison guards and security guards should also be removed from the unions.

Just as racist repression is inherent to the job of police in capitalist America, so too the actions and statements of cop “unions” reflect their job of promoting the interests, and shielding the crimes, of the repressors in blue. They are clearly counterposed to the most basic interests of the working class, and of real workers unions. Seeking to obscure this fact, labor bureaucrats and reformists are coming up with one diversion after another, from the AFL-CIO’s plea to police associations to adopt a “code of excellence,” to calls on them to be partners in “rooting out racism,” to claims that the cops can be “reformed” through “defunding,” “community control,” etc. These are just the latest versions of the decades-old pretense that one or another gimmick can reform away the core functions of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state.

Opponents of racist police terror must refuse to be diverted by such deceptions and cop-outs, and carry through the struggle for *cops out of the unions* – now. This means putting into practice the clear and unambiguous call for police “unions” and associations of all kinds to be ousted from all labor federations and councils; and for cops of all kinds



CSWP and IG supporters with ILWU members in front of union banner to “Stop Police Terror” on June 19.

to be ousted from all workers unions. In this struggle, we are inspired by the militant traditions of class-struggle unionism throughout labor history, and by the example of our comrades in Brazil, who over two decades ago carried out a historic struggle to oust police from the municipal workers union in Volta Redonda, Brazil’s “Steel City.”

As the CSWP’s founding program states: “Police, prison guards and security guards are the armed fist of capital, part of the apparatus of anti-labor, racist repression: they must be removed from the unions.” Today, the fight to carry this out is closely connected to urgent struggles to defend workers’ lives and rights, amid the triple pandemic of racism, COVID-19 and economic crisis. It is vital to the struggle to revitalize the union movement and massively organize the unorganized. And it is crucial to showing in practice that the cause of labor and the cause of black freedom are inseparable – and can only win together, in the fight to put an end to racist oppression and capitalist exploitation forever when the multiracial working class takes power into our own hands. ■

Defend Chicago ATU Activist Erik Slater! Drop the Charges and Reinstate Him, Now!

The following leaflet was issued by Joseph Wagner, a member of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1277 in Los Angeles, on June 27.

Chicago bus operator Erik Slater, a union steward and Executive Board member in ATU Local 241, has been targeted by the Chicago Transit Authority for talking to off-duty co-workers about issues related to the ongoing protests against racist oppression.

On May 31, the CTA called the police on Brother Slater and issued a “rule violation” notice against him, then took him out of service. The transit bosses are threatening him with termination. For what? For sharing the official May 28 public statement of ATU International President John Costa, which defended the right of union bus operators to refuse to transport police to protests and arrested demonstrators to jail, and stated: “This is a misuse of public transit.”

The CTA has reportedly also launched the false accusation that Slater was disciplined for advocating a “wild-cat strike.” The truth is that the transit bosses are trying to silence workers exercising their basic rights to discuss these burning issues. In targeting Brother Slater, CTA management – appointed by the Democratic mayor and governor – is attacking our whole union, and the

rights of us all. Using the union’s power to stop this management attack is connected to an urgent task for all conscious unionists today: fighting to mobilize the power of labor, in action, in the struggle against racist police terror. Last week’s Juneteenth ILWU shutdown, in memory of George Floyd and against endemic racism, points to the massive need and potential for this now.

Our union needs to state clearly and forcefully that not only do drivers have the right not to transport the police or those arrested in repression against anti-racist protests – but that it is the policy of the union as a whole not to do so. As I wrote on June 4, here in Los Angeles ATU Local 1277 needs to “make an unambiguous statement against the Metro bosses offering up buses for police round-ups of protesters”:

“We in ATU and sister SMART and TCU locals work for the multiracial workers and passengers, not for the police. Just as an injury to one is an injury to all, solidarity against racist repression is part of showing young people and all our fellow working people what the principles of labor stand for.”

Here in Los Angeles, ATU members, and our Local as a whole, must join in demanding that the Chicago Transit Authority reinstate Erik Slater in his job, drop all charges against him, and pay him any and all money he is due. ■

Read “Why Cops And Their ‘Unions’ Have No Place In The Labor Movement” by Becca Lewis of Class Struggle Workers – Portland and IATSE Local 28. This important article first appeared in the blog of the website Talking Points Memo, <https://talkingpointsmemo.com/cafe>. It can also be read on the website of the CSWP, <https://csw-pdx.org/>

and efficient disinfecting techniques have been successfully deployed systemwide.”

I.e., most likely never. Media accounts reporting that the trains would be shut down overnight “for the foreseeable future” more accurately reflect reality. Yet the reality is also that New York City, the center of finance capital, entertainment and much more, does function 24/7 year-round. Talk of replacing trains with frequent bus service

between boroughs and along the 245-mile subway routes is sucker-bait: it won’t happen. For anyone who believes the MTA’s empty assurances, or anything coming out of the mouth of the fork-tongued mayor, who never delivers on his promises, our word to the wise is: don’t fall for it. Next, they’ll have a bridge to sell you.

To restore 24-hour New York City subway service, *we need workers control.* ■



Hundreds cheer in Minneapolis as hated 3rd Precinct goes up in flames after cops flee.

Uproot Racist ...

continued from page 1

this was proof positive that nothing had changed since the 2014-15 Black Lives Matter protests over the police murders of Garner, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray and so many others. Minneapolis exploded in rage, and in the following hours and days, so did the rest of the country.

Thousands of protesters converged on south Minneapolis, first on the corner where Floyd was killed, then at the 3rd Precinct where Chauvin and his three accomplices worked. In the next days, crowds surged through downtown, later marching on the state capitol in St. Paul. On the third night, demonstrators besieged the precinct, notorious for brutal cops who routinely pistol-whipped black and brown suspects, kicked them in the face and performed anal searches in the station.¹ Until that night, the police had holed up in the station, firing tear gas and rubber bullets into the largely peaceful protesters outside.² So it was no surprise when on May 28, as the cops fled the growing crowd, crashing through a gate to escape in a motorcade, the hated 3rd Precinct went up in flames as hundreds cheered.

As protests spread across the country, clashes were provoked by cops geared up for battle who attacked demonstrators. Photos and videos flashed around the world of police cars trashed and torched, from Seattle and Los Angeles to Atlanta and New York and elsewhere. Democratic mayors and media screamed about “looting” to justify “law-and-order” crackdowns, imposing racist curfews and occupying cities with the National Guard. The incendiary racist provocateur president Donald Trump tweeted, “When the looting starts, the shooting starts,” and brought thousands of National Guard troops and the elite Immediate Response Force of the 82nd Airborne Division to the Washington, D.C. area.³ The police-state measures were then used almost exclusively to suppress peaceful demonstrations.

As for some youths grabbing stuff from fancy stores they could never afford

¹ “Minneapolis’ Third Precinct Served as ‘Playground’ for Renegade Cops,” *Star Tribune*, 7 June.

² “‘The precinct is on fire’: What Happened at Minneapolis’ 3rd Precinct – and What It Means,” *American Public Media Reports*, 30 June.

³ See “Trump and Democrats Stage Ominous Trial Run for Martial Law,” on page 5.

to shop in, to paraphrase the German communist playwright Bertolt Brecht, what is the “crime” of looting Macy’s compared to the crime of owning it?⁴

Despite efforts to discredit the protests, people weren’t buying it. Public opinion polls which up to 2018 showed more opposition than support to the Black Lives Matter movement showed more than two-thirds support by early June, including 60% among whites, a striking figure given the history of this racist country. Now 76% of the overall population (and 71% of white people) called racism and discrimination a “big problem,” 78% said protesters’ anger is fully or somewhat justified and a majority of whites (54%) said police are more likely to use deadly force against black people. Even when primed for a negative response, asked if they are aware of protests across the U.S. “including the burning of a police precinct in Minneapolis” in response to the police killing of a black man, 54% said they thought “the actions of the protesters” were fully or partially justified (Monmouth poll, 2 June).⁵

Biggest Sustained Protests in U.S. History

In the last few weeks, the U.S. has been going through a catharsis over the deeply ingrained racism of American society. The murder of George Floyd and the subsequent brutal repression of protests brought to a head a “seismic change” in white opinion on race which has been building for some time, particularly but not only concerning the police. As Trump dug in deeper, this change registered among Democratic pols: after earlier telling demonstrators to go home to avoid coronavirus infection (and defending the actions of the police under their command), they now switched gears and gave a stamp of approval to the protests while seeking to coopt them with phony “reforms” to move some funds from police budgets to social services. The liberal

⁴ Macy’s is notorious for its racist practices of accusing black shoppers and visitors of shoplifting and then holding them in its private jail on the premises. See the Class Struggle Education Workers pamphlet *Campus Protest, Capitalist “Security” and the Program of Class Struggle* (2014), Part 2, “From Slave Patrols and Pinkertons to Private Jails for ‘Shopping While Black.’”

⁵ Even after Trump’s hysterical attempts to whip up a backlash, a late-June Monmouth poll released on July 8 showed 67% saying that racism and discrimination are a big problem.

Democrats were aided in this cynical con game by reformist leftists who eagerly organized rallies and marches on the slogan of “defund the police.”

Partly as a result of this shift in strategy by a section of the capitalist rulers, as well as due to anger at Trump’s racist pyrotechnics and the cops’ brutal attacks on protesters, Black Lives Matter demonstrations grew even larger. On June 6, there were 550 protests reported across the country, bringing out over 100,000 in Washington, D.C. and perhaps 80,000 in Philadelphia. In NYC in mid-June there were a

dozen marches a day of upwards of 1,000 demonstrators each. Adding it up, the *New York Times* (3 July) counted at least 4,700 demonstrations, or about 140 a day, in 2,500 cities and towns over the last five weeks. “Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History,” it headlined, citing figures from polls showing that 9 to 10% of the entire population, or 23 to 26 million people, had joined in protesting. That’s huge.

The current protests have been described as “more integrated” than the BLM marches of 2014-15. This is not entirely accurate: in the major cities, the protests in that earlier period were racially and ethnically integrated, with tens of thousands of black, white, Latino and Asian marchers. What is true is that in recent demos there are far more white protesters. There is also a noticeable political difference: while five years ago the marches were seen (and many marchers saw themselves) as “radical” in some sense, today there are large numbers of mainstream liberals. Those liberals have become convinced that there is “systemic racism” in the U.S., which we as Marxists have always insisted is a bedrock truth about American capitalism. But their demands, taken up by pseudo-socialists who want to nudge them slightly to the left, have not transcended the limits of bourgeois politics. Thus they cannot get to the root of the murderous racist actions of the police.



Internationalists say: Cops out of the unions and out of the schools, pressuring the Democrats is a dead end, for a revolutionary workers party.

The giant, and truly unprecedented, marches across the United States against murderous police repression have reverberated around the world. Media images of flaming police cars have led many impressionistic leftists, both here and elsewhere, to imagine that the U.S. is suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, in the throes of a revolutionary uprising. This is far from being the case. The same opportunist leftists talked of a pre-revolutionary situation in France in 2018-19 with the explosion of the “yellow vests” movement, touched off by a rise in gasoline prices. They saw the same in the original BLM protests that shut down highways across the U.S. They waxed lyrical about the Occupy Wall Street movement against inequality in 2011. Earlier that year, they hailed “revolutions” in the Arab world – as did Western imperialists.

But starry-eyed make-believe, and what Lenin decried as “tailing” existing consciousness, does no one any good, and certainly not those who seriously seek to overthrow the system that, day in and day out, produces murderous racist repression. In none of these instances have there been genuine revolutions, nor have they produced real advances for the exploited and oppressed. Whether populist movements, spontaneous explosions of the downtrodden or liberal appeals for reforms, they did not challenge the capitalist system which produces untold misery – from obscene inequality to mass unemployment to racist repression – nor were they based on mobilizations of the power of the working class that produces the capitalists’ wealth. So, despite the widespread outrage they tapped into, they failed, even in their own terms. Yet the combustible material that can fuel a revolution is everywhere. What’s urgently needed is revolutionary leadership.

At the present time in the United States, there is a conjunction of deep crises. There is the deadly *coronavirus plague*: 135,000 dead so far. There is *skyrocketing unemployment*: more than 50 million people made jobless in a few weeks. There is the *never-ending scourge of cops killing people*: more than 1,700 a year since 2014, over 28,000 since 1 January 2000. And these crises are intimately related. The horrific death toll of COVID-19 is the result of the chaotic response of capitalist governments that endanger the lives of those they govern. The mass unemployment is the result of the government-ordered shutdown of the economy, from which – under what Karl Marx called capitalism’s “anarchy of production” – it



Demonstration in Washington, D.C., calls to “Defund the Police,” June 2020.

will take years to recover. And the murderous police repression reflects the racist oppression that, as we have written, is in the DNA of U.S. capitalism. Only a socialist revolution can end these plagues.

Operation “Defund the Police”

For the past five weeks, one of the main slogans that has been raised in protests across the country is “defund the police.” This strikes terror into the hearts of conservative Republicans, flummoxes mainstream Democrats, and excites liberals as well as reformist leftists. It is a vague demand, leading to myriad articles about what defunding the police “really means.” On the face of it, it’s a rather strange slogan, focusing on money when the demonstrations have been against racist police brutality. It has a kind of NGOish quality, which is not surprising as it originated with a Twin Cities non-governmental organization, Black Visions Collective, which on May 25, the same day George Floyd was murdered, launched a petition titled “Tell Minneapolis City Council to Defund the Police.”⁶ The call instantly spread around the country.

It’s no accident that the demand arose in one of the most liberal cities in the United States, with two black trans city council members, and a mayor and a majority of the city council elected on programs to reform the Minneapolis Police Department, even as the cops keep on brutalizing and killing African American, Latino and Native American people. Several local foundation-funded non-profits have been calling to downsize or replace the police force, among them

⁶ “How ‘Defund the Police’ Went from Moonshot to Mainstream,” Politico, 17 June.

MPD150, which describes itself as “working toward a police free Minneapolis.” “Dismantling the police will require re-allocating their budget,” it states, calling to “sequester” the MPD’s military equipment, to transfer “first responder responsibility” to community-based social services and generally to “transform the way policing, crime and safety are understood in Minneapolis.”

