

George Floyd's Murderer Convicted, Police Impunity Remains **One Year After George Floyd,** **Racist Killer Cops Keep Killing**

MINNEAPOLIS/NEW YORK, May 25 – On the first anniversary of the cold-blooded murder of George Floyd by killer cop Derek Chauvin, it is clear to all that, despite the massive protests against racist police brutality that swept the country, there has been no change in the treatment of black people at the hands of the enforcers of “law and order.” Nor, for that matter, was there any change after the original Black Lives Matters protests in 2014 following the police murders of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Laquan McDonald, Tamir Rice and many others; or after the murder of Freddie Gray and Sandra Bland in 2015, or the murder of Philando Castile in 2016, or . . . Year in and year out, wanton police killing of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asian Americans, as well as hundreds of white working people goes on and on.

The grisly death toll tells the story. Already, in the first four months of 2021, 700 people died in encounters with police in the U.S., almost six a day, the same rate as last year when over 2,200 were killed (well above the 2000-2019 yearly average of 1,400 deaths caused by police).¹

¹ <https://fatalencounters.org/>.



“Justice for Daunte Wright” on the street in front of the memorial for George Floyd in Minneapolis, April 12. Amid the trial of killer cop Derek Chauvin, racist police terror never stopped.

During the seven-week trial of Derek Chauvin, as the whole country was on pins and needles awaiting the outcome, 179 were killed, including 13-year-old Adam Toledo in

Chicago, shot down with his hands raised the day trial testimony began. All-round racist president Donald Trump incited police killings with his incendiary rhetoric about shoot-

ing “looters,” but in the first hundred days of the administration of Democrat Joe Biden, more than 650 people died in police actions. The fact that one badge-toting killer was convicted of murder changes nothing.

Meanwhile, we are hearing a lot of earnest talk of police “reforms,” of “de-escalation” and “anti-bias” training, of changing rules on use of deadly force, improving police-community relations and the like. The Democratic House of Representatives has passed a “George Floyd Justice in Policing Act” (no Republicans voted for it, and it is going nowhere in the Senate) with a few reforms, like “incentivizing banning of chokeholds,” banning no-knock warrants in federal drug cases and lifting “qualified immunity” for police. But for all the BS about “transparency” and “accountability,” and the bill’s pious calls to “empower our communities to reimagine public safety in an equitable and just way,” none of this will make a difference. The appeals to “defund” and even “abolish the police” are gone. Today, the front-runners in the New York

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Biden, Sanders, Democrats Arm Zionist Butchers **Defend the Palestinians** **Against Israeli War** **For Arab-Hebrew Workers Revolution!**

MAY 18 – The storming of the al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by hundreds of Israeli police on Monday, May 10 was the opening shot of renewed Zionist war on the Palestinian Arab people. While the imperialist media talk of military conflict between Israel and Hamas, the Islamist governing party in the besieged enclave of Gaza, the reality is a one-sided slaughter of Palestinians by the Israeli war machine. The death toll tells the story: over 220 Arabs killed so far, more than 60 of them children, compared to 6 Israeli Jewish civilians dead.

In addition, due to Israeli bombing electrical power lines have been knocked out while fuel for the sole power plant is running out and blackouts in Gaza are up to 16 hours a day. At least 800,000 people are without access to fresh water and sewage is spilling into the streets. More than 700 hous-

ing units have been destroyed, including 76 high-rise apartment buildings. Schools and hospitals have been hit by Israel’s precision bombs and a news media tower was deliberately destroyed. The United Nations reports that at least 58,000 residents of the narrow Gaza strip have been displaced from their homes, with 47,000 of them crammed into U.N. schools.

Added to this is the terror unleashed by Zionist-fascist vigilantes against Palestinians in Israeli cities of mixed Arab and Jewish population. In the occupied West Bank, Israeli military forces have fired on protest demonstrations while ultra-rightist settlers have attacked Palestinians. The rightist Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who launched the war in order to stay in office, and the military that is pounding Gaza

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Destroyed buildings in Beit Hanoun, Gaza, after May 14 Israeli air strike. Israel is targeting residential areas, leaving tens of thousands homeless.

Pickets Shut Down Job Sites Daily

Portland Painters Gearing Up: Now's the Time – Strike to Win!

By Class Struggle Workers –
Portland

PORTLAND, OR, June 21 – Members of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) Local 10 in Portland, Oregon, deemed “essential workers,” kept construction booming as they worked all through the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, their bosses in the Signatory Painting Contractors Organization (SPCO) took in \$20 million in Paycheck Protection Program “loans” which they may never have to pay back. Yet even as they are flush with cash, contractors are offering a “raise” so low (25¢/hour, less than 1% for a journeyman painter) that it would amount to pennies a week. This is also supposed to cover increased health insurance costs, and along with the rising cost of living this would amount to a *pay cut*.

But the painters are not giving in to the SPCO contractors’ bullying tactics. On May 24, ballots of Local 10 members were counted and 95% voted to authorize a strike. It would be the first painters strike in over 40 years in the Portland area. As the results of the vote became official, the Northwest Oregon Labor council unanimously adopted a solidarity resolution brought by IATSE (stage hands) Local 28 in support of a painters strike. And since they may be a little out of practice, painters have been gearing up for the strike with a series of unfair labor practice (ULP) pickets that have successfully shut down or greatly reduced work at several job sites across the metropolitan area.

Dubbed the “summer of chaos,” the pickets kicked off on May 21 at McDaniel High School, followed on May 28 and June 1 at a downtown apartment project, and on June 4 at an office remodeling. Then on June 7, 9, 10 and 11 at Christensen Oil; on June 10 at a remodeling of a house owned by Reed College; on June 14 at a wholesale food warehouse, and on June 18 at Siegner and Co. (one of the biggest contractors in the SPCO) and Christensen Oil. These have been the biggest painters pickets seen in Portland since the 1970s, and other construction trades locals have respected the lines. *Northwest Labor Press* (2 June) reported that at McDaniel High School, “an

estimated 120 members of over a dozen other unions had honored the strike picket line, giving up a day’s wages to show solidarity with the union brothers and sisters....”

When painters from Siegner and Co. who picketed at Christensen Oil Co. were targeted for retaliation after their courageous four-day picket and shutdown at the jobsite, Local 10 put out an “all out” call to Siegner employees, and dozens showed up to picket the contractor. The largest job under that contractor, 50 miles away in Salem, was shut down as all of their employees chose to aid the picket at Siegner. One picketer was struck by the car of a Siegner founder as he bullied his way in to the gate, but the pickets persevered. After discussion, a second picket was sent to Christensen, the job site where the workers had been retaliated against, and again the job was shut down.

Class-struggle militants in Local 10 have called for organizing strike preparation teams at all affected shops, for an elected strike committee to organize and direct strike activities, and for massive picket lines that can effectively shut job sites down. Solidarity across union and trade lines has already been key to shutting down individual jobs and such solidarity must be repeated *en masse* for the strike to be successful. As the labor adage goes, “An injury to one is an injury to all!” The construction trades in Portland are seeing the truth of this fundamental principle play out before their eyes.

In a previous contract battle, under pressure from the ranks, a binding arbitration clause was eliminated. But for the right to strike to be effective, labor’s power must be used. Painters’ pay has been lagging for years – partly because they haven’t struck for four decades – and the \$2.62 raise last year has still left them as one of the lowest-paid of the construction trades. As bargaining continues



Getting ready: 70 members of IUPAT Local 10 picketing at Christensen Oil on June 14.

behind closed doors (the bosses know what’s being negotiated, the workers are kept in the dark), painters should demand a *large raise* – *no less than 15%*, and even that would only begin to catch up.

There have now been weeks of preparations. It’s high time to *spread the pickets to the bigger job sites* (Intel, Nike, airport) and *strike all SPCO sites*, while elected delegates from the shop teams need to *make the strike committee a reality* to take their place in leading this battle that will require a full mobilization of the union membership – and *effective solidarity ac-*

tion by the construction trades and all of Northwest Oregon/Southwest Washington labor. We need to make those solidarity resolutions count.

Portland is home to some of the largest construction projects in North America today. A solid painters strike here would send a message to corona profit-bloated conglomerates around the country: labor is ready to fight. To win, all jobs under the master area agreement must be shut down. The watchword is: *one out, all out – picket lines mean don’t cross, period!* We make that stick and we can win. ■

Right-Wing Recall Campaign Targets Kshama Sawant

Seattle city council member Kshama Sawant, a supporter of Socialist Alternative, is facing a recall campaign fueled by right-wing forces. The recall grew out of a call by Seattle’s Democratic mayor Jenny Durkan last June (2020) to investigate the council member after Sawant had demanded Durkan’s resignation or impeachment for unleashing police brutality against anti-racist demonstrators. The mayor charged Sawant with using her office to promote the “Tax Amazon” campaign; supporting demonstrations at the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ) that occupied several blocks in Sawant’s district; letting demonstrators into City Hall during COVID lockdowns, and leading protesters to Durkan’s home, which was supposedly secret “because of her law enforcement background” (*Seattle Times*, 28 June 2020).

The recall process was kicked off with the filing of a petition last August based on the mayor’s complaints. Petition sponsors are now collecting signatures and if they gather a little over 10,000 signatures (a quarter of the votes cast in the 2019 election when Sawant was reelected by a narrow margin) in District 3, a yes/no vote on her removal would be held, possibly in the November general election. If Sawant is ousted, the city council would select a replacement to finish her term. The recall campaign is being pushed by real estate interests in particular, notably billionaire property developer Martin Selig (a prominent backer

of Donald Trump) and Sawant’s 2019 opponent, Egan Orion, leader of the Broadway Business Improvement Area.