Far from being a program for red revolution from fire-breathing radicals, as right-wingers claim, this is a utopian liberal “reimagining” of a “people-friendly” capitalist urban America. Within days of Floyd’s murder, a majority of the Minneapolis city council read a pledge before a crowd in a city park to “dismantle the police” and replace it with a new system of public safety. The crowd responded “Defund the MPD!” And on June 26, the council – all Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL, the Minnesota branch of the Democratic Party) except for a lone Green – voted unanimously for a city charter amendment to replace the MPD with a Department of Community Safety and Violence Prevention, under which a Division of Law Enforcement Services would be “composed of licensed peace officers, subject to the supervision of the department of community safety and violence prevention.”

In Minneapolis, virtually every one of the police “reforms” that have been bandied about in the U.S. have been tried, and failed. A *civilian police review board*? Minneapolis has had one since 1990. *Police body cameras*? They were instituted after the 2015 cop murder of Jamar Clark. Ditto for *implicit bias training*. Last year

the city *reduced the police budget* and transferred funds to *violence prevention programs*. The MPD is now headed by a *black police chief*. Before that it had a lesbian Native American police chief. Since 2016 the MPD has had a “*duty to intervene*” regulation requiring officers to stop another officer from using excessive force, and it no longer taught chokeholds and neck restraints. But none of that stopped killer cop Chauvin, aided by his fellow officers, from killing George Floyd.

Cancel laws shielding police disciplinary records (as New York’s 50-A law does)? Minnesota doesn’t have one, so it was soon reported that Chauvin had been involved in several police shootings and had ten complaints of abuse filed against him – all to no avail. *De-escalation*? Minneapolis banned fear-based “warrior-style training,” but the police “union” offered it for free. “*Disarm/demilitarize the police*”? George Floyd’s killer used his knee, the New York cop who murdered Eric Garner used his bare hands. *Community-based patrols*? Trayvon Martin was killed by a community watch member in Florida. In Latin America, some left groups call for *electing police chiefs*. Yet the racist sheriff of Maricopa County, Arizona, Joe Arpaio, who held thousands of immigrant detainees in a tent city concentration camp in 110°+ heat, was elected five times.

It makes little difference if cops are called “peace officers” instead of police (Minnesota state police are officially peace officers), or if the “law enforcement” agency is now a department of public safety (as in Mexico, with its notoriously brutal police). It is possible that in Minneapolis, with

its fascistic police “union” chief Bob Kroll (who sports a “white power” patch on his motorcycle jacket), a thorough purge could reduce wanton police violence somewhat. But at bottom, the reason that none of the numerous proposals to “reform” the police have ever succeeded is that *racist and anti-working-class repression is the essential function of the police*.

Arising from runaway slave-catching patrols in the pre-Civil War South, professional uniformed forces were formed in city after city across the country to keep down the poor, break strikes and impose the rulers’ “law and order.” Racist cop terror is endemic and systemic because the very purpose of “policing” is not to “serve and protect” the population, but to uphold the rule, property and profits of the owning class in this capitalist society, whose staggering inequalities took shape under slavery and whose continued domination has always rested in large part on racial oppression.

Democrats Are Still the Bosses of the Racist Killer Cops

The call to “defund the police” has become so widespread precisely due to its ambiguity. It can be interpreted to mean anything from Democratic House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s “shuffle some money around” to the Minneapolis DFLers’ vow to “dismantle” the MPD. Some Democratic mayors like New York’s Bill de Blasio and Minneapolis’ Jacob Frey were jeered and run out of demonstrations for George Floyd for opposing calls to defund the police. Black Democratic mayors of Chicago (Lori Lightfoot) and Washington, D.C. (Muriel Bowser) still oppose calls to shrink the police, while Atlanta mayor Keisha Bottoms claims she already did it. But under pressure, most mayors decided to at least trim police budgets a bit. Bowser covered herself by painting a giant “BLACK LIVES MATTER” on 16th Avenue near the White House.

De Blasio has now done the same on Fifth Avenue in front of Trump Tower. (Trump tweeted in response that “Black Lives Matter” is a “symbol of hate,” which would “denigrat[e] this luxury avenue.”) The inveterately two-faced New York mayor, after being booed off the stage at Cadman Plaza in Brooklyn on June 4, negotiated a budget with the city council which he claimed cut \$1 billion from the NYPD’s \$6 billion budget. It’s all smoke and mirrors: almost half the amount is from shifting the budget line for school “safety agents” to the Department of Education, and most of the rest comes from attrition through retirement. The actual police budget is \$11 billion, NYC will still have an army of 38,000 cops (plus 20,000 other NYPD employees), and within months new cadets will be brought in, even as there is a hiring freeze for teachers, hospitals and all other city departments.

Beyond such bait-and-switch gimmicks, the Democrats face a huge problem. With millions in the streets demanding an end to racist police brutality, despite all of the ambiguity and wiggle room to interpret “defund the police,” their presidential candidate in November, Joe Biden, flatly declared that “I do not support defunding the police” (*USA Today*, 10 June), and in fact wants to *increase* police funding. Biden wrote Bill Clinton’s 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which he bragged led to the hiring of “100,000 cops” and “125,000 new state prison cells,” greatly increasing the numbers of African Americans behind bars. When Trump called to shoot



IG, Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas and Class Struggle Education Workers marched on Juneteenth, calling for workers strikes against cop terror, like the ILWU shutdown of all West Coast ports.

looters, Biden responded by suggesting that police officers “shoot them in the leg.” Throughout his political career, Biden has kept close ties with police “unions.”

Likewise, Biden’s former primary rival, Bernie Sanders, when asked about “defunding or abolishing the police,” declared that he opposes getting rid of police departments. Now stumping for Biden, the self-proclaimed “democratic socialist” also voted for the 1994 Clinton crime bill. Absurdly claiming that cops are low-paid (the average NYC police officer’s base pay is \$77,000, before overtime), he called for more resources to pay *higher* “wages that will attract top tier” professionals to the police. In addition to hiring top-dollar cops, Sanders has also proposed a “civilian corps of unarmed first responders to supplement law enforcement, such as social workers, EMTs, and trained mental health professionals, who can handle order maintenance violations, mental health emergencies, and low-level conflicts to aid police officers.” This would turn medical and social service providers into auxiliary cops.

These reactionary proposals have now been included in the “Biden-Sanders Unity Task Force” (July 8) recommendations on “Reforming Our Criminal Justice System,” along with calls to “reinvigorate community policing” – i.e., to put more police into already cop-infested neighborhoods. When this approach was used in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, with the formation of Police Pacification Units, it led to a sharp increase in police killings.⁷ Then there is the Democrats’ “George Floyd Justice in Policing Act,” passed by the U.S. House of Representatives last month (although D.O.A. in the Republican-controlled Senate), which calls for \$750 million for “independent investigations” of police use of force. This would include having one law enforcement agency investigate another. So the Nassau County police could investigate the NYPD? Police investigating police? No thanks.

Malcolm X: “You Can’t Have Capitalism Without Racism”

Demands to “defund the police” are invariably combined with calls to instead use the money to pay for social services, and often linked to appeals to “tax the rich.” Like calls for “books not bombs,” “money for schools, not for war” and the like, they are posed as if it’s a choice of budget priorities. This is a reformist illusion that echoes the timeworn deceptions of liberal bourgeois politics, which by hoodwinking the masses helps maintain the system of racist oppression and exploitation. U.S. rulers don’t go to war because their government has decided that’s the best way to spend the money they have bilked out of working people in taxes. The U.S. invades country after country (Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria lately; before that Vietnam, Korea, Cuba...), and the Pentagon maintains hundreds of military bases (officially 600) in 80 countries, in order to impose its global hegemony. This is an existential question for U.S. imperialism, even more so in the 21st century when it must rely more on military might than its fraying economic dominance.

Likewise, the attack on public education and the militarization of the police, armed with heavy weaponry and trained for urban combat, are not a question of spending “priorities.” As capitalism decays, the ruling class (with its politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike) want to gut public educa-

tion, to turn it into a source of profits and steady cash flow for the bourgeoisie to offset the declining rate of profit. At the same time, inequality soars, and along with it growing poverty, depression-level unemployment and a housing crisis driven by real estate speculation that has sent rents and house prices soaring even as 17 million housing units stand vacant in the U.S. Thus the capitalist rulers – and not just in the U.S. – have concluded that they need paramilitary police forces to suppress potential revolts (“domestic disturbances”) by their impoverished subjects, which they can already see are in the cards.

While pseudo-socialists talk of funding this or that and talk blithely of “abolishing” the police, revolutionary Marxists insist that the police are a central pillar of the state. As Friedrich Engels wrote 136 years ago in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, the state is an instrument of class rule, for the subjugation of the exploited by the exploiters, and consists of “armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons, and institutions of coercion of all kinds.” Lenin added, in his work *The State and Revolution*, written in preparation for the 1917 October Revolution, “A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power.” This is not an abstract formula. It means concretely that capitalist rule cannot exist without police, and the police cannot be “abolished” without overthrowing the capitalist state.⁸

The police are the guard dogs of capital, although they may slip the leash at times and fascistic elements chafe at civilian control. Fundamentally, the police impose the racist “law and order” of American capitalism, which was forged on the genocide of the Native American peoples and the chattel slavery of Africans brought here in chains, and which to this day is based on racist oppression. As Malcolm X insisted, “You can’t have capitalism without racism.” The particularly murderous role of the police in the United States, along with other institutions such as the barbaric death penalty, are proof positive that despite the abolition of slavery in the Civil War of the 1860s, its heritage lives on in the 21st century.

For all the Obama-era happy talk of a “post-racial” society, the brutal reality of racist capitalism is revealed by a knee to the neck, by a stranglehold, by trigger-happy cops with Glockes. As Michelle Alexander has documented in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010), just as after the abolition of slavery in the Civil War the racist rulers responded with KKK terror and Jim Crow segregation to deny black people their rights, so following the passage of the 1960s civil rights laws, a new system of control came about, particularly through the “war on drugs.” Today 2.3 million people are imprisoned, two-thirds of them black and brown, the highest proportion of the population of any country on earth behind bars, plus another 4.5 million under the control of the racist “justice” system.

“Systemic Racism”: The System Is Capitalism

So now what began as protests against police brutality has become a broader struggle against racism. As statues to Confederate

⁸ Interestingly, in view of current proposals to rebrand the police, in the German text, Engels refers not to police but to a “public force,” a term used today in many countries (*fuerza pública, force publique*, etc.). That is, they don’t have to be called police to be police.

generals fall, aside from inveterate Trumpian racists, it is broadly admitted that there is “systemic racism.”⁹ But what is that system? Contrary to the rhetoric used by some liberals, reformists and nationalists, it is not “white people” in general who rule this system, it is *capital* – the owners of the factories, banks, communications and transport – that calls the shots. It is the racist *capitalist system* that produces massive poverty, unemployment, pervasive discrimination and violent repression of African Americans in particular, as well as of other specially oppressed sectors of society and working people overall. And to supplement the main force of violent repression, the bourgeois state, there are the white-supremacist fascist gangs brandishing AR-15 automatic rifles, itching to set off race war. (Some even tried to infiltrate the Black Lives Matter protests to stage provocations.)

As Marxists, we understand that racism is not just some toxic ideas floating around that can be rooted out by “bias training” or “checking privilege.” Rather, racist ideology grows out of and reinforces the material reality of the oppression of black people, which is an indelible birthmark of American capitalism. That is a reason we do not use the term “people of color,” because the oppression of African Americans is not identical with that of immigrants, for example (even as immigrants may today have even lower wages). Black people in the United States are oppressed as a race/color caste, segregated at the bottom of society, and no matter how many civil rights laws have been passed, no matter if there is a black president, black mayors or black police chiefs, for all the talk of “empowerment,” it is a question of real power, and as we fight racism and racist oppression every day, we have to tell the truth, that black oppression can’t be eliminated until capitalism is dead and gone.

Opportunist leftists see the present politically liberal protests through rose-colored glasses because they place themselves on a continuum, just a step to the left of the liberals. Today even many liberals understand that the institution of the police, “as we know it,” is inherently racist. But the reformists and centrists obscure the *class line*, and with their “fight the right” politics they constantly cross that line seeking political alliances with bourgeois liberal forces. As the German revolutionary Marxist Rosa Luxemburg wrote 120 years ago in her pamphlet, *Reform or Revolution*, denouncing the reformists of her day, they “do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society.”

Yet in the present situation, with the rampant pathology of this decaying system laid bare, after over a month of mass mobilization large sections of the population have been jolted into political awareness. The fact that hundreds cheered as they watched a police station that was a nest of racist thugs burn down, that tens of thousands defied racist curfews and braved police attacks, that millions joined Black Lives Matter protests, however liberal their politics, suggests that among the youth and broader layers, loyalty to the system is beginning to crumble. As armed fascists mobilize and racist drivers plow into protesters, it has become “which side are you on?” And the terrible toll of the COVID-19 pandemic can open

eyes of those willing to see that capitalism spells death and devastation on a vast scale.

Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution

A lot of the impact of these combined crises is only beginning to be felt. The effect of the unemployment of tens of millions of working people has been temporarily mitigated by \$1,200 “stimulus” checks, the expansion of eligibility for unemployment insurance to include “gig economy” workers and the \$600 per week supplemental benefits. But those measures, which Republicans would have denounced as socialism only a few months ago, are due to end soon. Young people are especially hard-hit, as over half (52%) of millennials have lost their jobs or seen their hours cut. In New York City, 1.25 million jobs have been lost, producing an effective unemployment rate of 26%. Now a tidal wave of evictions is expected, as large numbers of tenants have been unable to pay their rent (up to 40% in NYC). It’s all coming together, soon.

While the opportunist leftists, as always, chase after the “mass movement,” the task of revolutionaries is to provide leadership for struggle. These are the kind of conditions in which Leon Trotsky’s Transitional Program has particular relevance, to provide a “bridge between present demands and the socialist program of the revolution.” In the face of mass unemployment, the call for a *sliding scale of wages and hours*, for a radically shorter workweek with no loss in income, to provide jobs for all, should be taken up everywhere. There should be a *huge expansion of public housing*, as well as *occupying vacant buildings and hotels*, to provide housing for all, and a *vast program of school construction and hiring of educators* to sharply reduce class sizes. In the workplace, *workers health and safety committees* should be formed, which would shut down unsafe operations. This could spark a struggle for *workers control*, that is, dual power at the point of production, contesting the bosses’ power on the road to revolution.

Such measures point toward what a socialized, planned economy based on production to fill social needs rather than private profit would do, and thus to the need to overthrow capitalism. But when it comes to the police and other repressive organs – courts, jails and military – as the failure of every purported reform of the misnamed “justice system” shows, the ruling class is dead-set against any weakening of the central core of state power, which Democrats and Republicans alike are constantly fortifying. Demands here would include:

- for *labor/black/immigrant mobilization against racist attacks and to stop deportations*;
- for *worker/community mobilization to stop evictions*;
- for *workers strikes against racist cop terror*, as the ILWU dock workers did on Juneteenth, shutting down every West Coast port;
- for *the right of black armed self-defense*, and
- for *workers defense guards* mobilizing the power of the multiracial/multi-ethnic working class.

The Internationalist Group has called for, and where possible sought to realize, such measures for the *class mobilization of the working people and the oppressed*. This also requires a fight within the labor movement to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucracy which has undermined workers’ struggles

Opportunist Word Games to Justify Tailing the Democrats

“Abolish the Police” Under Capitalism?

As activists call to “defund” the police while Democratic leaders call for *more* funds to the cops, in a presidential election pitting “shoot the looters” Trump vs. “shoot ‘em in the legs” Biden, the Democratic Party is worried about energizing young voters in particular, especially if protests against race police killings pick up again later in the summer. Biden-Sanders need a little help from the opportunist left, to get out a “Dump Trump” vote in November. Early on, Democratic Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America (DSA) star, called to “defund the over-funded police.”¹ More recently, the DSA has been carrying banners to “Disarm – Defund – Abolish” the police. On June 29, the New York DSA, towing behind it a raft of groups nominally to its left, called a “Mass March to Defund the NYPD & Abolish the Police.”

The knee-jerk answer to this would be, “you and whose army?” The idea that a central pillar maintaining capitalist rule would disappear as a result of a referendum, legislative act or charter amendment is liberal/reformist illusion-peddling of the highest order, no matter how much “mass pressure” is thrown in. This is akin to the 2018 liberal/reformist calls to “Abolish I.C.E.” (Immigration and Customs Enforcement), which – as Ocasio-Cortez made clear – just meant replacing it with some other form of immigration cops. Whether I.C.E. or its predecessor, the INS, it’s still the hated *migra*. Today, if something purporting to “abolish the police” were enacted, it would simply substitute some other form of “reimagined” policing. And since racial oppression is intrinsic to U.S. capitalism, the liberal/reformist formulas actually mean that the imagined “peace officers,” “community police,” “public safety agents” or whatever they are called, *would in fact be maintaining racist, capitalist “law and order.”*

Leftists who help prettify this reality are, whatever their intentions or wishful thinking, helping to deceive and politically disarm the working class and anti-racist youth on a question that is literally one of life or death for all the oppressed: the nature of the capitalist state. To pretend that police can be abolished without a socialist

revolution of a piece with pacifist appeals for imperialist countries to carry out “disarmament,” adopt a non-imperialist foreign policy, etc., which Lenin in World War I heatedly denounced as bald-faced deception of the working class. As he emphasized, dispelling such illusions is a crucial part of clearing away the roadblocks to revolution.

Opportunist leftists present “abolish the police” as if that is the true meaning of protests calling to “defund the police.” But the actual role of the “abolish” demand is as sucker-bait, as professional con men call it, to tie BLM protests to budget machinations by Democratic politicians. This was the case with Occupy City Hall in New York. With protesters suffering from demo fatigue after June 19, some set up camp outside the NYC City Hall to push for cuts to the police budget. The occupation was initiated by VOCAL-NY, a liberal NGO begun by AIDS activists and partly funded by the city and the Ford Foundation. It grew to well over 500 people as the city council debated. Banners and chants called for defunding and abolishing the police. But after the budget with its phony billion in cuts to the NYPD passed, the numbers of occupiers fell.

This amounted to a kind of militant lobbying. For the easily excitable reformist and centrist not-so-far left, it was a throwback to the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement that swept the U.S. Meanwhile, across the country in Seattle, Washington, there was the considerably larger Capitol Hill Organized Protest or Autonomous Zone. The CHOP or CHAZ, which at the height covered six city blocks and a park, was established when police withdrew from Seattle’s East Precinct on June 8 after days of vicious cop attacks on demonstrators. Intended as a “police-free” area, it was blasted by President Trump, who denounced the occupiers as “domestic terrorists” and demanded that Seattle mayor Jenny Durkan “take back the area.” After several shootings in the zone grabbed headlines, the “police-free zone” disappeared as the cops moved in on July 1.

For the three weeks of its existence, CHOP/CHAZ was hailed by virtually the entire left. The arch-reformist Socialist Alternative (SAIt) had a little trouble with this, as its city council member Kshama Sawant had voted for and vociferously supported Police Chief Carmen Best. Meanwhile, as support was growing around the country for calls to expel police “unions” from the labor movement, SAIt cynically tried to dodge the issue by going on about the right



Internationalist photo

While liberals and reformists call to “defund the police,” Internationalists called “For the Right of Armed Black Self-Defence,” and to “Smash the Racist Capitalist State Through Workers Revolution!”

of the police – the armed fist of the capitalist state – to form “unions.” As a cover, it piously requested that “police unions reject racist policing policies and agree to support a purge of the police to remove those with a record of violence and racism in order to remain in or join labor councils” (*Socialist Alternative*, Summer 2020). Anti-racist police “unions” of these professional strikebreakers and enforcers of racist repression? As if.

The slightly more leftist Left Voice (affiliated internationally with the Trotskyist Fraction), which has been calling (LV, 12 June) to “Defund the Police (to 0!)” – how cute – breathlessly described NYC’s Occupy 2.0 and Seattle’s CHOP as the high points of the “mass uprisings” that have led many to “to question the integrity and even the very existence of the police” (28 June). These were supposedly forms of “self organization” that “could become the nascent forms of an eventual system of dual power capable of seriously challenging the state and winning significant demands.” It added, “May the word revolution once again blossom in the mouths of this new generation.” Waxing lyrical, LV calls upon readers to imagine uniting black and Latino neighborhoods with “workers who control production, distribution and services. Imagine this power now relying on workers’ militias,” etc.

But in all this imagining and romanticizing, Left Voice fails to put forward a program of demands for struggle leading from the current mass protests against rac-

ist police terror to overthrowing capitalist rule. By linking “abolition” of the police to “defunding” it, while coyly adding “even if we could defund police departments to zero,” Left Voice tags along after the DSA, aiding the Democrats in coopting protests with their “defunding” ploy rather than exposing this deception and calling clearly for socialist revolution. Revolutionary clarity is the antithesis of these cynical centrists, who with their inveterate tailism and sly word games are counterposed to the rules of Trotsky’s Fourth International, which instructed its members to “face reality squarely ... call things by their right names” and “tell the truth to the masses.”

In contrast, back when the DSA, AOC, SAIt, LV and Democratic Party pols were calling to “abolish I.C.E.” under capitalism, the Trotskyists of the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, called to “Smash the I.C.E. Gestapo with Workers Revolution!” (*The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018). At the June 29 DSA-sponsored demo in New York’s Washington Square Park, when Left Voice joined practically the entire reformist left (FSP, PSL, SAIt, MORE, CPUSA) playing the “defund/abolish the police” game, a Revolutionary Internationalist Youth sign read, “Defund the Police? Smash the Racist Capitalist State Through Workers Revolution.” The IG/RIY banner proclaimed, “The Police Can’t Be Reformed” and called for “Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution.” ■

¹ Meanwhile, demonstrating that she knows how to “go along to get along,” playing by the rules of bourgeois electoral politics, AOC landed a slot as co-chair of the Biden-Sanders task force on climate change (along with former secretary of state John Kerry), although her signature “Green New Deal” didn’t make the cut.

and chained the mass organizations of the working class to the parties and politicians of the ruling class. Thus, while class-struggle unionists seek to *oust the police from the unions*, as the League for the Fourth International has fought for and, uniquely on the left, carried out,¹⁰ the top union officialdom has fought to keep these armed enforcers of the class enemy inside labor’s house. Labor militants must fight to *oust the bureaucrats, break with*

¹⁰ Read about how our Brazilian comrades fought to oust the police from the municipal workers union in Brazil’s “Steel City,” and the state repression unleashed against them, in our *Dossier: Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (1997) See ad on page 9.

the Democrats and build a revolutionary workers party!

As workers’ strikes have broken out amid the pandemic, from fruit packing-house workers in Yakima, Washington, to shipbuilders in Bath, Maine, the Trotskyists of the IG have sought to build solidarity and intersect these struggles with our revolutionary program. As Karl Marx pointed out long ago, every real class struggle is a political struggle. In the present juncture, the economic and social crises of decaying capitalism intersect deep divisions in the ruling class, as witnessed in the failed impeachment of Donald Trump. Today Biden, Sanders and their lieutenants are desperate to channel protests against police brutality

into votes for the Democrats, “the bosses of the racist killer cops.” And at the same time as Trump stages military provocations in the South China Sea, the Democrats are the biggest China-bashing warhawks of all.

The fight against racist repression “at home” is inseparable from the fight against imperialist aggression abroad. Here, too, the contrast between revolutionary-internationalist and reformist politics is stark: the would-be socialists who join with bourgeois liberals in calling to “defund the police,” thus helping the Democrats peddle illusions that the capitalist state can be reformed, at the same time regurgitate the imperialists’ anti-communist war propaganda over Hong Kong, China and North

Korea – also fueling anti-Asian racism.¹¹ To eradicate racist oppression, to pull it out by the roots, and to end imperialist marauding, nothing short of the overthrow of capitalism will do the job. That is why it is crucial to build a revolutionary vanguard that fights the ruling class down the line, in the struggle for socialist revolution, here and throughout the world. ■

¹¹ See “Hong Kong ‘Democracy’ Riots: Pro-Imperialist, Anti-Communist, Fascist-Infested,” in *The Internationalist* No. 58, Winter 2020; and “Hong Kong: Defeat Pro-Imperialist Riots With Revolutionary Workers Mobilization,” in *The Internationalist* No. 57, September-October 2019.

Fruit Packinghouse Workers Stand Up for Their Rights

Yakima Strikes:

The Battle Has Just Begun

YAKIMA, Washington, June 5—On May 28, after 22 days on strike, workers at the Allan Bros. packinghouse in Naches, Washington, celebrated an agreement with the company and returned to work on Monday, June 1. As the workers committee returned from negotiations with the company with a signed document, strikers held a prayer meeting, ending with a chant of “*¡Si se pudo!*” (yes, we did it). A similar agreement was reached at Monson Fruit in nearby Selah on May 22. On Friday, June 5, Matson Fruit in Selah settled, leaving Columbia Reach in Yakima as the last ongoing strike. But as many strikers commented to *The Internationalist*, the struggle has only just begun.

Over the course of the strike movement that broke out at Allan Brothers on May 7 and spread to eight area packinghouses, many people commented that nothing like this had been seen in the Yakima Valley for decades.¹ The strikers demanded protective gear and cleaning of the facilities, plus \$100/week hazard pay and 40 hours work. Management handed out masks and disinfectant, with some spacing out on the conveyor belt, but only agreed to recognize the workers’ committee and to bargain with it on the demand for higher pay. Yet for the strikers, who started with zero, the fact that their struggle made some gains can be a first step on the road to winning a union.

As the year began, could the arrogant bosses who own the valley have imagined that “their” workers would dare to defy them by walking out—in the middle of a pandemic!—and force them to the negotiating table? Now, instead of keeping employees in line through a hierarchy of managers, they have to formally bargain with workers’ representatives fortified by three weeks on strike. Workers underlined that they secured an agreement, and went back with no reprisals. As Angelina L. commented, “It’s been 35 years, nobody has ever done any changes in any company, so for us that is a big win.” Now come the negotiations over wage demands.

The large majority of the workers in the packinghouses are women, as were the strikers who stuck it out in the face of company attempts at intimidation—an unfair labor practices complaint against Allan

¹ For our earlier article at the start of the strike, see “Victory to Yakima Packinghouse Strikers!” (17 May) at www.internationalist.org.



Strikers at Columbia Reach packinghouse in Yakima, Washington, June 3.

Bros. was filed with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). “I’m very proud of what we achieved” despite “all the humiliation and reprisals,” said Felicita R. “If we are united, we can do it, she said, adding: “And even if we are not united, we can stand up for our rights. Never give in.” María Cecilia G. said that the struggle was vital “for all the people who come here, very young, and spend their whole lives in the United States, with all the obstacles.”

Throughout, the bosses have played hardball. At Hansen Fruit, management wore down the strike until only one worker was left standing. Strikers rallied to celebrate at Frosty Packing on May 22, voting to go back to work, only to discover later that day that there was no deal. Columbia Reach bosses have yet to meet with the workers and have refused the demand for a \$1 an hour in hazard pay. But in a movement that swept through the valley, the agreements—or lack of an agreement—are only a preliminary result. The fact that hundreds of combative workers rose up and stood firm through weeks of hard struggle is a huge event—and the bosses know it.

The outcome will not be determined by legal fictions like the “good faith” of the bosses, the “good will” of the governor, or the regulations of various state and local agencies, from the NLRB to Yakima County Health Department, which quickly gave

the sheriff will set them straight.