We are opposed to the reactionary recall campaign, while making clear the counterposition between our communist standpoint and the politics upheld by Sawant and SAlt. It should be clear that none of the infractions she is charged with are reprehensible from the standpoint of the working class. The recall is clearly a reaction to the CHAZ occupation which greatly angered Republican Trump, the police and the Democratic Party establishment of Seattle and Washington state. However, as we noted last summer, while the occupation was hailed by virtually the entire opportunist left, “The arch-reformist Socialist Alternative (SAlt) had a little trouble with this, as its city council member Kshama Sawant had voted for and vociferously supported Police Chief Carmen Best” (“Abolish the Police’ Under Capitalism?” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020).

From the time of her initial election in 2013, we have noted that SAlt’s social-democratic program is no “alternative” at all to the Democratic Party, and in fact Sawant was backed by top Democrats (see “‘Socialist’ Elected in Seattle on Platform of Liberal/Populist Reforms,” *The Internationalist* No. 36, January-February 2014). Her call for a \$15/hour minimum wage (which SAlt made its signature campaign)

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Oppose G7/NATO Imperialist War Drive Against China, Russia

Andrew Parsons/No. 10 Downing Street



Group of 7 imperialist leaders in Cornwall, Britain, joined U.S. president Biden in demonizing China over COVID origins. But who contained the virus?

In back-to-back summit meetings in mid-June, imperialist leaders of the Group of 7, meeting in Cornwall, England, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) meeting in Brussels, Belgium, issued a pair of sabre-rattling communiqués demonizing China and denouncing Russia. The *New York Times* (14 June) noted the “distinctly Cold War overtones” of the confabs.

The G7 (Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United States) went after Beijing for cracking down on anti-China rioters in Hong Kong, echoed Washington’s Big Lie about supposed “genocide” against Uighurs and took up the U.S. call for an “investigation” of the origins of the coronavirus. As we have shown in detail, the 2019 Hong Kong rioters were financed and advised by Washington, and the World Uyghur Congress is a creature of U.S. agencies.

As for Donald Trump’s “Wuhan lab leak” conspiracy theory, now embraced by his successor Joe Biden, there is no evidence for this at all (only rampant “suspicions”). Its purpose is to cover up the fact that capitalist countries worldwide were unable to protect their populations from the COVID-19 pandemic, and in fact aided its spread, leading to almost 4 million deaths, while the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state, with its socialized planned economy, was able to contain the deadly virus in a matter of weeks.

While the G7 high-handedly ordered Moscow to stop its supposedly “destabilizing behaviour,” the next day in Brussels, the NATO communiqué was positively frothing, denouncing now-capitalist Russia 62 times. The charges range from carrying out military

maneuvers on Russia’s own territory and modernizing its nuclear arsenal (in response to the U.S. doing the same) to interfering in foreign countries through proxies. This is pretty rich coming from the war mongers who still have occupation troops in Afghanistan, 20 years after invading that Central Asian country.

The imperialist military alliance demanded that Russia get out of Crimea, whose ethnic Russian population voted to join the Russian federation, and stop aiding eastern Ukrainian rebels fighting against the fascist and Ukrainian nationalist forces that have tried to conquer the region for the last seven years. These demands are fostered by the superannuated Cold Warriors that infest the Biden administration. Victoria Nuland, who as a top aide of Hillary Clinton coordinated U.S. intervention with Ukrainian fascists, is now back as a top State Department official.

We repeatedly warned that Biden’s election would bring U.S. war moves against China, one of the few areas of “bipartisan” agreement between Republicans and Democrats. Today in Washington, the new administration is pitching all its initiatives, from education to the infrastructure bill, with anti-China rhetoric. And as the *New York Times* (29 May) wrote of the Biden budget: “The Pentagon pivots to a possible war with China.”

While much of the left parrots imperialist anti-China war propaganda, Trotskyists call to defend the deformed workers state against the threat of imperialist aggression and internal counterrevolution, while fighting to replace the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy with an internationalist leadership fighting for world socialist revolution. ■

is also supported by many bourgeois figures, including Amazon’s Jeff Bezos. Sawant embraced Democratic senator Bernie Sanders and hailed the election of five members of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) to Congress as Democrats. This past March, Sawant announced she was joining the DSA, which is functionally part of the Democratic Party. Many SALT supporters have done likewise.

The Internationalist Group has underlined that “the Democrats are the key strategic enemy whose stranglehold on labor, black and immigrant organizations and pop-

ulations must be broken.” We call to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party that fights against all the capitalist parties and politicians. Their pseudo-socialist pretenses aside, SALT and Sawant instead chain workers and the oppressed to this imperialist party of war, poverty and racism. For those who would like to investigate this vital issue, we recommend reading the Internationalist Group pamphlet, *Left Reformists in Existential Crisis* (June 2019), at www.internationalist.org, with documents of militants who broke from SALT to take up the fight for authentic Trotskyism. ■

CUNY Union Denounces U.S. Anti-China Drive

On May 13, the Delegate Assembly of the Professional Staff Congress (PSC), the union representing 30,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York (CUNY), passed a resolution to oppose “the steady build-up to war with China by the US government.” Proposed by the PSC’s International Committee, a long-standing official body of the union, it passed by a wide margin, overcoming opposition from the top leadership. We print the resolution in full below. That it was passed at the largest urban public university in the U.S. is a significant and important event – one that has been met with almost universal silence in both the big-business and “left” press.

Over the years and despite divergent viewpoints, Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) activists in the PSC have worked with International Committee members on a number of issues, going back to the successful campaign to spike the sinister “Homeland Security” course at CUNY’s Borough of Manhattan Community College (see “‘Fatherland Security’ Hits CUNY,” *Revolution* No. 2, October 2004) and PSC actions in solidarity with teachers in Oaxaca, Mexico. Though not involved in producing the China resolution, the CSEW backed it and highlighted the importance for the entire labor movement of this step.

At the Delegate Assembly (DA), a CSEW spokesman called on fellow delegates to vote “yes,” noting that Democratic president Joe Biden (whose election was supported by the PSC together with the rest of the union movement) is rapidly escalating U.S. imperialism’s anti-China war drive, which threatens humanity with World War III. With Israel launching its renewed war on the Palestinian people the day before the DA, he also called on the union to stand forthrightly with the Palestinian people.

At the June DA, after a fight over the content of a “Resolution in Support of the Palestinian People,” it was passed. While containing many “Whereases” and standard liberal phrases, it does state that “the PSC-CUNY condemns the massacre of Palestinians by the Israeli state.” It will be crucial to defend the union in the face of the inevitable attempts to whip up new witch hunts by an unholy alliance of rightists, Zionists, China-bashers, anti-Palestinian and anti-Asian racists.

No Cold War with China

Whereas, US belligerence towards China is growing in what some call a Cold War with China;

Whereas, we have learned from the “war on terror” that wars “abroad” often translate into wars at “home”, with the violent targeting of racialized communities;

Whereas, incessant China-bashing by the

mainstream media is inflaming imperialist, xenophobic, racist, and misogynist ideologies, triggering violence against Chinese, Chinese-American and Asian communities at home, such as the March 16, 2021 shooting of six Asian women in Atlanta, and the more than 3,700 incidents of violence, discrimination, and violations of civil rights against Asian Americans reported since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, some of which directly impact CUNY students, workers and the broader community;¹

Whereas, anti-Chinese racism has long roots in the U.S., including the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the exploitation of Chinese workers who built the transcontinental railroad, the current demonization of China serves as a distraction from the coronavirus pandemic and weakening economy at home;

Whereas, US military spending is expanding at the expense of funding education, healthcare, housing, and other essential social needs;²

Whereas, a Cold War with China harms students, researchers and educators in China and the U.S. by erecting barriers to international academic collaboration and exchange;

Whereas, the PSC, in solidarity with international workers traumatized by US wars and military occupation of their homelands, has consistently declared its resolute support for anti-war campaigns, and successfully brought anti-war resolutions for adoption by our affiliates NYSUT and the AFT;

Whereas, we are still learning that ‘cold’ and ‘hot’ wars leave wounds that never heal and permanent scars on peoples, nations, and even landscapes;

Therefore be it resolved, that the PSC opposes and rejects the steady build-up to war with China by the US government, and declares that as anti-war US trade unionists and educators it is our duty to join in solidarity with Chinese fellow-workers, educators and scholars to oppose US military spending for a Cold War in China, which leads to further racism at home; and

Be it further resolved, that the PSC will bring this resolution forward for consideration by our state affiliate NYSUT, our national affiliate the AFT, and other labor bodies, so as to build a movement among US teachers and unionists against a Cold War with China. ■

¹ Yeung, R., Yellow Horse, A., Popovic, T., Lim, R., *Stop AAPI Hate National Report*, February 28, 2021 [online] <https://caasf.org/stop-aapi-hate/>. Accessed March 19, 2021. [Footnotes from original resolution. – Ed.]

² See <https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/03/29/the-real-danger-of-the-pentagons-new-indo-pacific-plan/>

May 29: Lula 2022 Campaign and the “Broad Front” in the Streets,
The Bourgeoisie in Deep Trouble Over COVID Catastrophe

Brazil: “Bolsonaro Out” Is Not Enough

Fight for a Workers and Peasants Government!

**Vaccines For All –
For Workers Control
of Public Health!
Forge a Leninist-Trotskyist
Revolutionary Party**

The following article is translated from a June 18 supplement to Vanguarda Operária, newspaper of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic that has catastrophically increased the number of victims, now close to half a million dead, demonstrations against the bonapartist government of Jair Bolsonaro were held on Saturday, May 29 in more than 200 cities and 20 state capitals and the Federal District (Brasília). Those protests brought out more than 100,000 demonstrators centered on the call for the impeachment of the pandemic president with the slogan “Fora Bolsonaro!” (Bolsonaro out).

Endless posters, banners and flags called for acceleration of the vaccination campaign against COVID-19 in Brazil. Many also demanded raising emergency aid to R\$600 (US\$117) a month. Other demands included defense of educational institutions, targeted by brutal cuts in the federal budget, and an end to police violence. The emblematic case of this plague was the massacre in the Jacarezinho favela (slum) in Rio de Janeiro on May 6, where 28 people and one police officer were killed by police bullets.