The workers’ power lies in their organization and consciousness. The workers at the Yakima fruit packers are getting organized. The small farmworkers union from northwest Washington, Familias Unidas por la Justicia, came in at the invitation of the strikers to provide advice and support, and has been on the scene every day. But as we wrote in our May leaflet, “While production at some plants has been slowed, it has not been stopped. Trucks and scabs pass in and out without trouble.” This has remained true throughout, and the consequences weigh heavily on the workers who continued resisting day after day.

Action by the entire labor movement is key to achieving a victory in Yakima. The AFL-CIO representative in the Valley, Dulce Gutierrez, has been on the picket lines, but only after more than three weeks on strike did the Washington AFL-CIO bureaucracy finally bestir itself. On Saturday, May 30, an auto caravan converged on Yakima from Seattle and other points. Some 80 cars of union staffers and some members proceeded over the course of a couple of hours from one quiet weekend plant to the next. They honked their horns, emerged from their cars for a few moments at each site to applaud each other as the word “solidarity” flowed freely from their lips, and at about 1 p.m. the event concluded with catered tacos in a city park.

But the power of the organized working class has not been brought to bear to win the strikes. Supermarket workers organized by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) could refuse to handle fruit from the struck packinghouses. Teamster truckers and UPS drivers could refuse to cross strike lines. The Teamster-organized Del Monte fruit processing plant could go out. There are hundreds of union construction workers fighting for safety at the nearby Hanford nuclear cleanup site. Washington Education Association teachers struck across the state two years ago. To win any lasting gains for Yakima workers, this power must be mobilized.

Already, the packinghouse workers strike has stoked a spirit of rebellion in the Valley. To the annoyance of local rulers,

there have been repeated Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the city protesting the racist police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. A May 31 protest drew many hundreds of marchers and a long car caravan. The bosses worry that a unionization drive could spread to fruit pickers on the ranchos. The strike could also undercut the reign of terror by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.), whose agents infest the region, while regular deportation flights take off from Yakima airport.

The fruit packers’ strike in Yakima can serve as a beacon to workers in packinghouses across the country—overwhelmingly African American, Latino and immigrant—which have been infested by the coronavirus due to the bosses’ disregard for workers’ health and safety. When the pandemic struck, it was discovered that these workers were essential, even though still treated as disposable and oppressed. Yakima County now has 4,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with the highest rate of infection on the West Coast. This week strikers honored David Cruz, a worker at Allan Bros. who participated in the strike until he fell ill and has now died of the virus.

To stop the ravages of the virus and raise the tens of thousands of minimum-wage workers out of poverty, it is crucial to make use of this moment when their labor is indispensable. The Internationalist Group and Class Struggle Workers—Portland have been present on the strike lines, emphasizing that “unions across the state must mobilize now to build mass picket lines to win the strike, and make Yakima a stronghold of union power” (*The Internationalist*, 8 May). A successful union-organizing drive extending to the Tri-Cities area to the east will require a leadership that goes beyond narrow “business unionism” to defend all oppressed groups.

As Karl Marx emphasized a century and a half ago, “every class struggle is a political struggle.” For decades, struggles to unionize the workers in the fields have largely failed as they have been subordinated to the Democratic Party, as Cesar Chávez did with the United Farm Workers. To win the class battle underway in Yakima requires a political struggle to unchain the power of the multiracial working class from the parties of capital. Whether Democrats or Republicans are in charge, the police forces that lynch black people—and immigrant agricultural workers like Antonio Zambrano in Pasco²—also serve the bosses as professional strikebreakers.

Drawing the lessons of the courageous struggle in Yakima, we urge the most dedicated strikers to join the effort to build a workers party fighting to replace the deadly dictatorship of capital with the revolutionary rule of the international working class. Then instead of harvesting the “grapes of wrath,” the fruits of their labor in this incredibly rich agricultural region can serve to liberate all mankind. ■

² See “Outrage Over Police Murder of Mexican Worker in Washington State,” *The Internationalist* No. 39, April-May 2015.



Packinghouse workers demonstrated on June 4 outside state Department of Labor offices (above) and then headed to Yakima Health District honoring David Cruz, a striker who died of coronavirus. Sign says: “How many dead from COVID-19 are necessary?”

the packinghouses a clean bill of health after workers walked out over unsanitary conditions. Strikes are class struggles. They test the power of the working class against the power of capital. The bosses have the money and the property. They own the fruit that the workers pick and pack. The government and its armed enforcers do their bidding. Anyone who questions that,

To Meet Urgent Demand, Workers Power Is Key

How Capitalism Sabotaged Ventilator Production

APRIL 14 – “There are profiteers all over the place,” remarked Dr. Steppe Mette, chief medical executive of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Medical Center in Little Rock (Reuters, 10 April). As one of the people responsible for acquiring ventilators for the state of Arkansas, Mette has experienced the U.S.’s cut-throat ventilator bidding wars first-hand, in which state governments compete against each other and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to get their hands on these desperately-needed life-saving devices.

As the coronavirus pandemic ravages the country, with New York City being the epicenter, hospitals and government at all levels have been caught wholly unprepared. There has been a lot of political drama around the mechanical breathing devices. In late March, New York’s governor Andrew Cuomo sounded the alarm when Donald (“President Death”) Trump made a show of sending NYC a paltry 400 ventilators. “I need 30,000 ventilators,” Cuomo responded. “You want a pat on the back for sending 400 ventilators?” Of course, the fact that New York had such a dire shortage meant that it hadn’t stockpiled them long before-hand.¹

Johns Hopkins University counts “approximately 62,000 full-featured mechanical ventilators” in hospitals across the U.S., with “an additional 98,000 ventilators that are not full-featured but can still provide basic function in an emergency during crisis standards of care.”² However, that estimate is based on a 2010 study that admitted that “the full number has never been enumerated.” Now tens of thousands more are urgently needed across the country. According to Reuters, “31 [states] that either responded or have disclosed figures showed a collective intent to procure 70,000” ventilators.

¹ According to New York state “Ventilator Allocation Guidelines” from 2015 (see below), “There are no current plans to buy enough ventilators for the most severe” scenario.

² “Ventilator Stockpiling and Availability in the US” (1 April 2020).

Conclusion: *There should be a crash program to produce tens of thousands of new ventilators – yesterday!* So why hasn’t that happened? In a word – profits. It is a horrific example of what Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels described as the “anarchy of production” under capitalism. As production is not coordinated to serve human needs, each capitalist company competes with the others to snatch the largest share of profits, inevitably leading to both gluts and shortages, often with deadly results.³ The ventilator shortage should more accurately be called a ventilator sabotage, in which capitalist vultures are feasting on COVID-19’s victims.

Today, states are scrambling to buy ventilators at enormous markups. A former Obama administration official reported, “One of the governors is trying to buy them at \$45,000 per ventilator. The typical cost is \$15,000 per ventilator.... They are all bidding against each other. State vs. state.” A liberal website, Talking Points, commented: “If you’ve got the right connections and access to trade networks and political power there are fortunes to be made starting bidding wars for products people are literally dying for” (*The Nation*, 3 April).

But it’s not just cutthroat distributors who are responsible for this crisis. Ventilator manufacturers are loath to ramp up production on the massive scale needed *because it would virtually eliminate their profits*. The price of a ventilator can range up to \$50,000 (*Washington Post*, 18 March), and a flood of new units on the

³ “With the ... introduction of the capitalist mode of production the production of society at large was ruled by absence of plan, by accident, by anarchy; and this anarchy grew to greater and greater height.... Finally, modern industry and the opening of the world-market made the struggle universal, and at the same time gave it an unheard-of virulence.... The contradiction between socialized production and capitalistic appropriation now presents itself as *an antagonism between the organization of production in the individual workshop and the anarchy of production in society generally*” (Engels, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific* [1880]; emphasis in original).



IUE-CWA members outside General Electric turbine and generator plant in Schenectady, New York, April 8, call on GE to rehire laid-off workers to manufacture ventilators.

market would drive prices way down. A recent piece in *MIT Technology Review* (18 March) bluntly laid this out:

“‘Who will pay for all the extra ventilators even if the company can ramp up?’ said Kenneth Lutchien, dean of Boston University’s College of Engineering and a professor of biomedical engineering.... ‘Presumably at some point this crisis will play itself out and the hospitals will have far more ventilators than they need until the next crisis.’ ‘There needs to be an incentivized business model to hit the go button for ramping up manufacturing...’”

So under capitalism, businesses need to be “incentivized” to produce urgently needed medical equipment. While people are left to die in hospitals critically short on staff, the result of years of cuts to health-care funding and hospital closures by local governments and private equity firms, the bourgeoisie is worried about its bottom line. Only a centrally planned, international socialist economy, in which production is to fill human needs rather than for profit, could ever meet the demands of the vast majority of people.

Writing Was on the Wall

The ventilator shortage has been known for years. Medical professionals and even some government officials had been ringing the alarm bells, warning that a pandemic would leave U.S. hospitals in the lurch:

“Despite planning and preparedness, however, in a severe pandemic it is possible that shortages, for example of mechanical ventilators, will occur and medical care standards may need to be adjusted to most effectively provide care and save as many lives as possible.”

—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “HHS Pandemic Influenza Plan” (November 2005)

“The ‘just-in-time’ supply chain management systems⁴ used by many hospitals creates a significant threat to successful disaster response as many hospitals maintain only a minimal store of medical supplies on site.... Were a mass casualty critical care event to occur tomorrow, many people with clinical conditions that are survivable under usual health-care system conditions might have to forgo life-sustaining interventions. Failure to provide critical care will likely result in high mortality rates.”

—Task Force for Mass Critical Care Summit Meeting, “Definitive Care for the Critically Ill During a Disaster: Current Capabilities and Limitations” (26-27 January 2007)

“Planning for mass respiratory public health emergencies has been hampered by not knowing how many ventilators there are in US hospitals, how they are distributed across the country, and whether, taken together, the numbers and types of ventilators in hospitals will provide sufficient surge capacity to meet anticipated needs.”

—“Mechanical Ventilators in US Acute Care Hospitals,” *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness* (October 2010)

“New York state may have enough ventilators to meet the needs of patients in a moderately severe pandemic. In a severe pandemic health emergency on the scale of the 1918 influenza pandemic, however, these ventilators would not be sufficient to meet the demand. Even if the vast number of ventilators needed were purchased, a sufficient number of

⁴ The “just-in-time” supply-chain system, associated with so-called “lean production,” involves “ordering and receiving inventory” only as immediately needed, as opposed to having supplies on hand before or in case they are needed (see thebalancesmb.com/just-in-time-jit-inventory-management-393301).



NYC mayor de Blasio with one of the 400 ventilators Trump sent to New York.

trained staff would not be available to operate them. If the most severe forecast becomes a reality, New York State and the rest of the country will need to allocate ventilators.”

—New York State Department of Health/ New York State Task Force on Life and the Law “Ventilator Allocation Guidelines” (November 2015).

So what was done about this critical shortage? A federal program begun in 2008 under the auspices of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), during the administration of George Bush II, was meant to fill that gap by purchasing up to 40,000 new ventilators. According to a report in the *New York Times* (29 March), HHS contracted the job to a specialized company, Newport Medical Instruments, which would produce compact, portable devices it would sell to the government for \$3,000 per unit, back when ventilators typically cost \$10,000 apiece. Newport was awarded the contract in 2010, with production slated for 2013.

However, in 2012 Newport was acquired by a larger competitor, Covidien, for \$100 million. After the acquisition, “Covidien had demanded additional funding and a higher sales price for the ventilators,” according to the *Times* report. Then in 2014, Covidien dropped the contract, complaining “that it was not sufficiently profitable for the company.” According to the article:

“Government officials and executives at rival ventilator companies said they suspected that Covidien had acquired Newport to prevent it from building a cheaper product that would undermine Covidien’s profits from its existing ventilator business.” [emphasis added]

Note that this was under the Democratic Obama administration. In other words, the dictates of the capitalist market, where production of goods is based on profit, prevented the production of desperately needed medical equipment. This is an object lesson in capitalism, where human lives are sacrificed on the altar of private property.

Mind you, this is not something new. It’s a decades-old practice for capitalist firms to either collude or buy each other out in order to produce inferior, more expensive products. Take the incandescent lightbulb, for example. In the U.S., this market was the virtual monopoly of General Electric in the 20th century. As early as 1924, GE, along with Osram (a spin-off of the German AEG) and other “competitors,” formed the Phoebus Cartel, whose “enduring legacy was to engineer a shorter life span for the incandescent lightbulb,” reducing it from 2,500 hours to 1,000 hours in order to increase sales (IEEE [Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers] *Spectrum*, 24 September 2014).

Democratic Fire Sale Gutted Stockpiles

While the drive for profits spiked the federal government’s plan to buy 40,000 new ventilators, some states, like California, sought to accrue their own stockpiles. “In 2006, citing the threat of avian flu, Republican governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced the state would invest hundreds of millions of dollars in a powerful set of medical weapons to deploy in the case of large-scale emergencies...” (*Los Angeles Times*, 27 March). The state spent over \$200 million on a mobile hospital program that could quickly deploy medical care facilities to affected areas.

The *Los Angeles Times* report notes that “at its height, the state’s stockpile held more

than 50 million N95 respirators” (the close-fitting facial air filtration device for medical personnel to protect against infection) and “2,400 portable ventilators.” The mobile hospitals “were fully insulated, HVAC-equipped [with heat, ventilation and air-conditioning], semi-permanent tents” that would “roll out on 18-wheelers.” But in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, California’s Democratic governor Jerry Brown eliminated funding to the mobile hospital program in 2011. The stockpiles were sold off or allowed to expire. One Democratic state assemblyman even suggested that the state sell its medical equipment on eBay (*Sacramento Bee*, 13 February 2012).

New York City, which has become the epicenter of the pandemic in the U.S., acquired its own stockpile of ventilators in 2006, also in response to the strain of influenza then ravaging Asia and the Middle East. A report from that year predicted the city would face a “shortfall of between 2,036 and 9,454 ventilators” if NYC were faced with a pandemic.⁵ Although the city government of then-Republican Michael Bloomberg only purchased 500 ventilators that year, even those additional units were left to fall into disrepair or auctioned off under the Democratic administration of Bill (“Bloomberg Lite”) de Blasio (*Pro Publica*, 6 April).⁶

Recently, Trump accused Cuomo of not heeding his own state Health Department’s warnings of a critical ventilator shortage back in 2015, in a report that set the framework for “ventilator allocation.” It’s true, of course. New York has known for years about a ventilator shortage and did nothing about it, and the “triage committees” that would oversee such brutal health-care rationing do indeed amount to “death panels.” But racist-in-chief Trump is no better. The *New York Times* (1 April) reports that 2,109 ventilators in the federal government’s stockpile have fallen into disrepair because the contract to maintain them “lapsed late last summer, and a contracting dispute meant that a new firm did not begin its work until late January.”

Meanwhile, after the U.S. government’s contract with Covidien to produce low-cost ventilators fell through, Dutch manufacturer Philips was awarded a new contract for the same purpose in 2014. But it wasn’t until last July that the FDA approved Philips’ design, and only last December did the government order 10,000 units to be delivered in mid-2020. But not a single mention of these supposedly incoming ventilators was made by administration

⁵ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, “Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan” (July 2006).

⁶ While union bureaucrats, “progressives” and many reformist reformists enthused over Bill de Blasio’s election as mayor back in 2013, the Internationalist Group accurately wrote: “Despite the Hype, de Blasio Will be ‘Bloomberg Lite’”



Newport HT-70 ventilator.



Faced with refusal by bosses to convert plants and rehire workers to serve urgent need in coronavirus crisis, GE workers should take control and gear up ventilator production.

officials until late last month, after they were contacted by the *New York Times*.

Drive for Profits: Death Sentence for the Sick

So where are the ventilators? Trump says private enterprise will save the day. Democrats have urged him to use his powers under the Korean War-era Defense Production Act, promoted and signed by Democratic war criminal president Harry Truman – who A-bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, firebombed Tokyo and slaughtered millions in Korea – to compel companies to prioritize the filling of government contracts. On April 8, HHS signed a new, \$647 million contract with Philips to produce 43,000 ventilators, the first 2,500 of which would be delivered before the end of May and the rest by the end of December. Yet under this new contract the government would be paying \$15,000 for each ventilator, *five times the price established under the 2014 contract*. That same day, HHS signed a \$489 million contract with General Motors (GM) to produce 30,000 ventilators, with the first 6,000 coming in by June 1.

But ventilators are needed *now*. If production had begun in January, when the pending disaster was already evident, they could be in operation today. Yet according to a former HHS official, “most of these ventilators will come too late to make a difference in this pandemic” (*Ars Technica*, 10 April).

On March 30, aviation factory workers at General Electric’s Lynn, Massachusetts plant protested to demand the company convert its jet engine factories to produce ventilators. That same day, members of the IUE-CWA (International Union of Electrical Workers – Communications Workers of America) held a march at GE’s Boston headquarters. This came as the company was an-

nouncing plans to lay off 10% of its domestic aviation workforce and to furlough half its maintenance workforce for three months. On April 8, workers at the GE turbine and generator plant in Schenectady, New York, Dallas, Texas, Salem, Virginia and Lynn rallied, calling to produce ventilators.

“Ventilators are desperately needed at hospitals in New York, California, Washington State, and Florida,” said CWA president Chris Shelton. “They soon will be in short supply from the East Coast to the West Coast, from Puerto Rico to Hawaii, from Alaska and Illinois to Texas. Most Americans are not aware that the best ventilators are already made by General Electric within the company’s healthcare division.”

Okay, so how about doing something about it? Since the corporate bosses aren’t going to, workers and engineers at Lynn and

continued on page 22

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Shipbuilding Workers in Maine Fight General Dynamics Union-Busting Victory to the Bath Iron Works Strike!

BATH, Maine, June 29 – At 12:01 a.m. on Monday, June 22, some 4,300 members of Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America/International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) Local S6 went on strike at the Bath Iron Works (BIW) shipyard here, where workers produce Arleigh Burke- and Zumwalt-class destroyers for the U.S. Navy. BIW is owned by General Dynamics, which is one of the largest military contractors in the world, maker of the M1 Abrams main battle tank, and which year-in and year-out rakes in \$3 billion annual profits on \$30 billion in sales with its lucrative cost-plus contracts.

Amid record unemployment, a global pandemic and mounting pressure from the military as BIW's order backlog grows longer, the shipyard workers have shown they are ready and willing to fight. When a worker at the plant tested positive for COVID-19, word spread like wildfire, and on March 24 more than 3,000 called out sick. What's at stake in this strike is the survival of the union, as IAM international president Robert Martinez, Jr. stressed in a press release: "The company is engaged in flat-out union-busting, and is exploiting the current pandemic to attempt to outsource work from its dedicated employees."

Now the battle has been joined, and it will take real class struggle to bust the union-busters. The last strike at the shipyards, in 2000, went on for 55 days, which worries BIW and GD corporate officers and the naval brass. The shipbuilders are in a strong position to win this fight if they hang tough, "come hell or high water" or anti-strike orders from the Pentagon or the White House. Looking to the bosses' National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is a loser, but a victory here could set the stage for a wave of labor struggles nationwide. The BIW workers' strike must be taken up by the entire labor movement – *Victory to IAM Local S6!*

At issue in the strike are demands by the company to rip up seniority protections and to increase subcontracting, as well as jacking up workers' contributions to health insurance. The shipyard is running six months behind schedule, according to the *Defense One* news site, with a backlog of eleven ships due to delays stemming from

mismanagement exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile, the military and business press are full of hand-wringing articles. "It is critical for our Navy that we get ships, we get them on the schedule we contract for them, and that we have high confidence in our shipbuilders to deliver," complained the assistant secretary of the Navy, James Guerts. In a letter to the Maine Congressional delegation, BIW boss Dirk Lesko cited Vice Adm. William Galinis, the new chief of the Naval Sea System Command, to the effect that "other shipyards with which the Navy does business, our competitors, regularly use subcontractors to address shortfalls in skilled labor to overcome schedule challenges."

Worker discontent with Iron Works management has run rampant in recent years. The last contract offered up a variety of concessions in the hope of making the company more "efficient" as it vied for a Coast Guard bid. "I was one of the few on the Negotiating Committee that opposed it at the time," current local president Chris Weirs told an *Internationalist* reporter, "but we took a five-year wage freeze so they could make a bid on those [Heritage-class] patrol cutters." Of course, when the company lost the bid, the concessions weren't returned.

In January 2020, state legislators started threatening to rescind a \$45 million tax credit provided to the company on condition that it continue to provide good-paying jobs, citing plans to hire out-of-state contractors and to subcontract low-wage workers, as well as a decline in the average pay at the site as proof that BIW wasn't living up to its end of the bargain. This further riled S6 members. But it was the company's brutal indifference to the lives and health of its employees during the coronavirus pandemic that really stirred a hornet's nest in the ranks.

In the March 24 walkout, the union called on the company to shut down for two weeks to clean and disinfect the facility, with full pay for employees. Management refused. After much legal wrangling involving state officials and the intervention of the U.S. Navy, the shipyards were declared "essential." Initially, BIW refused to provide PPE (personal protective equip-



Bath Iron Works strikers on first day of the walkout, June 22.

ment) and insisted that workers provide their own masks. Many workers voted with their feet, and absenteeism was rampant until the company issued a "back-to-work" ultimatum in May. As we go to press, there are reports that four additional employees have tested positive for COVID-19.

As local union president Weirs told *News Center Maine* on April 10, "Our membership right now collectively is so turned over as far as hatred for Bath Iron Works and how they're being treated, echoes of the word 'strike' are being heard through the shipyard." Two months later, in a mail ballot, 87% of participating members voted against the proposed contract agreement and to go on strike.

In the last two weeks of the contract, IAM members showed their anger at the company by creating a raucous din, "every hour on the hour, for a minute," a picketer told *The Internationalist*. "We would down hammer and bang on sheet metal, you could hear it across the river in Woolwich, it was so loud." "It's just a perfect storm," added another picketer, "How much can you take? No raises for five years, then the disease, now this insulting contract. We decided we were going to hold the line here, no matter how long it takes, no matter how many ships are in the water."

The Bath Iron Works strike is no local matter. Across the country and around the world, the bosses and their politicians have insisted that the working class and poor shoulder the burden of the ravages caused by the coronavirus pandemic. From employees of logistics giants Amazon and UPS to packinghouse workers and nursing home staffs, companies have made it clear that death and disease are no big whoop compared to the horror of flagging profits. As the United States reports over 2.5 million COVID-19 cases and over 126,000 deaths from the virus, the capitalist bosses have been on the offensive in a mad rush to reopen the economy.

As Donald Trump used the Defense Production Act to order pork and beef processing plants reopened despite huge numbers of COVID-19 infections, the Pentagon leaned on Mexico to reopen the *maquiladora* (free trade zone) factories along the U.S.-Mexico border, where superexploited workers labor for the U.S. market.

Among the corporate giants calling for the factories to reopen was GD. From Bath, Maine to Matamoros, Mexico, the name of the game is profits, profits, profits, and workers lives be damned. On June 8, courageous labor lawyer Susana Prieto Terrazas, who has led a fight to shut down and clean up the *maquiladoras*, was arrested on trumped-up charges. Local S6 should join in demanding: *Freedom now for Susana Prieto!*

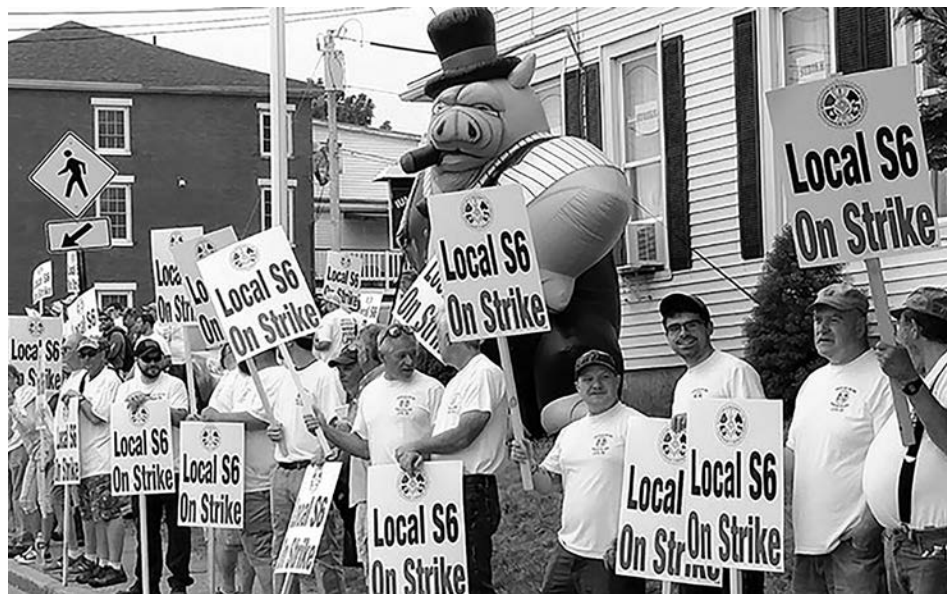
Despite expressions of support from other labor unions, such as the Teamsters and the Maine Nurses Association, it is crucial to see clearly that this class battle will not be won by playing by the bosses' rules. The original directives from the union instructed picketers not to engage with scabs nor to block entrances to the struck facility. Now appeals are being made for federal mediation. What is needed instead is to mobilize and organize the power of the working class to *shut down Bath Iron Works!*

A glimpse of this power was visible all along the Pacific coast a week and a half ago, when the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shut down all the West Coast ports on Juneteenth (the day celebrated as marking the end of slavery) in solidarity with George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other victims of racist cop terror. This is the kind of power that needs to be brought to bear in the BIW contract battle. As we wrote two months ago:

"The class struggle does not shut down during a 'natural' disaster – if anything it intensifies. Contrary to the deceptively reassuring and hypocritical 'we're all in this together' rhetoric of the politicians, the stark realities of life or death expose the fundamentally opposed interests of the exploiters and the exploited – at least for those who dare to see. And the capitalist rulers never 'let a good crisis go to waste' That is why, for the working class and all the oppressed, desperate and tragic times cry out for revolutionary leadership."

–"As the COVID-19 Pandemic Rages, Workers Fight for Health and Safety," *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020

A class-struggle leadership of the labor movement would meet the threat of
continued on page 21



Local S6 is going up against General Dynamics, one of the world's largest, and always profitable, war contractors.

Free the Four! Drop Charges Against the 15,000!

In the days and weeks after the racist cop murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on May 25, as hundreds of thousands took to the streets to decry police repression, the authorities sought to intimidate them with a massive display of police power. This included violent attacks on demonstrators, racist curfews and massive arrests, “kettling” large groups and hauling them all off to COVID-19 infested jails. By late June, close to 15,000 arrests had been tallied nationwide. They are all violations of freedom of assembly. *We demand that all charges against everyone detained during the recent protests be dropped.*

Among those arrested in New York and still in jail are Colinford Mattis, Urooj Rahman, Samantha Shader and Timothy Amerman. The first three are accused of throwing Molotov cocktails at police vehicles. The cocktails did not ignite, and no one was injured. They were initially charged with “causing damage by fire and explosives,” facing

5 to 20 years imprisonment. But then the federal government stepped in, following racist president Donald Trump’s calls to make an example of protesters. The three have now been charged with federal crimes including arson, civil disorder, conspiracy, use of a destructive device, making or possessing a destructive device and the use of explosives during a crime of violence, charges which carry a minimum sentence of 45 years.