The euphoric crowds that took to the streets on May 29, far larger than the numbers of Bolsonaro supporters who paraded on May 1 at Rio de Janeiro’s Copacabana beach, surprised not only the bonapartist government (of a military/police character) of Bolsonaro but also the organizers of the Brazil Popular Front and the People Without Fear Front. Everyone thought that the terror caused by the pandemic carnage, and the fear of losing their jobs, would intensify the #ficaemcasa (stay at home) appeals. It didn’t turn out that way.

The popular-frontist left just wanted a bland, amorphous movement. Nothing too radical that would scare off the right-wing “opposition” to Bolsonaro. Anything at all radical could get in the way of building the “Broad Front” that is forming with the appeals and coaxing from Lula (ex-president



Indigenous protesters in Brasília call for “Bolsonaro Out!” in massive demonstrations on June 19 which brought out an estimated 750,000 protesters in over 350 cities nationwide.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva) in the context of the COVID-19 Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) led by the old fox, Senator Renan Calheiros. Now the labor federations, which were silent on May 29, along with the two popular fronts have called for a “Bolsonaro Out” day of protest on June 19, with the same insipid program.

On the streets on May 29, the mood was different. Aiming to get even, the “Bolsonaro Out” demonstrators hit the streets to contest the domination of the so-called “bolsominions” (Bolsonaro minions). But what the CPI masks is that the coronavirus pandemic is just one of the crises of capitalism. We can see how the bourgeoisie has been profiting greatly from this pandemic, first by brutally driving down the value of labor power. In Brazil, one of the worst minimum wages in the world was cut in half, as emergency aid of R\$600 has now dropped to R\$300. It’s an outrage, and it will be hard to contain the fury of the mobilized masses.

Not since Bolsonaro’s inauguration, and more precisely since the “#EleNão” (Not Him) protest of 29 September 2018, have demonstrations of such size been seen.¹ However, as was the case then, it’s not enough to demand the removal of the COVID death

¹ See “Brazil Elections: For Workers Action Against the Election Fraud and the Militarist Danger,” *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018.

president, and in particular to call for his impeachment by the Congress that in 2016 ousted President Dilma Rousseff. In order that the racist general Hamilton Mourão (the vice president) occupy the presidential chair? Or, if he too is impeached, new elections for this den of thieves and murderers that legalized slave labor? No, what we need is class struggle to overthrow this rotting system.

Whether it is Bolsonaro’s federal government, the state governments of the right-wing “opposition” or the popular front, all the capitalist governments have failed to protect the population from the deadly plague and the unemployment that has resulted. This is in stark contrast with the Chinese workers state which, while bureaucratically deformed, with its planned economy was able to contain the virus. The experience of the coronavirus pandemic proves that capitalism means death for millions around the world. We must fight for a workers and peasants government, as part of an international socialist revolution.

“Bolsonaro Out” Reflects the Needs of a Bourgeoisie in Deep Trouble

On March 8, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) approved the ruling by Justice Edson Fachin, which nullified the rigged trial of former president Lula. After being imprisoned for 580 days, the former metal workers leader and two-time president for the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, or PT) is now free and can again run for the Palácio do Planalto (Brazil’s White House). The 2016 indictment and his arrest two years later were intended to prevent him from being elected

² The 2017 “Labor Reform” declared that rural workers could be paid “in wages or remuneration of any kind.” An accompanying bill specified that this “remuneration” could be food and housing, including in barracks. The government then cut the budget of the Labor Ministry agency investigating slave labor in half. Under Bolsonaro, the Labor Ministry was abolished altogether, along with the National Commission for the Erradication of Slave Labor.

for a third term in 2018.³ Now his release opens the way for his candidacy for 2022, since Lula was always at the top of the electoral preferences in the polls.

It’s a turn of events that reflects the shifting interests of the bourgeoisie, which has been shaken by the COVID crisis. And not just in Brazil. The charges against the leader of the Workers Party were part of “Operation Lava Jato” (Operation Car Wash), in which Judge Sérgio Moro headed the “anti-corruption” offensive of U.S. imperialism aiming at

privatization of the state-owned petroleum company Petrobras. The Democratic administration of Barack Obama (with Joe Biden as vice-president) thought that it no longer needed the services of the PT, which had governed the country since 2002 in the framework of a coalition with bourgeois parties, a “popular front.”

In fact, Lula has always placed himself at the service of the bourgeoisie. It was in 1989 that for the first time he formed the Brazil Popular Front with the long-since social-democratized Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) and the bourgeois Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB). (The following year the leaders of the PT leaders in Volta Redonda, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, were expelled for refusing to support a popular front in the “Steel City.” In 1996, they formed the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International.) At that time (1989-1992), as a consequence of the imperialist-led counterrevolution that destroyed the

³ See “Brazil Elections: For Workers Action Against the Election Fraud and the Militarist Danger,” in *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018.

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The June 29 protests took place on the day the toll of COVID-19 dead in Brazil officially passed 500,000.



On June 12, Brazil’s bonapartist president Jair Bolsonaro (center) led ominous motorcycle cavalcade in São Paulo organized by shooting and cycle clubs and members of the “bullet caucus” of pro-police legislators.

Smash the Fascist Networks Through Worker/Immigrant Action

Germany: The “Neukölln Complex”

State Apparatus Complicit with Fascists

The following article is translated from *Permanente Revolution* No. 5 (Spring 2021), the newspaper of the *Internationalistische Gruppe*, German section of the *League for the Fourth International*.

The “Neukölln Complex” ominously reveals the entanglement of the state apparatus of political, judicial and police with Nazi fascists. This phenomenon, of which there are an untold number of examples nationally, can be seen in this district of Berlin as only one facet of a comprehensive network, of systematic cooperation of the state with fascist and fascistic forces.

Neukölln is a district under siege, both by the coronavirus and by the bourgeois state, which in Berlin is administered by the “red-red-green” coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Left Party (Die Linke) and Greens,¹ especially by its racist crusade against alleged immigrant “clans” and against shisha bars (hookah lounges). And this state repression has always had its fascist outriders, although officially classified only as “right-wing extremists.”

Since 2010, Neukölln has repeatedly been a focal point of fascist activities and murders, including the assassination of Burak Bektaş in April 2012, presumed to be the work of a fascist, and the murder of Luke Holland by fascist Rolf Zielesinski in September 2015. In addition, since 2016, coinciding with the rise of Alternative for Germany (AfD), there has been an ongoing series of fascist arson attacks, assaults on immigrants, death threats against journalists, trade unionists, leftists, anti-fascists and women, as well as attacks on their centers.

As of February 2020, 72 crimes, including 23 cases of arson, were officially attributed to the “right-wing extremist camp” since 2016. A few months later, *Tagesspiegel* (7 July 2020) reported: “Since September 2019, investigative authorities registered a total of 130 right-wing crimes in Neukölln, according to Senate [city government] administration data.” That would be three crimes per week. However, the left-wing research group Acoabo (“Anti-faschistische Computeraktion Berlin”) has listed 242 violent acts and other cases of aggression in the district from January 2016 to June 2020, as well as 293 incidents of pasting up or scrawling Nazi propaganda. Yet the “hard core” of the Neukölln Nazi scene is said to consist of only 15 people.

Despite multiple indications and clues pointing to a few prime suspects, it took



April 2016 demonstration on the anniversary of the death of Burak Bektaş.

police and prosecutors more than a decade to bring charges in December 2020 against two notoriously fascist gangsters in the series of arson attacks. Since the indictment was not accompanied by any new revelations about their crimes, it looked very much like a hasty attempt to “close” this politically tangled case. By the end of January, both were again at large.

“Breakdowns” in the Investigation of Fascist Violence

From the beginning, there were endless “breakdowns” in the investigation of the perpetrators and various revelations indicating direct cooperation of police and prosecutors with the fascists. While in the murder of Luke Holland, law enforcement authorities could not deny that Zielesinski was the perpetrator, due to the obvious facts of the case which took place on the open street with a shotgun, in front of too many witnesses, his equally obvious racist and fascist mindset was simply ignored by the court when assessing the motive for the crime and in not pursuing further investigations into his fascist connections. According to the judge, the possibility that this was a racist crime could not be established, although Zielesinski had made homophobic and racist comments about gays and non-German speakers in his former local pub immediately before his crime, and Luke Holland spoke English. Phil Holland, Luke’s father, exclaimed at an April 2017 memorial meeting: “We are dismayed how the judge in Luke’s case, could claim Zielesinski was not a Nazi. He had so many illegal weapons, Nazi memorabilia, Adolf Hitler busts in his apartment, equipment to make ammunition, and yet the judge claims he was not a Nazi. That is a complete whitewash!”²

Officially, therefore, this was not a fascist, political murder, and the authorities were thus not compelled to investigate Zielesinski’s fascist environment and dig up his criminal connections. We see here the paradigm of the “lone-wolf perpetrator” which the state systemati-

cally puts forward. The fascist networks are carefully protected with the lone perpetrator theory. Zielesinski was granted mitigating circumstances due to alcoholism and got off with a prison sentence of 11 years and 7 months. His milieu was not investigated.

During the trial proceedings on the murder of Luke Holland, it emerged that in the course of the investigation into the case of Burak Bektaş, a statement was made by an apparently anonymous witness at the end of 2013 that a possible perpetrator was Rolf Z., who in 2006 had already shown the witness his gun and asked for ammunition. “In addition, Z. had [the witness] drive him to the vicinity of the crime scene in order to meet his brother there ‘to shoot up’ the area. This information had already been given to the police by the whistleblower in 2006.”³

Although there were clear indications of right-wing extremist backgrounds in the two murder cases, no further investigations were carried out in this direction. Similarly with the arson series. “There is probably no other case about which so much is known and yet there is not a single investigative result,” commented Karin Wüst of the Basta group in the *Tagesspiegel* (21 December 2019). It is “simply incomprehensible why so many mishaps would accumulate, unless there are connections between LKA (state criminal investigation department) officials and right-wing extremists,” she added.

The Basta group has been protesting every Thursday since May 2019, together with victims and supporters of those targeted in right-wing attacks, in front of the State Attorney’s Office in Berlin against obvious Nazi connections in the LKA, and calling for the rightist terror attacks to be investigated. Right-wing police officers there make no secret of their racist and pro-fascist sentiments: “Raising the right arm for the Hitler salute, after all, hurts no one, and besides, crime comes almost exclusively from refugees,” said one of the police officers at the LKA offices.

The unsolved cases continue to multiply. When Heinz Ostermann, owner of the bookstore Leporello, joined the initiative of Neuköllner Buchläden gegen Rechtspopulismus und Rassismus (Neukölln Bookstores Against Right-Wing Populism and Racism) in 2016, he immediately became a victim of fascist attacks, in 2016, 2017 and 2018. First, stones were thrown at his bookstore and then there were two arson attacks on his car, the last right in front of his apartment.

The arson attack on Ostermann’s car in February 2018 took place on the same night as the arson attack on the car of Ferat Kocak, a leading member of Die Linke in Neukölln. There are no results in the investigation, and the investigation regarding the stone throwing was closed at the beginning of 2019, along with the investigation regarding many others who had been targeted. Why this is so is obvious: there was and is no interest in getting investigative results.

Special Commissions, Special Investigators: Letting Off Steam

In fact, the Neukölln complex reaches deep into the political apparatus of the capitalist state, even among the reformist “bourgeois workers parties” who support the state. SPD Interior Senator Andreas Geisel opposed the establishment of a parliamentary investigative committee which was called for by parts of Die Linke. Instead, Geisel continued to rely on the police Special Commission (Soko) “Focus”, which he created under pressure at the beginning of 2019. This was essentially composed of LKA officers, including the State Security Department LKA-5 (political police, state-level equivalent of the American FBI), whose head has himself recently come under suspicion of being close to the Nazis. In any case, the Soko was only intended to let off steam.

So what did this special commission accomplish? After complaints by plaintiffs over the lack of investigative results, it was claimed that the Soko had deciphered encrypted “enemies lists” with the names of over 500 people. These were stored on the computers of Sebastian T., the former NPD⁴ chairman of the Neukölln district, who had been jailed several times, including for grievous bodily harm, and who had long been under suspicion; and Tilo P., a former member of the AfD leadership known since 2003 for involvement in violent Nazi attacks. It is suspected that names on the enemies lists had been known for a long time but the

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¹ The SPD is the traditional social-democratic party in Germany, which for decades joined in administering the imperialist West German state; Die Linke, or Left Party, includes remnants of the former Stalinist ruling party of East Germany, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, who with the capitalist reunification of Germany transformed themselves into “left” social democrats; the Greens are a bourgeois party. Together the three parties have a majority in the Berlin state parliament and constitute the Senate, the executive body which governs Germany’s capital city.

² From: <https://berlin-gegen-nazis.de/Veranstaltung/gedenken-an-luke-holland/>.

³ From: <https://rechtsaussen.berlin/2020/09/luke-holland-wird-in-neukoelln-ermordet/>.

⁴ The National Democratic Party, the largest neo-Nazi fascist outfit. An effort to ban the NPD in 2003 failed on the grounds that the *Verfassungsschutz* (Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Germany’s FBI) had so many agents and informers in the party, including at high levels, who had written much of the incriminating material and practically controlled the party in some states (notably Nordrhein-Westfalen).



Palestinians carrying the bodies of children killed in May 16 Israeli raid in Gaza. The next day, 42 people were killed in Gaza air strikes, 10 of them children.

Zionist War...

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residential areas with artillery and bombs, vow to continue until they are finished with their lengthy target list. Yet the Zionists have failed to break Palestinian resistance.

The horrific images – of apartment buildings flattened by bombs, of a father staring at his dead children in a morgue, of an Arab being lynched by Jewish pogromists – have set off protests of tens of thousands worldwide. In Europe, imperialist rulers have tried to smear protesters as anti-Semites, breaking up and banning demonstrations against the Zionist bloodbath. In the United States, Democratic president Joe Biden has emphatically backed Israeli military action against “terrorist groups in Gaza,” when the real terrorists are the Israeli military and Zionist lynch mobs rampaging in the streets.

A White House readout of a May 17 call with Netanyahu says that Biden “expressed his support for a cease-fire,” but added that the two “discussed progress in Israel’s military operations” in Gaza. Meanwhile, the administration informed the U.S. Congress that it has approved the sale of \$735 million in precision-guided weapons to Israel. Against all those who called to put the Biden regime in office, don’t forget how, yet again, the Democratic Party of U.S. imperialism has provided the weapons Israel uses to rain death on the Palestinian people, like those U.S.-built F-16 jets that are terror-bombing Gaza.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, youth are rising up, and as the destruction of Gaza goes on relentlessly, there is talk of a third *intifada*, or uprising, following the rebellions of 1987-1993, and from 2000-2004 (the latter triggered by the butcher Ariel Sharon’s invasion of the al Aqsa compound by 1,000 police). Today a “general strike and day of action” was called by Arab labor and community groups in Israel for all of historic Palestine to protest the attacks on Gaza and on Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Israel. Hundreds of thousands stopped work, shutting down work-sites, stores and other businesses, both in Israel and the West Bank, where there were clashes with the Israeli military. Initiated by the High Follow-Up Committee of Palestinians in Israel, led by Mohammad Barakeh, a former member of the Knesset (parliament) for the leftist Hadash party, the action’s endorsers extended even to the discredited Palestinian Authority.

In the face of the new outbreak of the unending Zionist war, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call to *defend the oppressed Palestinian people* against their oppressors, in the first instance the Israeli militarists and pogromists, backed up by U.S. and European imperialism. We call to *defend Gaza, the new Warsaw Ghetto*, against the Israeli mass murderers; to *break the Israeli-Egyptian siege* that has turned this barren land of refugees into an open-air prison, to be bombed to smithereens every few years; and to *drive the Israeli army and all Zionist settlers out of occupied Palestinian territory*.

In this war, we understand that the launching of rockets from Gaza is a desperate attempt to stand up to and retaliate against the Israeli attackers, while we give no political support to the Islamist¹ forces who are mortal enemies of communism, from Iran and Syria to Palestine (where Hamas was first sponsored by Israel). Yet the fact is that in this one-sided war, Palestinians are massively outgunned by the Israeli military. The Zionist citadel will not be brought down by homemade rockets – that will take revolutionary class struggle inside Israel, and internationally.

With the imperialists near unanimous in backing Israel, and opportunist leftists tailing after Palestinian nationalism and Islamism, the LFI uniquely stands for proletarian internationalism. We urgently call for *labor action against the Zionist/imperialist war on Palestinians*, including boycotting Israeli air and sea cargo. Italian dock workers in the port of Livorno declared that they would not handle Israeli military cargo. Now the International Dockworkers Council has called on port workers to refuse to handle war materiel bound for Israel. This should be implemented immediately by port unions in the U.S. (ILA and ILWU) and worldwide.

In calling to *stop Zionist “ethnic cleansing”* from 1948 on and to *defend the Palestinians’ right to return*, we emphasize that this requires common struggle by Arab and Jewish working people leading to *Arab-Hebrew workers revolution*. Palestine is a case of *interpenetrated peoples*.

¹ Islamism, or political Islam, is a doctrine holding that Islamic law (sharia) should govern society. For Islamists there is no separation of mosque and state. While there are different Islamist currents, and sharp differences between Islamists of the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam, all call for a theocratic, inherently undemocratic regime in which religious doctrine and authority are supreme, and thus are inherently anti-democratic.

With two nations – Palestinian Arabs and the Hebrew-speaking people – inhabiting the same narrow strip of land, the only way to achieve equitable access to vital resources (such as water) is in an *Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state*, as part of a region-wide *socialist federation of the Near East*, with the powerful Egyptian and Turkish working classes as the anchor.

Electoral Ploy Leads to Zionist Mass Murder

The current one-sided war being waged against the Palestinian Arabs began with a cynical provocation. The liberal media are wringing their hands about a situation that has “gotten out of hand,” that is supposedly being driven by “extremists” on both sides, Hamas on the one hand, Netanyahu on the other. Nonsense. The war was deliberately set off by the Israeli prime minister, who is on trial for corruption and after the last election has not been able to form a new coalition government, yet is still running things as head of a “caretaker” government. Netanyahu decided on an old trick: launch a war and then people will have to rally ’round the leadership. Specifically, he got his “public security” minister, Amir Ohana, a Netanyahu flunkie, to launch a series of unprovoked attacks on Palestinians. It began on the first night of Ramadan, April 13, when police invaded the al Aqsa mosque and cut off the speakers broadcasting evening prayers.

Shortly after, the police banned gatherings at the Damascus Gate where Arab youth gather in the evening during Ramadan. This led to nightly clashes between young Palestinian men and the police. On April 21, several hundred members of a Zionist-fascist group, Lehava, marched through central Jerusalem chanting “Death to Arabs” and attacking Palestinian passers-by. While this was going on, Palestinians were demonstrating daily in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem, where settlers have been trying to evict Arab families, with a court decision due on May 10. Police regularly beat demonstrators, including a Jewish member of the Knesset who is part of the predominantly Arab Joint List. Jerusalem deputy mayor Aryeh King, a leader of the ultra-Zionist settlers, declared that, “of course,” the evictions were part of a strategy to insert “layers of Jews” into East Jerusalem. In other words, “ethnic cleansing” by pushing Arabs out.