On July 4, Timothy Amerman was charged with civil disorder and civil disorder conspiracy for allegedly giving Shader supplies. His charges carry up to 10 years in prison. *We demand that all four be freed and all charges against them be dropped.* The thousands of arrests, the cop violence and the very presence of the police and police vehicles in the vicinity of protests were provocations and a violation of civil liberties, while the barrage of charges being used against protesters is a “legal” arsenal for police-state rule. ■

George Floyd...

continued from page 1

ed “support” from the National Guard. On top of wanton police murder of a black man, they add racist repression of the community. As outrage spread, a Metro Transit bus driver, member of Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1005, announced that he would refuse to transport arrested protesters, as the MPD was demanding, and called on his fellow union members to do likewise. With police menacing the masses demanding justice for George Floyd, the entire workers movement and defenders of black and democratic rights must demand: **Cops and National Guard, get out NOW!**

This latest racist outrage occurs in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is killing African Americans and Latinos at staggeringly high rates. Capitalism’s built-in racist oppression means that those most exploited and most oppressed – who are most “essential” to profits and most expendable to the profiteers – are the most likely to die. And now the rulers’ racist police choke another black man to death – it is too much to take. It has to end. To put an end to it *we have to overthrow this capitalist system of racism and death.*

The African American, Latin American, Native American, poor and oppressed communities in the Twin Cities, includ-

ing a sizeable Somali population, have long been targeted by the police. In 2015, 24-year-old Jamar Clark was shot in the head by Minneapolis cops while handcuffed and on the ground near the 4th Precinct. The next year, Philando Castile was shot to death in his car in front of his girlfriend and four-year-old daughter by a police officer in the St. Paul suburb of Falcon Heights. In 2018, Thurman Blevins was shot dead by two white cops as he pleaded, “Please don’t shoot me. Leave me alone.” And last December, Chiasher Fong Vue, a Hmong man, was killed by a squad of nine MPD officers who fired over 100 bullets.

Today, as the pandemic has led to mass unemployment, the ruling class fears that the killing of George Floyd could lead to a resurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement that started after the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 and took off in 2014 as hundreds of thousands protested the police murder of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and so many others. And as right-wingers have besieged the Minnesota state capitol demanding an end to the COVID-19 shutdowns ordered by the Democratic Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) governor, an uproar against racist repression could trigger a backlash, like the armed KKKers who attacked a BLM protest against the police murder of Jamar Clark.

So Minneapolis’ DFL mayor Frey and black police chief Medaria Arradondo moved quickly to try to get out in front of the protests. “Being black in America should not be a death sentence,” said Frey after watching the bystander’s video. On Tuesday, Arradondo fired the four police involved in the arrest of Floyd. The next day, the mayor said that the cop who had his knee on Floyd’s neck should be arrested and tried. But as we wrote after the cop slaying of Clark:

“Democrats and Republicans will not and cannot put a stop to racist police terror because they depend on the guard dogs of capital to maintain ‘law and order.’ Some of these politicians feign support to protests like Black Lives Matter in order to make sure they don’t get ‘out of control’ (i.e., threaten the domination of United Healthcare, Target, Best Buy, 3M, U.S. Bancorp, General Mills and other giant corporations). And if protesters can’t be assuaged by ‘I feel your pain’ bromides, the liberals call in the cops.”

–“Minneapolis: ‘Cops and Klan Go

Hand in Hand’,” *The Internationalist* No. 42, January-February 2016

In the massive BLM protests in 2014, a slogan chanted by the Internationalist Group, “*Eric Garner, Michael Brown – Shut the whole system down!*” was quickly picked up. But with all the mass marches in the streets – or shutting down Interstate highways, as protesters did for a few hours on I-94 after the cop murderer of Philando Castile was acquitted – it will take much more to shut down the capitalist system. That is why the IG and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth call to **mobilize labor/black/immigrant action against racist police terror.** It is the power of the multiethnic working class, grouping around it all the oppressed, that can actually bring the wheels of racist American capitalism to a halt. And that is also why, as many chanted “No justice, no peace,” we chanted the hard and necessary truth, “*Only revolution can bring justice!*”

Can the working class be mobilized against police terror? There’s no better place in the U.S. to ask that question than Minneapolis, with its long history of labor struggle going back to the 1934 Teamster strike that shut the city down. In that knock-down, drag-out fight, workers squared off with scabs, strikebreaking cops and deputies of the Citizens’ Alliance (which later allied with the fascist Silver Shirts) in the “Battle of Deputies Run,” turning Minneapolis from an “open shop” haven into a solid union town. And the answer to the question is, yes, the workers movement can and must come out in the thousands demanding an end to racist cop repression. It could happen now, not just in the distant past, but that requires class-struggle leadership.

Six years after Eric Garner’s murder, five years after Jamar Clark’s, four years after Philando Castile’s, two years after Blevins’ and six months after Fong Vue’s, the video of Floyd’s killing is a stark reminder that nothing has changed in the racist, capitalist U.S.A. On May 6, Sean Reed livestreamed his murder by Indianapolis, Indiana police on Facebook. After shooting Reed, one cop can be heard saying: “It’s going to be a closed casket, homie.” On March 13, Breonna Taylor, an emergency medical technician in Louisville, Kentucky, was shot while sleeping in her apartment by police thugs who stormed in to serve a “no-knock warrant.” And on



George Floyd

February 23, Ahmaud Arbery was shot and killed in Georgia by a retired cop and his son. The two chased Arbery down in their pickup truck while he was out for a jog, and shot him dead like a couple of Ku Klux Klan night-riders. The lynchings never stop.

“Driving while black,” “jogging while black,” “sleeping at home while black.” Floyd is just the latest addition to the endless list of African Americans and Latinos murdered by the police, in a country where racist repression is and always has been the linchpin of capitalist exploitation. This goes back to slavery days, when runaway slaves would be hunted down by squads of slave catchers. These patrols paved the way for modern-day police departments. In recent decades, the police and courts have ramped up mass incarceration, particularly of black men, while cops across the U.S. kill an average of over 1,700 civilians a year, with black men five times as likely to be gunned down by police as white men (see “Black America Under the Gun: Workers Revolution Will Avenge Philando Castile,” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017).

In Minneapolis, 31 people have been killed by police since 2000, 21 of them black. As in 2015, the city has asked for a civil rights investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. FBI investigations of police departments from Chicago and Baltimore to Ferguson, Missouri, have shown that they are shot through with racism, but have changed nothing.

Another favorite cop-out to disguise the racist nature of the cops is to put some “black (and Latino) faces in high places” to head the police. Arradondo is the first black police chief of Minneapolis. He replaced Janeé Harteau, who was a liberal identity politics dream: the city’s first Native Ameri-



Minneapolis cop kneels George Floyd, killing him, May 25.



Los Angeles protest over murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, May 27.

Screenshot from bystander cellphone video

EPA

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can, female and openly gay police chief, all in one. She introduced body cameras and “implicit bias training.” But police racism isn’t implicit, it is overt and *systemic*: it expresses the function and nature of the police and “criminal justice system” in this racist capitalist society. Harteau managed to tough it out through the crisis over Clark’s killing, but was forced out after police murdered a white Australian woman, Justine Damond, outside her home, after she had called to report a possible sexual assault. This happened just weeks after the Latino cop who killed Philando Castile was acquitted. Whatever the ethnicity, the job of the police is to enforce racist capitalist “law and order.”

One demand heard in Tuesday’s protests, trumpeted by various opportunist left groups, is the call to “jail killer cops.” *Certainly, Derek Chauvin, the officer who kneeled George Floyd to death, Tou Thao who stood by and protected his murderous partner, and the other two officers involved are all guilty of murder and should spend the rest of their lives behind bars.* But as revolutionary Marxists, we must warn that this won’t happen in the capitalist U.S.A.: the bourgeois politicians will go all out to protect their professional killers-in-blue. Similarly, calls by reformist leftists for “community policing,” “community control of the police” and the like only build illusions, which can be exploited by skillful capitalist politicians, as Minneapolis mayor Frey just did by calling to jail and charge killer cop Chauvin. (Democratic congresswoman Ilhan Omar, a favorite of the pseudo-socialists, didn’t even go that far, only calling for an investigation.)

Those who stand on the side of the oppressed must look not to the bosses’ state but to *our own* forces, above all the working class. After Jamar Clark was killed in 2015, over 200 union members from around the Twin Cities protested outside the 4th Precinct, including from the Minnesota Nurses Association, Letter Carriers, SEIU Healthcare MN, St. Paul Federation of Teachers, and CWA Local 7250. *We need much more today.*

Class-conscious workers and defenders of democratic rights should respond to the police murder of George Floyd by fighting for ***mass workers action joining with the black population and all the oppressed to shut the Twin Cities down!*** This means ***breaking with the Democrats and all capitalist parties and politicians.*** In almost every big city in the U.S., *Democratic mayors are the bosses of the racist killer cops.* It is urgently necessary to ***build a revolutionary workers party,*** for the inescapable fact is that ***justice for George Floyd and all those killed by this racist system can only be achieved by socialist revolution,*** which alone can bring down the murderous capitalist state and open the way to black freedom and the liberation of all the exploited and oppressed. ■

Martial Law...

continued from page 6

Milley’s declaration was followed by similar messages from the chiefs of staff of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Trump’s previous defense secretary, retired Marine Corps general Jim Mattis, issued a statement denouncing Trump for ordering troops to “violate the rights of their fellow citizens,” declaring: “We must reject any thinking of our cities as a ‘battlespace’ that our uniformed military is called upon to ‘dominate.’” These military chiefs are hardliners, war criminals

one and all, who have commanded the wanton slaughter of tens of thousands of civilians in Afghanistan and Iraq, who pushed to keep U.S. occupation troops in Syria, who today are itching for war with Iran and North Korea, and tomorrow with Russia and China. But they worried that Trump’s actions would cast the military into an abyss.

“We are at the most dangerous time for civil-military relations I’ve seen in my lifetime,” wrote Adm. Sandy Winnefeld, a retired vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The chiefs know full well that putting elite military units, trained to be a killing machine, into U.S. streets could very well lead to a bloodbath far greater than the Kent State (Ohio) and Jackson State (Mississippi) massacres of antiwar students in 1970 – and that the heightened “civil unrest” this would ignite could lead to rebellions in the ranks.

On the other hand, they are particularly concerned, and said so, that fully 40% of active-duty and reserve military personnel are African American, Latino, Native American, Pacific Islanders or members of other racial/ethnic minorities. They worried that troops would not fire on (or bayonet) demonstrators protesting racism if ordered to do so. They are haunted by the “Vietnam syndrome,” when black troops in particular revolted against their officers and non-coms and the U.S. military suffered a stinging defeat.

Then there was the silence of the Democrats. Even though Trump’s ire was directed at them, they looked to the military. The Democratic Party’s ties with it run deep: from World War I on, U.S. imperialism’s wars have largely been waged under their administrations. Over the past period, the Democrats have assiduously sought to bolster this connection with the military and “intelligence community.” In 2018, roughly half of the Democrats newly elected to Congress were from intelligence backgrounds. From the beginning the Trump presidency, the Democratic Party has called on the Pentagon and spy agencies to keep the bellicose, xenophobic white supremacist in the White House in check, while hailing top figures in the U.S.’ mass-murder and spy apparatus as heroes in the anti-Trump “Resistance.”

Just as importantly, in virtually every major city in the U.S., as we have put it, “Democrats are the bosses of the racist killer cops.” George Floyd (Minneapolis), Eric Garner (New York), Laquan McDonald (Chicago), Freddie Gray (Baltimore), Breonna Taylor (Louisville) and thousands more were murdered by police under Democratic Party mayors. And now, from Rhode Island to Minnesota to Colorado to California, Oregon and Washington state, it is Democratic governors who have deployed National Guard units against anti-racist protesters.

Early on in the coronavirus crisis, California governor Gavin Newsom announced the mobilization of the National Guard, while emphasizing, “We have the ability to do martial law ... if we feel the necessity.” At the same time, a train with close to 300 tanks rolled through Los Angeles, on the way from the Ventura naval base heading out into the desert of the Inland Empire. To do what? A prosecutor in Santa Clara County remarked, “Right now we’re putting parts of the Constitution on hold. We really are. Freedom of assembly. Right to practice religion” (*New York Times*, 12 May). A year earlier, residents were startled by Army training exercises in downtown L.A. and Long Beach, “to enhance soldier skills by operating in various urban environments and settings.”

Meanwhile, it was Democratic *New York City* mayor Bill de Blasio that defended police who on May 30 deliberately rammed their SUVs into protesters, and who imposed an abusive curfew, supposedly to stop “looting,” but which was used almost exclusively to arrest dozens of protesters by “kettling” them. It was black Democrat *Chicago* mayor Lori Lightfoot who that same day carried out kettling on a vast scale by raising the bridges connecting the downtown Loop to the rest of the city and cutting off “El” trains so that trapped demonstrators could not escape, while police arrested hundreds and threw them into COVID-infested jails. In *Los Angeles* under Democratic mayor Eric Garcetti, also on May 30, the LAPD surrounded and trapped protesters and then raised a hue and cry about “looting” a few blocks away.

It was in *Philadelphia*, with a Democratic mayor and black woman police chief, where on June 1, police violently attacked a peaceful demonstration, launching tear gas at a crowd of protesters. And in *Seattle*, with a Democratic woman mayor and black woman police chief, the cops, also on June 1, violently broke up a demo, without warning, indiscriminately pepper-spraying marchers, launching tear gas and flash-bang grenades. The list goes on and on. In all of these cases, video evidence shows conclusively that police wantonly attacked protests against the cop murder of George Floyd with more racist repression. And the vast majority of the arrests on June 1 and the days before and after – in city after city, including in Washington, D.C. – were carried out by police under the command of Democratic mayors.

The big-mouth all-round racist, xenophobe and misogynist Donald Trump is an outlier. His attempt at imposing martial law in the nation’s capital was bungled. But when it comes to the cop repression that systematically violates the Constitutional rights of the U.S. population (including undocumented immigrants), that imposes racist police occupation of African American ghettos and Latino barrios, that kills more than 1,700 civilians a year, that holds more than 2 million people in jails and prisons, more than five times the number behind bars in 1970, the large majority for no serious crime at all – this is overwhelmingly carried out by Democrats. In addition to being the No. 1 imperialist war party, they are the No. 1 party of racist repression in the U.S., going back to when professional police grew out of slave-catching patrols in the early 1800s.