Then, on Friday, May 7, police attacked a group of worshippers at the al Aqsa mosque, using stun grenades, tear gas and rubber bullets inside the prayer hall of the third-holiest site of Islam, injuring over 200 as youths fought back. And on May 10, when rightist and fascist Zionists provocatively march through the Muslim Quarter of the Old City heading to the Temple Mount (also the location of the al Aqsa mosque) on “Jerusalem Day,” celebrating the seizure of Arab East Jerusalem in the 1967 war, only at the very last minute did police reroute the march. At the same time, hundreds of police raided the mosque for the second time in three days, on the pretext that Muslims were stockpiling stones (to protect al Aqsa from attack by the police and the rightists). This produced a toll of over 330 wounded, sending 250 to the hospital. It was crystal clear that this would set off massive protests by Arabs and the launching of missiles by Hamas.

Netanyahu wanted this war, he wanted the chaos it set off, it had the effect he sought, and he’s now on a murder mission in Gaza. This slaughter is being carried out by the military led by the defense minister, retired general Benny Gantz, the supposedly “moderate” Zionist candidate for prime minister in the 2020 and March 2021 elections. Gantz is a war criminal who as chief of staff of the Israeli armed forces ordered the terror-bombing of Gaza in the 2014 war, killing over 2,200 Palestinians. So all wings of the Zionists have their hands dripping with Arab blood. Netanyahu also wanted the pogroms being carried out by Zionist religious fanatics and settlers in Israeli cities with mixed Arab and Jewish populations, particularly Haifa, Acre, Jaffa, Ramla and Lod, or more properly Lydda, its name before the 1948 massacre when Zionists killed hundreds and drove out thousands of Arabs in the Lydda Death March. Now, ultra-rightist Zionists are out to “finish the job.”

“Ethnic Cleansing” of Arabs Would Be Cataclysmic

For many decades, these cities have had between one-sixth and one-third Arab population, with Jews and Arabs often living in the same neighborhoods and even the same buildings. Many Jews in those cities were proud of living with Arabs. However, in recent years, rightist Zionists have sought to ghettoize the Arab residents and drown them out in a flood of new Jewish residents of these cities, particularly Lydda. Since May 11, hundreds of Zionist-fascist thugs, many of them armed, have been marching through the mixed cities threatening and mercilessly beating Arab residents, some of which has been caught on videotape. These are *pogroms*, like those carried out by the tsarist Black Hundreds who attacked Jewish quarters in Russia before the Revolution, or racist lynch mobs in the Jim Crow South in the U.S. At least three different fascist organizations² are involved, some of them offshoots of Meir Kahane’s Kach party, which was banned. Kahane was the founder of the ultra-right terrorist Jewish Defense League in New York.

Netanyahu is angling for a coalition with these fascists, who repeatedly assaulted Arabs in East Jerusalem in April. In Lod, the pretext was “riots” by Arab youth enraged by the attack on al Aqsa and the torching of synagogues provocatively placed in Arab neighborhoods. Netanyahu claimed that Jews were the victims of “lynchers” and vowed to use an “iron fist” to crush the Arabs, while defense minister Gantz declared a state of emergency and locked down the city. The public security minister Ohana, a fascistic settler, specifically endorsed the armed ultra-rightist vigilantes roaming the streets. What is taking place inside Israel is state-sponsored, Zionist-fascist terror against the Arab population. The mobs are thirsting to drive out the Arab population and implement longstanding plans of ultra-rightists, Netanyahu’s right-wing Likud as well as some “moderate” Zionists, to formally annex much of the West Bank to Israel.

This is in line with the grotesque Middle East “peace plan” of Donald Trump, unveiled last year, which sought to push hundreds of thousands of West Bank Arabs into Jordan and lop off Arab-majority regions around Umm

² These include Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power), Lehava (Flame) and the religious Zionist Tkuma movements.

Al-Fahm in northern Israel.³ This area was formerly a stronghold of the Palestinian Communist Party, which gave rise to the Israeli CP (Maki). A portrait of Lenin once hung in the city hall of Nazareth, where the CP held the mayoralty for decades until 2014. The Zionist racists seek to get rid of these Arabs as well. The mixed population cities are in the center of coastal Israel, which is why Lydda was a particular target of massacres and “population transfer” in 1948 (led by Yigal Allon and Yitzhak Rabin, members of the Palmach militia linked to the self-styled “Marxist-Zionist” Mapam party). Lod, 14 miles from Tel Aviv, is the site of Israel’s international airport and astride the highway to Jerusalem.

So it is possible that there will be a push to drive out the Arabs from Lod/Lydda, but if so it would be a cataclysm. It would certainly go hand in hand with the drive to expel Arab residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem. Such a racist purge would not just be an action by the fascist lynch mobs – “ethnic cleansing” almost always requires the backing of the armed force of a state power. And it would almost certainly be met with bitter resistance, for everyone remembers that the Arabs that the Zionists forced out in 1948, in order to establish the state of Israel, were never to return.⁴ So if they launch a serious attempt at driving out the Arabs today, it would likely be a bloodbath of massive proportions, provoking an explosive reaction throughout the Near East and the world. One can imagine the impact in Brooklyn, where Palestinians and ultra-Orthodox Jews live in adjacent areas of Bay Ridge and Borough Park.

The Nature of Zionist Oppression

Revolutionary Marxists oppose the very existence of a “Jewish state,” just as we oppose the “Islamic Republic” of Iran or self-designated Christian states like Franco’s Spain, all of which are inherently undemocratic. We defend the oppressed Palestinian people against the Zionist oppressors. But what is to become of the two peoples now occupying historical Palestine? Palestinian nationalists chant, “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free!” Various left groups, after long tailing Yasir Arafat’s Palestine Liberation Organization and its support for a “two-state solution,” have lately taken up the call for a “one-state solution” in a “democratic secular Palestine.”

For liberals and leftists, these programs are democratic illusions, while many Palestinian nationalists and Islamists, having endured decades of Zionist torture and murder, dream of simply kicking Israeli Jews out. Today there are approximately 6.8 million Jews and 6.8 million Arabs in historic Palestine (plus millions more Palestinian refugees who were pushed into other countries, including Jordan, Lebanon and elsewhere). But under capitalism, the stronger power will prevail, and today that power is the Zionists, so that one state or two, Palestinian Arabs lose.

Many on the left refer to Israel as a “colonial-settler state,” as if it were some kind of colony of a country that the Israeli Jews could go back to if things got rough, like the Algerian colonists who went to France, or the Rhodesian whites who went

back to Britain after independence. Note that in Algeria the French colonists, known as *pieds noirs*, were 10% of the population; in British Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), the white settlers were about 8% of the population. In comparison, the Hebrew-speaking Jewish population constitutes about three-quarters of Israel’s population.⁵

Although the establishment of Israel was a colonial project, facilitated by British imperialism after the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Israel is not a colony – it is a regional power and a bellicose imperialist client, particularly of U.S. imperialism. Were full-scale war to break out, while many might take off for South Florida, overall the Israeli Jewish population isn’t going anywhere. No real program for defeating Zionism can be based on such illusions. The Hebrew-speaking population must be split, along class lines.

Israel is also not an “apartheid state” like South Africa, another favorite comparison. Liberals and reformists interpret “apartheid” to mean very repressive or very racist, as in the recent (27 April) report by Human Rights Watch, “A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution.”⁶ It is understandable that outrage against the horrendous crimes of Israel against the Palestinian people would lead some activists to reach for an evocative comparison. But rather than describing the material reality of the Zionist state, this term is an expression of liberal despair.

It’s also connected to a program, in the case of Israel, like South Africa, of “BDS” – that is, “boycott, divestment and sanctions.” But refusing to buy Sabra brand hummus will not stop the war on Palestinian Arabs, any more than boycotting Krugerrand coins led to the fall of South African apartheid. And who exactly is supposed to divest and sanction? This is a call on capitalist multinationals and U.S. imperialism, which is guilty of far greater crimes against oppressed peoples than even the kill-crazed Zionists. And anyone who thinks the Pentagon will stop buying Israeli software for its computers or stop hiring Israeli mercenaries to train its paramilitary death squads in Latin America is dreaming.

But, beyond its programmatic implications, the term is not historically accurate. As Marxists we understand that the apartheid regime did not just consist of legal measures such as passbooks, but is a particular brand of capitalist wage slavery based on super-exploitation of black African workers forcibly segregated in townships and “bantustans.” And in apartheid South Africa, whites were about 15% of the population. One can say that the Israeli-occupied West Bank is subject to apartheid-like rule, where the Palestinian Arab population is carved up into little cantons, and some Israeli employers wring super-profits from the super-exploited labor of their Arab workers. But in Israel itself, the Arab and Hebrew-speaking population is still interpenetrated, and the hardline Zi-

⁵ Opposing the Zionist claim that Israel is “the state of the Jewish people,” revolutionary Trotskyists use the term “Hebrew-speaking people” to refer to the population that became the dominant nation in Israel with the formation of the Zionist state.

⁶ HRW is an imperialist agency that has typically produced war propaganda about human rights abuses by regimes or movements that U.S. rulers oppose or want to overthrow, although occasionally (as now) it may be out of step with the powers that be in Washington.



Internationalists at L.A. protest against Israeli war on Palestinians, May 15.

onists aren’t mainly interested in super-exploiting Palestinian labor, but instead would like to expel the Arabs altogether.

That is why we have written about the danger of a Zionist “final solution,” describing Gaza and the West Bank enclaves envisioned by the annexation plans as giant concentration camps for Palestinians. It should not be forgotten that the Zionists – both “Labor” Zionists like David Ben Gurion and the “Revisionist” Zionists led by Ze’ev Jabotinsky – cooperated with the Hitler regime and opposed the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.⁷ The “solution” that Netanyahu and Kahane’s heirs yearn for is much closer to Nazi Germany than apartheid South Africa and could ultimately be genocidal, literally. As we wrote in 2014:

“In rejecting the characterization of Israel proper as a ‘colonial-settler state’ or ‘apartheid state,’ we in no way diminish the monstrous nature of the Zionist crimes. On the contrary, what Israeli rulers are prepared to do to the Palestinians is potentially *much worse* than what the Rhodesian or South African racists did.” – “Defend Gaza and the Palestinian People – For Arab-Hebrew Workers Revolution!” (July 2014), in *The Internationalist* No. 38, October-November 2014

What will result from the current barbaric war on the Palestinians? Yet another ceasefire? The Palestinians will still be caught in a Zionist vise. Regional war, mass “population transfer” as the Zionist founders euphemistically called it? To all these terrible outcomes, the answer must be to fight for **Arab-Hebrew workers revolution**. This path is difficult, but it is the only real way out.

Smash Zionism and Imperialism with International Socialist Revolution

The ceaseless attacks on the Palestinian population will eventually lead to an explosion. It is vital that the Zionist fortress be breached *from within*. Israel, after all, has hundreds of nuclear weapons, and a leadership crazy enough to use them, against Iran or anyone else. Until a few years ago, recruits to the Israeli tank corps were taken to the top of the Masada escarpment in the Judean Desert to swear their oath of allegiance. That is where close to 1,000 Zealots were said to have committed mass suicide when surrounded by Roman legions in the year 74. That was the end of the Zealots, but today their self-styled heirs have their finger on the nuclear trigger. There is a whole layer of the Israeli ruling stratum of some thousands of pathological killers that no hu-

⁷ See “Zionism, Imperialism and Anti-Semitism” and “Zionist Complicity in the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry” and other articles in *The Internationalist* No. 9, January-February 2001.

mane society could tolerate. But it is important that they be brought to justice by the Hebrew-speaking working class and revolutionaries, as part of putting an end to the endless cycle of nationalist slaughter.

The situation facing the embattled Palestinian Arab people today is grim, as it has been for the past three-quarters of a century of Zionist ascendance, and before that British colonialism and the Ottoman empire. But not all Israeli Jews want to live forever in a garrison state, and plenty are opposed to the fascist settlers and ultra-rightist religious zealots now marauding in the streets. Leon Trotsky long ago warned that the Zionist enterprise would be a death trap for Jews. There are fault lines in Israeli society, but it will take a huge shock to break the Zionist hammerlock. The *only* road to liberation lies through united *class* struggle by workers and the oppressed, both in Palestine, throughout the region and internationally. **Labor actions against the Israeli militarists**, even if mainly symbolic at this point, can point the way. **Revolutionary workers struggles to bring down the Arab bourgeois rulers**, particularly in Egypt and Turkey, would shake the Zionist entity.

In Europe, where the rulers lyingly label any and all opposition to Israel anti-Semitic, the fight against Zionist militarism is against the bourgeoisies and social democrats. In the United States, where even the most left-posing Democrats go no further than criticizing *unconditional* U.S. aid to the Zionist butchers (and Bernie Sanders has regularly voted to send millions to finance the Iron Dome anti-missile system and other parts of the Israeli war machine),⁸ a fight to **stop all U.S. aid to Israel**, and to **break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties** would have an impact. Without the backing of its imperialist overlords, Israel is a very small country in an Arab sea. But ultimately, victory over Zionism and imperialism (and the other imperialist clients and bourgeois satrapies throughout the area) can only come about through **international socialist revolution**. The League for the Fourth International seeks to forge the nucleus of the Leninist-Trotskyist communist party that is indispensable to lead that revolution. ■

⁸ The Vermont senator and Democratic primary candidate for president who calls himself a “democratic socialist” says he is “pro-Israel” and joined his Senate colleagues last year in giving unanimous consent – twice! – to appropriating \$3.3 billion to Israel under the “Foreign Military Financing Program.” Today Sanders only calls for Biden to take a “hard look” at Israel’s use of U.S. military aid, to “consider” reducing it and making it conditional on good behavior. This is in stark contrast to the *demand that all aid be cut off immediately*.

Adam Toledo, Anthony Alvarez and So Many Others Chicago Cops' Killing Machine Grinds On

CHICAGO, April 19 – In the early morning hours of Monday, March 29, Adam Toledo, a 13-year-old middle-school student, was murdered by a police officer who was chasing him down an alley in the overwhelmingly Latino, largely Mexican, neighborhood of La Villita, or Little Village, on Chicago's Southwest Side. The cop yelled, "Stop right f—king now!" As the teenager slowed down, his pursuer screamed, "Hands, show me your f—king hands!" Adam stopped, turned with his hands up, empty, and in a split second the cop shot him in the chest, killing him. The Chicago Police Department claimed that the shooting of Toledo occurred in an "armed confrontation." It took the Chicago Police Department (CPD) two days to inform his mother that cops had killed her son.

The incident was set off by an automated gunfire locator, ShotSpotter, which reported shots fired "at approximately 2:36 a.m." at a location in Little Village (press conference of CPD superintendent David Brown, April 5). This technology, in use in 90 cities across the U.S., uses sensors placed on rooftops and light poles around what the police consider "high crime areas" – i.e., African American and Latino neighborhoods – and sends automatic alerts with GPS info to police in the area. Two police cruising the area got the notification "at 2:37" (*The Intercept*, 13 April) and within a minute were at the location where they spotted two young men and chased them down an alley. At 2:38:40, according to the body-cam footage, police officer Eric Stillman shot and killed Adam Toledo. The app activated, and less than three minutes later, a white cop had executed a 13-year-old Latino boy. *The CPD today is an automated racist murder machine.*

That machine serves to enforce the "law and order" of the capitalist rulers, and it is fueled by lies. After the CPD spokesman's March 29 claim that Adam was shot "in an armed confrontation," the Cook County state's attorney declared on April 10 that he "has a gun in his right hand" before the police officer shot. But the cop's bodycam video released on April 15 clearly showed Adam with his hands raised, and no gun. As Adeena Weiss Ortiz, an attorney for the Toledo family, said at a press conference, "If you're shooting an unarmed child with his arms in the air, it's an assassination." Meanwhile, knowing the video contradicted their story, the police tried to smear the seventh grader as a gang-banger, since "The area where Adam was shot is considered to be a Latin Kings stronghold" (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 16 April).

Adam was one of seven people shot by Chicago police in the space of a month. The latest was Anthony Alvarez, age 22, father of a two-year-old daughter, who worked as a machine operator at a meat factory in Franklin Park. Alvarez, too, was shot to death by police after a foot chase,



Demonstrators in Chicago's Loop on April 14 protest the police killing of 13-year-old Adam Toledo. The next day body-cam footage was released showing that Adam had his hands up, empty, when he was shot to death.

on April 2. Two weeks later, the CPD still hadn't explained why cops were chasing him, nor have they released the body-cam video, as the family is calling for. As protesters demand an end to the endless police murder spree, the only response from Mayor Lori Lightfoot has been vague talk of setting guidelines on foot chases, which are involved in one-third of all Chicago police shootings, and complaining of "way too many guns on our streets" – by which she doesn't mean cops with Glocks. Yet the crime here is *police* gunning down people for supposedly having guns.

On April 16, the day after the video was released revealing that Adam Toledo didn't have a gun when he was shot – contradicting police and prosecutor lies – thousands came out to protest in the Logan Square neighborhood where Mayor Lightfoot lives. The city prepared by flooding downtown with police, stationing salt trucks around CPD headquarters and raising the Lake Shore Drive bridge (for "maintenance"), while businesses along Michigan Avenue were boarding up. The demo itself was surrounded by police cars, with drones and helicopters overhead. These were part of contingency plans for a massive response by police using hundreds of city "assets" (heavy trucks) with National Guard on standby in preparation for the jury verdict in the Minneapolis trial of Derek Chauvin, the killer cop who murdered George Floyd.

The demands of the protests included calls for justice for Adam Toledo and Anthony Alvarez, "no justice, no peace," illusory calls to "abolish the police" (which under capitalism, if anyone took this seriously, would just mean putting in some other "public safety" repressive force) and the standard liberal/reformist refrain since last summer to "defund the police." As we explained last summer ("Abolish the Police" Under Capitalism? *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020), in reality these demands aim at luring anti-racist protesters into supporting the budget maneuvers of Democratic politicians. To top it off, various "progressive" Dems and pseudo-socialists are now pushing a bill for

a "Community Safety Oversight Board," which would mean getting activists to collaborate in racist repression.

As the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth have insisted throughout, *only revolution can bring justice!*

The Weaponization of Infrastructure

Chicago, one of the most rigidly segregated cities in the country, has also been one of the most ruthlessly policed going back to the days of the Haymarket massacre of May 1886. Amid a general strike for the eight-hour day, police shot four workers while breaking up a demonstration protesting the cop killing of six strikers the previous day, and then railroaded anarchist workers leaders to the gallows. In 1968, Mayor Richard J. Daley unleashed the CPD in a cop riot against anti-war demonstrators outside the Democratic National Convention, as police pushed protesters through plate-glass windows, beat them bloody and arrested hundreds. More recently, Mayor Rahm Emanuel (Barack Obama's former chief of staff) covered up the 2014 cop murder of Laquan McDonald¹ and other police killings, while operating a secret jail in Homan Square.

After 43 years under "Boss" Daley and his son Richard M. and eight years under high-handed "King Rahm," the Chicago Police Department has long been synonymous with racist cop brutality. In 2019, Chicagoans elected Lightfoot, who has long posed as a police "reformer," as mayor. After a stint as assistant U.S. district attorney, she was head of the CPD's Office of Professional Standards in 2002-04. Later, under Emanuel she was head of the Chicago Police Board (2015), dealing with disciplinary actions, then led a Police Accountability Task Force (2016), and in 2017 was back on the Police Board. Her actual role in all this has been to cover up for the (Democratic) mayors and police chiefs, including ruling that the cop execution of 17-year-old Robert

¹ See "Chicago: '16 Shots, 400 days,'" *The Internationalist*, January 2016.