What should be the response of those who fight for the oppressed against this systematic racist repression? When Trump threatened to introduce martial law and began to carry out that threat with a military occupation of Washington, D.C., the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth immediately raised a call for ***workers strikes now against racist terror and martial law threats and no to military/police rule – mobilize workers power.*** We demanded ***free all protesters – drop the charges*** and called for ***police out of the schools and the unions.*** In New York City IG/RIY signs proclaimed, “It’s Not Just Republican Trump, Democrat de Blasio is the Boss of the Racist NYPD – Build a Revolutionary Workers Party!” And we highlighted our call for ***black liberation through socialist revolution.***

In the face of liberal and reformist talk of “reforming” the unreformable police, as Marxists we underline that racism, and racist repression, are the expression of the underlying racial and ethnic oppression which

is at the core of U.S. capitalism, founded on chattel slavery of Africans and genocide of Native Americans, a legacy that is very much alive today. Fighting for the Trotskyist program of revolutionary integrationism, we call for the workers movement to bring out its tremendous power – as the International Longshore and Warehouse Union did on June 19th by shutting down every port on the West Coast – together with and in defense of all the oppressed. The key lesson, from the 2014 protests over the police murders of Eric Garner and Michael Brown to the continuing upheaval over the murder of George Floyd, is that ***only revolution can bring justice!*** ■

Iron Works...

continued from page 19

union-busting subcontracting by fighting to bring all these workers into the IAM, and for ***union control of hiring – organize the unorganized – for a union hiring hall.*** In the face of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, workers should form ***all-worker elected safety committees,*** independent of management, with the power to shut down production. Faced with rising health care premiums and increases in co-pays, a combative union movement would fight for ***socialized health care, free for all.*** And instead of appeals to the NLRB, ***build mass picket lines that no one crosses!***

Workers in “defense” industries are also in a key position to fight the warmongering policies of the imperialist rulers. A key reason why the Pentagon is hot to get the destroyers being built at BIW into the water is to step up provocative deployments in the South China Sea. Meanwhile, Republicans and Democrats alike blame Beijing for the coronavirus, when the truth is that China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, was uniquely able with its planned economy to limit the spread of the virus and the numbers of dead, in contrast to the disastrous response in the U.S. Just because naval construction workers build Navy ships doesn’t mean they share the war aims of the profit-driven rulers who don’t give a damn about them or any workers anywhere.

Historically, shipyard workers have played a key political role precisely because they are a stronghold of workers power. In November 1982, when the Ku Klux Klan threatened to march in Washington, D.C., longshore and shipbuilders union leaders and activists from Norfolk, Virginia played a key role in a powerful labor/black mobilization that stopped the fascists cold. And going further back, in November 1918 dockers and shipyard workers in the port of Kiel were the spark that set off the German Revolution that brought the slaughter of World War I to an end.

Today, the power of the unions is hamstrung by a pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy that has chained workers to the bosses’ parties, particularly the Democrats. Yet the Democrats no less than Republicans have pushed policies like outsourcing and subcontracting that have destroyed unions and union gains for the last four decades. Instead of relying on Democratic Party phony “friends of labor” politicians like Joe Biden, who claims to support Local S6 workers, class-conscious workers must call to ***break with the Democrats*** and undertake the urgent task of ***building a revolutionary workers party*** that champions the cause of all of labor and the oppressed.

Victory to IAM Local S6! Bust the union-busters! ■

Silent Amidst Mass Upsurge Against Racist Oppression Spartacist League Declares Bankruptcy

Published online on June 21. Weeks later the SL's silence continues.

In the almost four weeks since Minneapolis cops murdered George Floyd, the ongoing upheaval against racist police terror is by far the largest sustained wave of protest this country has seen in many decades. Day and night, demonstrations have been held in at least 1,280 cities and towns across the United States, bringing out huge numbers of youth and workers, largely new to political activism, who are seeking answers to fundamental questions about this racist capitalist country.

"Progressive" bourgeois politicians and their auxiliaries and surrogates on the reformist left are now working overtime to channel protests into updated versions of the same old fakery about "reforming" the police. Their goal: "November" – that is, rounding up votes for presumptive nominee Joe Biden. As promised, Bernie Sanders has endorsed Biden, who has given Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez a coveted post as co-chair of his climate task force. Yet a significant number of young protesters question the idea that fighting racism means lining up behind Biden, infamous co-author of the 1994 Clinton crime bill that escalated mass incarceration, who railed against busing for school integration in the 1970s (and delivered a eulogy for arch-segregationist fellow senator Strom Thurmond in 2003). While many reformist groups are pushing nostrums about "defunding" the police, both Biden and Sanders have doubled down on their calls to give the cops *more* money.

For Marxist revolutionaries, this is a crucial time to intervene in the ongoing struggle with the communist program. This means showing how racial oppression is woven into the fabric of this capitalist society born of slavery; exposing all variants of the fraudulent claim that the functions of the armed fist of the capitalist state can be reformed away; combating the deception and illusion-mongering that are the stock-in-trade not only of the bourgeois politicians but of their reformist adjutants. It

means working to mobilize the power of the multiracial working class in the fight against police terror, as a key aspect of the struggle to forge a Leninist vanguard party. This Trotskyist intervention is precisely what the Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, has been carrying out in this turbulent mass upsurge, through our press, our leaflets and speeches, on the banners and signs of our contingents, and in many other ways.

For those familiar with the organized left, the sepulchral silence of the formerly Trotskyist Spartacist League (SL) amidst this mass upsurge can be seen as a minor sidelight. But for anyone seeking the voice of Trotskyism in the current protests, it is more than that. Amid the most massive protest movement in decades, as it has continued week after week, the Spartacist League has not published a paper, put out a leaflet or posted a single statement on its website on the killing of George Floyd or the mass protests against racist police terror. And this despite the fact that the core issue posed is black oppression, which the SL, from its inception, crucially emphasized as key to proletarian revolution in the citadel of imperialism. Their silence speaks volumes: the SL's abject abdication is a *declaration of political bankruptcy*.

As we underlined in "Some History Ex-Trotskyists Would Like to Keep Hidden" (*The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020), the last conference of the SL's International Communist League already issued an "auto-obituary" with its bizarre central document, "The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra," proclaiming endless war against an enemy within their own ranks while denouncing wholesale the organization's past Leninist positions on the national question and openly embracing bourgeois nationalism, especially on behalf of "oppressed white people in economically advanced countries of North America and Europe." Under the subhead "Whose Chauvinism?" our article reprinted important ma-

terial published over two decades ago and never answered by the ICL, together with supplementary material that any would-be Trotskyist actually committed to fighting oppression should be aware of.

At the same time, we noted that the SL/ICL's flagship publication, *Workers Vanguard*, has now shrunk to four pages, with an issue skipped in April. Clearly, the internal crisis has gotten even worse. The SL/ICL website (icl-fi.org) currently states that the closing date for news in the most recent issue was May 26, which was the day after the cops murdered George Floyd, immediately setting off furious mass protests. On the rare occasions when they have been seen at protests in the ensuing weeks, hapless SLers had absolutely *no* written material to distribute regarding George Floyd or the current protests.

The current *Workers Vanguard* (29 May) that they are selling consists entirely* of a "translation of a revised article from a March 2020 supplement" – that is, an item originally published two months previously – to the paper of their Greek group. (Discussing some of the ongoing internal turmoil, the most recent issue of the ICL's theoretical journal had publicized the expulsion, on accusations of racist conduct, of two members who were involved in the Greek group's work.) Those who actually read the issue of WV will see that its single article, polemicizing against calls for "freedom of movement for refugees and immigrants in all European countries," centers largely on *denouncing* demands to abolish the racist "Dublin III" agreement of the European Union. Yet as their article admits, this measure "stipulates that member states can deport refugees to the first EU country they entered," meaning that "thousands of refugees languish in concentration camps in Greece and elsewhere, set

* *Correction:* In the 4-page physical copy, in addition to the article on Greece, about a page and a third consist of extracts from the 1938 Socialist Workers Party Declaration of Principles.

up at the behest of German imperialism."

Hiding behind their usual pseudo-orthodox logic-chopping and straw-man arguments, they oppose calls to abolish the racist measure, while wielding the slogan of full citizenship rights for those "who have made it to Greece" to oppose calls to let in the refugees drowning in the Mediterranean off the shores of Greece and other European countries. For members or supporters of the SL and ICL looking for genuine chauvinism to combat, there it is, right in front of you, as we have noted in "Spartacist League vs. Refugees" (*The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017), "The ICL Against Asylum for Refugees in Quebec" (*The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019) and other articles.

Today, those seeking a revolutionary path forward in the struggle against racist cop terror and for world socialist revolution have much to learn and apply from the arsenal of genuine Trotskyism that the Spartacist tendency helped build up for three decades after its inception in the early 1960s. Yet amid U.S. imperialism's post-Soviet "death of communism" offensive, the SL/ICL succumbed to demoralization and disorientation, even backing the U.S. occupation of Haiti in 2010, then admitting it had grossly capitulated to it "own" imperialist rulers. (See "Repentant Social Imperialists: Open Letter to the SL/ICL," *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010.)

There has been no more urgent time than now to bring the Trotskyist program into the class struggle. The once-revolutionary SL/ICL can today scarcely summon even the pretense of contributing to that fight, let alone leading it. Instead, it displays its shameful bankruptcy for all to see, as the widespread protests, and the racist terror that set them off, continue. The banner of Trotskyism is carried forward by the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International, which is winning a new generation of fighters to communism. ■

Ventilators...

continued from page 18

Schenectady GE and other plants should take matters into their own hands and gear up to produce this urgently needed medical equipment. This points to the fact that, faced with the refusal of the capitalists to ensure the health needs of the population, *workers control of production* is called for. This would involve the workers exerting their class power in the plants and distribution centers in a direct challenge to the bosses' power, overriding the anti-social profit drive of the parasitic owning class in order to rev up factories to make life-saving machines. That would be a fundamental break with "business as usual," but for working people around the world this is a genuine *international* emergency requiring drastic measures.

The fact is, companies like Ford, GM and GE, which have factories sitting idle across the country, have the capacity to produce thousands of ventilators ASAP. But they will not reopen those plants because their bottom line is that *profit rules* – which is why the plants were shuttered in the first place. Ultimately, the only way to ensure that the needed medical equipment is pro-

duced is by expropriating the capitalists and driving out their politicians, who have dramatically shown their incapacity to defend the lives and livelihoods of the vast majority of the population, with the working class establishing its own government.

As the call to action by Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP) states: "A mass, militant workers movement with a class-struggle leadership would establish *workers commissions* at workplaces to decide appropriate measures, including shutting down where necessary, with no loss in pay, or continuing production with needed safeguards." That should also include *what* should be produced. But to get from here to there, and continuing on the road to socialist revolution, the key is building a proletarian vanguard – the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party – based on the program for putting the technology and wealth built up by the working class to work to save lives now and make a decent future for working people here and around the world. That means the working class putting an end to this deadly capitalist anarchy – and taking power into its own hands. Our lives depend on it. ■

Cancel the Rent – Expropriate the Real Estate Barons Mobilize Worker/Community Action to Stop Evictions

New York City is heading towards a massive eviction crisis, as are cities and states across the country. With millions unemployed, huge numbers are unable to pay rent. Until late June there was a moratorium on eviction proceedings under an emergency order issued by NY governor Cuomo in March. A second order in early May extended the ban until late August, but only for those who could prove COVID-related hardship and who are eligible for pandemic relief payments from the government. Now that order has been rescinded for residential (but not commercial) tenants. Landlords began filing cases on June 22.

It is conservatively estimated that 50,000 or more new housing cases will be filed. The 2020 Tenant Safe Harbor Act will at most delay this. Lacking any protection against rapacious landlords are hundreds of thousands of families of undocu-

mented immigrants. They may be the first to face eviction. Many are the "essential workers" who have braved the pandemic to keep the population supplied with basic necessities. They along with African Americans and Latinos have also been the hardest hit by the virus. Meanwhile, half or more of undocumented workers in the city have lost their jobs.

Tenants groups and legal aid attorneys have sought to block the reopening of the housing courts. But much more is needed. The Internationalist Group calls on labor to join with community groups to *mobilize to stop evictions*. We support demands to call to cancel rent due during the pandemic, and call to take over hotels and vacant apartments to house the homeless. The real estate moguls should be expropriated and a vast expansion of public housing undertaken. Only a workers government can solve the housing crisis. ■

Furia por...

sigue de la página 24
 en las calles —o incluso con la ocupación de las autopistas interestatales, como la que realizaron durante algunas horas los manifestantes en la autopista I-94 después de que el policía que asesinó a Philando Castile fuera absuelto— hará falta mucho más que cerrar el sistema capitalista. Es por eso que el Grupo Internacionalista y la Juventud Internacionalista Revolucionaria llaman a **movilizar acciones obreras, negras e inmigrantes en contra del terrorismo racista de la policía**. Es el poder de la multiétnica clase obrera, agrupando en torno a sí a todos los oprimidos, lo que realmente pude parar los engranes del racista sistema capitalista norteamericano. Ésta es también la razón por la cual, cuando muchos corean la consigna de “Sin justicia no hay paz”, nosotros decimos la dura y necesaria verdad de que *“¡sólo la revolución hará justicia!”*

¿Será posible movilizar a la clase obrera en contra del terror policiaco? No hay mejor lugar en Estados Unidos para plantear esa pregunta que Minneapolis, con su larga historia de luchas obreras que se retrotraen a la Huelga de los Teamsters (camioneros) de 1934 que paralizó la ciudad. En esa lucha dura, los trabajadores se enfrentaron con esquiroles, policías rompehuelgas y cuerpos parapolicíacos “auxiliares” de la Citizens’ Alliance (que más tarde se aliaron con los camisas plateadas fascistas) en la “batalla de la huida de los auxiliares”, convirtiendo a Minneapolis de baluarte de las empresas sin sindicato en un bastión sindical. Y la respuesta a la pregunta es que “sí”, el movimiento obrero puede y debe salir a las calles por miles para reivindicar el fin de la racista represión policiaca. Puede pasar ahora, no sólo en el pasado distante, pero para eso hace falta una dirección de lucha clasista.