Washington in 2000 was justified.

In the summer of 2018, as Lightfoot was campaigning for mayor against Emanuel, police killed Maurice Granton in June and Harith "Snoop" Augustus in July. Granton was shot in the back while trying to scale a fence, Augustus was a neighborhood barber described as having "characteristics of an armed person" (whatever that means), as if that justified shooting him. We said "having a firearm is a right," but liberal leaders held "anti-violence" marches to push gun control, taking the heat off the CPD.² That fall, the trial of killer cop Jason Van Dyke for the slaying of Laquan McDonald riveted the city. Van Dyke beat the first-degree murder rap, and was only convicted of second-degree murder and 16 counts of aggravated battery with a firearm, one for each bullet he pumped into McDonald. He got less than seven years behind bars.

So, when the video of George Floyd's murder went viral in May 2020, Chicago was primed to erupt. In March and April the city was reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic. The governor proclaimed a statewide disaster order on March 9, and a shelter-in-place order went into effect on March 21. Gatherings of 50 or more people were banned, later tightened to ten people. But when news of Floyd's killing under the knee of a Minneapolis cop hit, thousands spontaneously went into the streets of Chicago to protest in anguish and rage, as did hundreds of thousands around the U.S. And there they were met with armed battalions of cops with truncheons, shields and full riot gear. On May 29, police were instructed to "no longer use force to disperse large gatherings," but use force they did, with a vengeance.

Over 1,000 people were arrested between the nights of May 30 and 31, many assaulted by cops and tear-gassed, as the mayor rolled out a 9 p.m.-to-6 a.m. curfew. A parking ban was instituted downtown as City Hall plotted a calculated, brutal response. The mayor said then that "she was not considering asking Gov. J.B. Pritzker to mobilize the National Guard to assist the Chicago Police Department." But when the brutal May 30 police assault on protesters failed to intimidate, on May 31, Lightfoot announced that the governor, at her request, "has ordered a contingent of the National Guard to maintain a limited presence to support our police department." Chicago was flooded with hundreds of National Guard and hundreds more state police. The mask of the supposedly "progressive" mayor was being ripped off.

Riding on Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) you could spot the Humvees from the elevated train tracks – that is, on those

² See "Chicago: Democrat-Led Cops Continue Racist Killing Spree," *The Internationalist*, August 2018.

For Workers Action Against Racist Repression!



Police body-cam footage of Adam Toledo with his hands in the air, the instant before he was shot dead.

lines where you could even get close, as the city abruptly halted mass transit. Before the weekend was out, bemoaning the “looting” and continued protests, Lightfoot issued an indefinite curfew (the first time since 1968, when it was ordered by Boss Daley after the assassination of Martin Luther King). The Metra commuter rail system cut off service to downtown. In the evening, the CTA suspended its entire bus and rail system, effectively bringing the city to a halt. Most dramatically, the nearly two dozen bridges over the Chicago River, which serves as a moat around the downtown Loop, were suddenly raised to trap protesters inside. Lightfoot announced that people had “35 minutes” to clear the streets, which she termed “ample notice.” As we wrote at the time:

“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.

—“Trump and Democrats Stage Ominous Trial Run for Martial Law,” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020

Then it happened again, in August, with the police shooting of Latrell Allen in Englewood, a poor area in South Chicago that is 94% black. A witness said, “He was crying, asking the officer – he had his hands up, like ‘Why you keep shooting me?’” The cops’ body cameras were turned off. Witnesses denied that Allen had a gun, but the police tore up his family’s household looking for one anyway (CBS 2 Chicago News, 10 August 2020). While Latrell was lying in a hospital bed, he was charged with attempted murder. In two days of furious protests, hundreds were arrested as the CPD unleashed a barrage of pepper spray. And as cops chased the crowd in the Loop south on Michigan Avenue, once more the mayor raised the bridges, this time to cut off protesters from marching north to the affluent Gold Coast and Magnificent Mile shopping area.

The weaponizing of the bridges, and the CTA, was the most arresting symbol of Lightfoot’s particular brand of racist repression. A *ProPublica* (14 August 2020) article, “In Lori Lightfoot’s Chicago, Bridges Have Become Barricades,” said: “The move was among a number of measures the mayor announced to pro-

tect businesses and reassure residents. But it was the image of the bridges being raised that offered the clearest symbol of Chicago’s divisions.” An article in *The Appeal* (13 November 2020), “Chicago’s Mayor Turns City’s Infrastructure into Weapons Against Protesters,” noted: “The shutdowns left many feeling that Mayor Lightfoot was more concerned about protecting downtown businesses and some of the city’s wealthiest residents than the police violence that brought people out to the streets.”

Well, yes. But this has always been the case in Segregation City, U.S.A. By treating this as more of the same, these articles miss the fact that the pattern of racist repression is shifting, as the capitalist state power exhibits increasingly bonapartist traits of strengthened military/police powers. This is a function of the growing inequality and increasingly sharp class polarization in the 21st century United States, and is reflected in the militarization of local police and the resort to police-state measures, like massive “kettling” to quell unrest by “those at the bottom.” In this drive to a “strong state” amid putrefying capitalism, it is not the Trump Republicans hobnobbing with fascistic and outright fascist forces who are in the forefront, but the Democrats, who look to and rely on the Pentagon, National Guard and local police.

“Chaos and Confusion” and Racist Repression

In the wake of the unprecedented mass protests last summer, by early this year voluminous reports had been issued by inspectors general, special commissions and risk-management companies on the police response in cities across the country. Back in 1968, the Kerner Commission Report (of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) on the upheavals that swept northern U.S. cities from 1964 to 1967 cited white racism as the detonator, famously concluding: “Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white, separate and unequal.” That official observation changed nothing, of course. But the reports on the 2020 protests against racist police brutality are quite different: a cross between military after-action and lessons-learned reports. Their prime, and often exclusive, concern has been that police couldn’t contain the protests.

Thus, while “the reports are a damning indictment of police forces that were poorly trained, heavily militarized and stun-



Bridges over the Chicago River were raised by Mayor Lightfoot last summer, “kettling” protesters in the Loop: on May 30-31 over 1,000 were arrested.

ningly unprepared for the possibility that large numbers of people would surge into the streets” (*New York Times*, 21 March), their complaints were of inadequate crowd control training, equipment that was lacking or defective, faulty intelligence, etc. The *Times* wrote that “police also did not understand how angry people were,” a stunning statement, but false: cops understood the anger directed at them, and treated protesters as enemies to be suppressed. Even when reports criticized aggressive police tactics, as in the New York State Attorney General’s did, their point was not that these violated demonstrators’ rights, but rather that “excessive enforcement ... contributed to heightened tensions,” i.e., they were counterproductive. “The reviews did not examine protesters’ complaints of racial bias in policing,” the *Times* noted laconically.

The capitalist rulers are worried that they aren’t prepared to dominate the streets, and from Democratic mayors like Lori Lightfoot to Democratic president Biden in the White House, they intend to rectify this. Thus, in Los Angeles the reported complaints were that not enough police were trained on how to fire rubber bullets into crowds, that there were not enough buses to transport arrested demonstrators, and that there was no planning for “field jails.” In Chicago, the complaints were not against mass arrests, but that the cops didn’t have enough mass arrest kits and that the zip-ties were decayed or broken. In discussing “chaos and confusion in the command staff,” the report lamented: “Missing reports and videos may limit or preclude prosecution of some arrestees” (*Report on Chicago’s Response to George Floyd Protests and Unrest*, 18 February).

While there was evidently plenty of chaos and confusion at the top, the Chicago report documents a full-scale *police riot*, in which thousands of cops flooded into the Loop, where demonstrators were kettled and trapped, beaten, tear-gassed and mass-arrested. There was “widespread non-compliance with CPD’s policy requiring use of BWCs” (body-cams), the report says, and also “insufficient supervision of officers,” legalese for open season for police brutality. Cops “deployed to the field directly” rather than from their stations, and indeed, “many CPD members from across the city self-deployed without specific assignments or clear direction” from an on-site commander. Some squads went marauding through the Loop playing “whack-a-mole,

running from one situation to another, lacking coordination and communication.”

Body-cams captured some of the most egregious incidents. In one case, a transport wagon arrives at a jail and the cops exit: “After one of the arrestees begins banging on the wagon from within, a transport officer opens the back door to find a female arrestee lying face-down on the floor. The CPD member comments, ‘chick’s having a seizure, I guess’ and further notes that she appears to be breathing and that there is nothing to be done. The member then closes the door of the transport vehicle with the occupants still inside, without rendering aid.” In another case: “A CPD member is also captured recounting to fellow officers how the member made an arrestee cry by telling the arrestee that they would be raped in jail given their thin physical stature. In the same video, after a radio call related to a car pursuit, an officer can be heard telling other officers that CPD should just shoot the tires out and shoot the occupants of the vehicle in the head.”

This cop riot and violence against protesters was clearly instigated from above. The report notes that on May 29, the “rhetoric and stakes were heightened when then-President Donald Trump delivered an ultimatum to Minneapolis protesters and suggested that the military could use armed force to suppress riots,” tweeting “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.” The next day six people were shot and one killed, possibly by vigilantes, amid the Chicago protests. And Trump had an ally on the spot. According to the report, that same night the CPD chief and Mayor Lightfoot discussed the possibility of raising the downtown bridges “to limit the number of protesters able to access Trump International Hotel and Tower.” Department of Transportation officials objected that the “safety of protesters might be at risk if bridges were raised with people on them.” But the bridges were brutally cleared as cop beat, punched and kicked demonstrators.

Altogether, a total of 3,775 arrests were made in the week of protest, but only about a third had any documentation at all. Typically, a district commander instructed officers to just “take your handcuffs out and put them on somebody.” As a result, many protesters were released without charges or later had the charges dropped. But the point of the round-up and mass arrests was to get demonstrators off the streets. And while she may

not have the clout of a Boss Daley or King Rahm, Mayor Lori Lightfoot is very much the boss of the sadistic, racist CPD. If there was confusion and chaos at the top last time around, the tight-knit local ruling class and the Democratic machine that runs the city in the interest of capital is going to ensure that next time around the repression is much more thorough. No more Mr. Nice Guy.