Seis años después del asesinato de Eric Garner, cinco años después del de Jamar Clark, cuatro años después del de Philando Castile, dos años después del de Blevins y seis meses después del de Fong Vue, el video del asesinato de Floyd es un crudo recordatorio de que nada ha cambiado en los racistas y capitalistas Estados Unidos. El 6 de mayo, Sean Reed transmitió en vivo a través de Facebook su asesinato en Indianápolis, a manos de la policía de Indiana. Tras disparar a Reed



Policía de Minneapolis encaja su rodilla en el cuello de George Floyd, matándolo.

se puede escuchar a un policía que dice: “Va a ser un ataúd cerrado, compadre”. El 13 de marzo, Breonna Taylor, una técnica de emergencias médicas de Louisville, Kentucky, fue asesinada a balazos por policías matones que ingresaron a su casa para cumplir con una “orden de registro sin aviso”. Y el 23 de febrero, Ahmaud Arbery fue baleado y asesinado en Georgia por un policía retirado y su hijo. Los dos persiguieron a Arbery en su camioneta mientras éste corría para ejercitarse, y lo mataron a balazos como habría hecho una pareja de caballeros de la noche del Ku Klux Klan. Los linchamientos no paran nunca.

“Manejar siendo negro”, “correr siendo negro”, “dormir en casa siendo negro”. Floyd no es más que la última adición a la lista de afroamericanos y latinos asesinados por la policía en un país en el que la represión racista siempre ha sido la punta de lanza de la explotación capitalista. Esto hunde sus raíces en los días de la esclavitud, cuando los esclavos fugados eran cazados por escuadrones de captura de esclavos. Las patrullas de entonces fueron la base de los departamentos de policía de la actualidad. En décadas recientes, la policía y los tribunales han aumentado la encarcelación en masa, particularmente de varones negros, mientras que los policías en todo el país matan en promedio más de 1,500 civiles al año, en tanto que los hombres negros tienen cinco veces más probabilidades de ser asesinados por la policía que los varones blancos (véase “Black America Under the Gun: Workers Revolution Will Avenge Philando Castile”, *The Internationalist* No. 48, mayo-junio de 2017).

En Minneapolis, la policía ha asesinado a 31 civiles desde el 2000. De éstos, 21 eran afroamericanos. Como en 2015, la ciudad ha pedido una investigación de derechos civiles a cargo del Buró Federal de Investigación (FBI). Las investigaciones que realiza el FBI a departamentos de policía desde Chicago y Baltimore hasta Ferguson, Missouri han demostrado que éstos están empapados de racismo, pero no han cambiado nada.

Otra estratagema a la que suele recurrirse para disfrazar la naturaleza racista de las policías consiste en poner algunos “rostros negros (y latinos) en altos puestos” para encabezar la policía. Arradondo es el primer jefe negro de la policía de Minneapolis. Reemplazó a Janée Harteau, quien era la encarnación del sueño de la política de la identidad de los liberales: se trató de la primera mujer indígena norteamericana, abiertamente homosexual, en encabezar a la policía: todo en una. Introdujo cámaras corporales y “entrenamiento con respecto a los prejuicios implícitos”. No obstante, el racismo policiaco no es algo implícito, sino que es abierto y *sistémico*: expresa la función y naturaleza de la policía y del “sistema de justicia criminal” en esta racista sociedad capitalista. Harteau se las arregló para endurecerse a lo largo de la crisis causada por el asesinato de Clark, pero fue obligada a renunciar después de que la policía asesinó a una mujer blanca australiana, Justine Damond, afuera de su casa, después de que llamó para reportar un posible ataque sexual. Esto ocurrió apenas unas semanas después de que el policía latino que mató a Philando Castile fuera exonerado. Cualquiera que

sea su ascendencia étnica, el trabajo de la policía es imponer la “ley y el orden” del capitalismo racista.

Una exigencia que se escuchó en las protestas del jueves, repetida por varios grupos de la izquierda oportunista, es el llamado a “encarcelar a los policías asesinos”. *Ciertamente, Derek Chauvin, el policía que encajó su rodilla en el cuello de George Floyd hasta matarlos, Tou Thao, quien se mantuvo a su lado y protegió a su compañero asesino, así como los otros dos oficiales involucrados, son todos culpables de asesinato y deben pasar el resto de sus vidas tras las rejas.* Pero como marxistas revolucionarios, debemos advertir que nada de esto va a pasar en los capitalistas Estados Unidos: los políticos burgueses harán todo lo que esté a su alcance para proteger a sus asesinos profesionales en uniforme. De manera similar, los llamados de izquierdistas reformistas a favor de la “policía de proximidad”, el “control comunitario de la policía” y otras fórmulas del estilo sólo siembran ilusiones, que pueden ser explotadas por políticos capitalistas habilidosos, como acaba de hacer el alcalde de Minneapolis Frey al pedir que se encarcele y enjuicie al policía asesino Chauvin. (La congresista demócrata Ilhan Omar, una de las figuras favoritas de los seudosocialistas, ni siquiera llegó a eso, y pidió tan sólo que se realizara una investigación.)

Quienes están del lado de los oprimidos no deben apelar al estado de los patrones, sino a *nuestras propias* fuerzas, sobre todo, las de la clase obrera. Después de que Jamar Clark fuera asesinado en 2015, más de 200 sindicalistas de las Ciudades Melleras y sus alrededores protestaron afuera de



George Floyd

la 4a delegación de policía. Entre los manifestantes había miembros de la Asociación de Enfermeras de Minnesota, Carteros, Trabajadores de la Salud afiliados al SEIU, de la Federación de Maestros de Saint Paul y del local 7250 del CWA, sindicato de trabajadores de las telecomunicaciones. *Hoy necesitamos mucho más.*

Los trabajadores con conciencia de clase y los defensores de los derechos democráticos deben responder al asesinato policiaco de George Floyd luchando a favor de **jacciones masivas de trabajadores a las que se unan la población negra y todos los oprimidos para paralizar por completo Minneapolis y Saint Paul!** Esto supone **romper con los demócratas y con todos los partidos y políticos capitalistas**. En prácticamente cada ciudad grande en los Estados Unidos, *los alcaldes demócratas son los jefes de los racistas policías asesinos*. Es urgentemente necesario **construir un partido obrero revolucionario**, pues es un hecho ineludible que *sólo se podrá hacer justicia a George Floyd, y todos los demás asesinados por este sistema racista, mediante una revolución socialista*. Sólo así es que se podrá derribar al estado capitalista asesino y abrir la vía hacia la liberación de los negros y la emancipación de todos los explotados y oprimidos. ■

Screenshot from bystander cellphone video

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¡Acción obrera/negra/inmigrante para combatir el terrorismo racista!

Furia por asesinato policíaco de George Floyd en Minneapolis

28 de MAYO – “No puedo respirar”, decía George Floyd una y otra vez mientras un policía encajaba su rodilla en su cuello. Esta tortura asesina siguió durante al menos siete minutos, mientras que Floyd, de St. Louis Park, Minnesota, yacía esposado en el pavimento. Finalmente, dejó de respirar. Otro hombre negro asesinado por la policía racista. Para millones alrededor del país y en todo el mundo, este hecho hizo recordar de manera conmovedora e insoportable las últimas palabras de Eric Garner, el hombre de Staten Island, Nueva York, que fue asfixiado hasta la muerte por un policía en 2014, mientras repetía una y otra vez, once veces en total, “no puedo respirar”. En un video grabado con un teléfono celular de este linchamiento racista aparece Floyd rogando desesperadamente a su asesino, un policía de Minneapolis: “Por favor, por favor, por favor, no puedo respirar. ¡Por favor, hombre!” (Star Tribune, 27 de mayo).

Miles marcharon en Minneapolis la tarde del martes, 26 de mayo, coreando consignas como “Black lives matter” (las vidas de los negros cuentan), “No puedo respirar” y exigiendo el arresto y enjuiciamiento de los cuatro policías responsables del asesinato de Floyd. Los manifestantes se reunieron en la calle 38 y en la avenida Chicago, donde Floyd fue asesinado, llenando las calles en todas direcciones. Después marcharon a lo largo de casi cinco kilómetros hasta la sede de la 3ra delegación de la Policía de Minneapolis. Ahí se quebró ventanas y una patrulla de la policía fue destrozada. Algunos jóvenes manifestantes se treparon a la azotea del edificio. Cuando se desplegó la policía antimotines en su contra, lanzando gas pimienta y disparando balas de goma, los manifestantes montaron barricadas con carritos de supermercado de

un almacén Target situado al otro lado de la calle y respondieron al ataque con justa furia. ¡Qué bueno!

Siguieron protestas a gran escala el miércoles y se extendieron a otras ciudades. En Minneapolis, una manada de policías llenó el área en la que las furiosas protestas estaban teniendo lugar. Ahora el alcalde Jacob Frey ha solicitado el “apoyo” de la Guardia Nacional. Encima del asesinato completamente gratuito de un hombre negro, ahora añaden la represión racista de la comunidad. Mientras la ira se extendía, un chofer de autobuses de Metro Transit, miembro del local 1005 del sindicato de trabajadores del transporte público (Amalgamated Transit Union – ATU) anunció que se rehusaba a transportar a manifestantes que la policía arrestara, lo que exigía la policía, y llamó a sus compañeros del sindicato a obrar del mismo modo. Frente a la amenaza policíaca en contra de las masas que exigen justicia para George Floyd, el movimiento obrero en su conjunto, lo mismo que los defensores de la población negra y de los derechos democráticos, deben exigir: **Policía y Guardia Nacional ¡fuera ya!**

Este ataque racista se da en medio de la pandemia de COVID-19, que está matando a afroamericanos y latinos en proporciones abrumadoramente altas. La opresión racista resultante del capitalismo implica que los más explotados y los más oprimidos –quienes son más “esenciales” para las ganancias y más desechables para los explotadores– son los que tienen más probabilidades de morir. Y ahora, la racista policía, el puño de hierro de la clase dirigente, asesina por asfixia a otro hombre negro. **¡Basta ya!** Esto tiene que terminar. Para ponerle fin, **tenemos que derribar este sistema capitalista de racismo y muerte.**



David Joles/AP

¡Minneapolis arde! Cientos de manifestantes aplaudieron cuando se incendió a la odiada 3ra Delegación, tristemente célebre por sus policías brutales.

Las comunidades de afroamericanos, latinoamericanos, indígenas y de todos los sectores explotados y empobrecidos de las Ciudades Mellizas (Minneapolis y St. Paul), entre las cuales existe una considerable población somalí, han sido desde hace mucho objeto de hostigamiento policíaco. En 2015, Jamar Clark, de 24 años, recibió un disparo en la cabeza de parte de policías de Minneapolis mientras estaba esposado y en el suelo, cerca de la sede de la 4ta. delegación de la policía. Al año siguiente, Philando Castile fue asesinado a tiros en su carro, frente a su novia y a su hija de cuatro años, por un policía en Falcon Heights, un suburbio de la ciudad de St. Paul. En 2018, Thurman Blevins fue asesinado a tiros a manos de dos policías blancos mientras rogaba “Por favor, no me disparen. Déjenme en paz.” En diciembre pasado, Chiasher Fong Vue, un hombre de la etnia hmong, fue asesinado por un escuadrón de nueve policías de Minneapolis que dispararon más de un centenar de balas.

Hoy, cuando la pandemia ha arrojado un desempleo masivo, la clase dominante teme que el asesinato de George Floyd pueda llevar a un resurgimiento del movimiento Black Lives Matter (BLM) que comenzó tras el asesinato de Trayvon Martin en 2012 y que llegó a su punto culminante en 2014, cuando cientos de miles participaron en manifestaciones de protesta en contra del asesinato policíaco de Michael Brown, Eric Garner y tantos otros. Ya que derechistas sitiaron el capitolio estatal de Minnesota para exigir que se ponga fin a los cierres ordenados por el gobernador del Partido Demócrata de Granjeros y Trabajadores (DFL, por sus siglas en inglés), un clamor en contra de la represión racista podría desencadenar una reacción violenta, como cuando miembros armados del Ku Klux Klan atacaron una protesta del movi-

miento BLM en contra del asesinato policíaco de Jamar Clark.

Entonces, el alcalde Frey y el jefe de la policía negro Medaria Arradondo se movieron rápidamente para intentar salir airoso frente a las protestas. “Ser negro en Estados Unidos no debería ser una sentencia de muerte”, dijo Frey, tras ver el video del asesinato grabado por un testigo. El martes, Arradondo despidió a los cuatro policías involucrados en el arresto de Floyd. Al día siguiente, el alcalde dijo que el policía que había encajado su rodilla en el cuello de Floyd debía ser arrestado y juzgado. Pero como escribimos tras el asesinato policíaco de Clark:

“Ni demócratas ni republicanos pondrán fin –ni pueden hacerlo– al terrorismo racista de la policía porque dependen de los perros guardianes del capital para mantener la ‘ley y el orden’. Algunos de estos políticos fingen apoyar protestas como las de Black Lives Matter para asegurarse de que no se ‘salgan de control’ (es decir, para evitar que representen una amenaza contra el dominio de United Healthcare, Target, Best Buy, 3M, U.S. Bancorp, General Mills y otras empresas gigantes. Y si los manifestantes no son aplacados con la bazofia de que ‘compartimos tu dolor’, los liberales mandan a la policía”

–“Minneapolis: ‘Cops and Klan Go Hand in Hand’,” *The Internationalist* No. 42, enero-febrero de 2016

En las masivas manifestaciones de protesta del movimiento BLM de 2014, una consigna coreada por el Grupo Internacionalista, “Eric Garner, Michael Brown, – Shut the whole sytem down!” [Eric Garner, Michael Brown, ¡hay que parar todo el sistema!] se extendió rápidamente entre los manifestantes. Pero con todas las manifestaciones de masas *sigue en la página 23*



Foto: The Internationalist

Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas formó parte del contingente internacionalista en la marcha del 19 de junio contra el racista terror policíaco.