For Workers Strikes Against Racist Cop Terror

Racist repression is S.O.P. for Chicago police: it's what they do, day in and day out, year after year. That hasn't changed one iota, no matter which Democrat is in the mayor's chair (and a Republican would be no different). In Chicago, *black people are 22 times more likely than whites to be killed by cops*, by far the biggest racial disparity in police killing of all major U.S. cities (FiveThirtyEight, 4 February). And the cops get away with it because they enjoy near-total impunity from legal or other consequences. In one study, of 28,500 citizen complaints filed against CPD officers from 2011 to 2015, in 97% of the cases there was no punishment. One of the main people responsible for that was Lori Lightfoot as she headed police disciplinary panels.

In her 2018-19 election campaign, one of Lightfoot's top planks was for a civilian oversight commission for the police. But like her promise of an elected school board, after being elected mayor she dropped that. For the past several years there have been competing proposals for a civilian review board, one put forward by the Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability and the other by the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression pushing a Civilian Police Accountability Council. These have now been combined as the Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS) ordinance, which the mayor opposes. She says she will put forward her own proposal, but has yet to do so. The ECPS plan calls for a referendum in 2022 on whether to form 22 district councils to work with CPD district commanders and select a Community Commission (subject to mayoral and city council approval) to decide on CPD policy and possibly to select or remove Police Board members and the CPD superintendent.

The ECPS is being pushed in particular by the caucus of six aldermen who are supporters of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), all but one elected on the Democratic Party ticket. In reality, no ordinance or council will change the basic function of the police. As Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and V.I. Lenin insisted, the police (along with the military) are the "special bodies of armed men" who along with their adjuncts – the courts and prisons – serve to uphold the power and property of the ruling class, acting as "an instrument of exploitation of wage-labor by capital" (Lenin, *State and Revolution* [1917]). The state power increasingly stands above society, and the idea that the capitalist exploiters would allow representatives of the exploited to decide how its repressive apparatus is wielded is the purest "democratic" illusion.

Moreover, in practice, if any of the variants of supposed "community control" of the police were enacted, it would mean recruiting members of oppressed populations (community "empower-

ment" NGOs and the like) to become complicit in the racist repression of those communities. In all the U.S., nowhere have such "oversight" bodies made the slightest dent in the unrelenting police murder machine, least of all in Minneapolis, which has had a civilian review board since 1990. Some measures – like junking the "qualified immunity" from civil suits that police enjoy, or making discipline and complaint records public – could have some marginal effect. But "anti-racist training," "duty to intervene" laws against excessive use of force by fellow police (Minneapolis has one, yet it didn't stop killer cop Chauvin), etc., are empty PR gimmicks, as repression is the function of the police.

"Democratize the police," "disarm the police," "abolish the police," "community control of the police," as many demonstrators have called for? Not possible under capitalism. But that doesn't mean nothing can be done in the here and now about the plague of racist police murders. On the contrary, the Internationalist Group calls for powerful *workers mobilization and strike action against racist repression*. If the next time Chi cops kill someone, transit workers shut down the L and all CTA transit; if teachers, students and staff walk out of the schools with the support of parents; if workers throughout "the city that works" stop work and go on strike, that would have an impact. And if the cops keep it up, *shut the city down!*

Can it happen? Look at what happened on Juneteenth (June 19) of last year, when the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) shut down every port on the U.S. West Coast against police brutality and systemic racism. As the giant cranes stood idle, their booms up, 30,000 protesters streamed through the port of Oakland. That is the power of labor. We need to see it in Chicago. And for that to happen, someone has to fight for it.

Since, as we have written and the history of Chicago shows, *Democrats are the bosses of the racist killer cops*, what's posed in the fight against racist repression is the need to oppose all the capitalist parties and politicians. Electing some social democrats to the city council doesn't change a damn thing, as shown by the DSA Democratic aldermen in Chicago like Byron Sigcho-Lopez or Socialist Alternative's Kshama Sawant (now also DSA) in Seattle. The Internationalist Group calls to *break with the Democrats* (and Republicans, and Greens) to undertake the struggle to *forge a revolutionary workers party*, a party that would lead a struggle together with all the oppressed to overthrow the system of capitalist wage slavery.

Today even a Joe Biden – who led the fight in Congress against desegregating schools by busing and authored the infamous 1994 crime bill that led to the incarceration of millions – can demagogically claim to oppose systemic racism and call to "root out" racial disparities in the criminal "justice" system. But the roots of rampant police brutality go far deeper than training or racist cop culture. Wanton killing by the police and mass incarceration were the rulers' answer to the limited gains of the civil rights movement of the 1960s, building up these mechanisms to keep black people under the heel of the bosses, just as Jim Crow segregation replaced the end of slavery.

Bottom line: the police are the central enforcers of the systematic oppression of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, immigrants and other oppressed people that is built into the structure of U.S. capitalism, and which is reflected in the racism that permeates this society founded on genocide and chattel slavery. As the banner of the Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth that we carried last Juneteenth declared, "The Police Can't Be 'Reformed'." It was true yesterday, it's true today: *only revolution can bring justice* – for Adam Toledo and Anthony Alvarez, for Daunte Wright and George Floyd, for Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland and all the victims of racist killer cops. ■

George Floyd...

continued from page 1

City Democratic mayoral primary, and in elections from coast to coast, are demanding *more cops*.

Racist police brutality is not a matter of a few "bad apples," or even a barrel full. It's not just about "police culture" and the "blue wall of silence" when it comes to "testilying" for fellow cops in court. Police impunity is built into the system, and that system is *racist American capitalism*. That is true even with black cops, black police chiefs, black mayors and black presidents, because the laws themselves, the political system and the whole economic and social structure are racist. Under this system, black people are 2.6 times as likely to be killed by police as whites (in Chicago 22 *times* as likely), and Latinos 1.5 times as likely.² At the same time, a majority of those killed by police are non-Hispanic whites.³ While racism is key to the picture, it's not just about race, but also class: it is overwhelmingly poor and working people whose lives are snuffed out by kill-crazed cops.⁴

The charade of police "reform" won't change a thing in this country founded on black slavery and genocide of Native Americans. Today police ride herd on millions of people forced into desperation by poverty wages, housing segregation and rent-gouging, inadequate and discriminatory health care and all the other social pathologies of the decaying profit system. The police "serve and protect" the interests of capital. To put an end to the systemic racism they enforce, *the only solution is socialist revolution*. To see why, you only have to look at liberal Minneapolis, Minnesota, where almost every police "reform" in the book was already tried *before* killer cop Chauvin squeezed the life out George Floyd with a knee to the neck.

A Carefully Choreographed Trial

During the weeks of jury selection and trial testimony, the bourgeois media gave a play-by-play account. Every TV channel in the Twin Cities became Court TV, the *New York Times* posted minute-by-minute live updates of the testimony. Chauvin's stone-faced apparition haunted the court room. The city – and indeed the entire country

² <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>.

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/585152/people-shot-to-death-by-us-police-by-race/>.

⁴ A 2015 study of the fatalencounters.org data base showed that almost all (95%) of police-caused deaths occur in neighborhoods with less than \$100,000 median family incomes (the median income of neighborhoods where 441 police killings occurred was \$53,000). See <https://www.alternet.org/2015/07/95-police-killings-2015-occurred-neighborhoods-incomes-under-100000/>.

– waited for the verdict with bated breath. Millions outraged at the police lynching of George Floyd wondered if Chauvin would be yet one more in the endless chain of killer cops who, while guilty as hell, are let off or given just a slap on the wrist.

On April 20, the jury's verdict was read: "guilty on all charges," including second-degree murder. This may have prevented a repeat of last summer's huge and sustained protests, but the pandemic of racist police murder is far from over. With "shoot 'em in the leg" Biden and the Democrats in office, the guilty verdict, plus enough "stimulus" money to spread around to community activists and NGOs, the bourgeoisie just hopes it can keep things from exploding.

As testimony was about to begin in the Chauvin trial, police departments around the country erected barricades to prepare for the popular outrage sure to follow anything other than a guilty verdict. Extra cops were put on standby in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Atlanta and elsewhere. Washington, D.C. mayor Muriel Bowser got the army to send 250 troops to patrol the streets of the capital. Illinois governor J.B. Pritzker deployed state troopers and 125 National Guard troops to supplement cops in Chicago. In Minneapolis, cement barricades and barbed wire blanketed downtown since jury selection began in March. Operation "Safety Net" mobilized over 3,000 National Guard soldiers and hundreds of backup cops from other states, making military outposts and armored vehicles a common sight.

The show trial of Derek Chauvin was a spectacle made for the age of coronavirus. The wall-to-wall media coverage (despite only two journalists being allowed in the courtroom at once) was designed to sell the story line that the criminal "justice" system works, and this trial will prove it. The murderer was certainly the personification of evil: in the video, Chauvin's smug demeanor reeked of impunity as he kept his knee on George Floyd's neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds, his victim pinned to the ground and handcuffed, unable to resist. With the stakes so high, some kind of guilty verdict was virtually ensured. A verdict of "not guilty" or a hung jury, unable to reach a unanimous decision, would have sparked new conflagrations. The ruling class could visualize the headline, "Minneapolis Is Burning, Again," all too vividly.

The trial began with a lengthy jury selection. In the end, six white, four black and two mixed-race jurors were selected. The proportion of African Americans was much higher than the 17% black population of Hennepin County, even as black potential jurors were rejected at a higher rate than others. It was hard to find black people who haven't been negatively affected by police discrimination in their lives. But both defense and prosecution understood that a verdict delivered by a jury with African Americans underrepresented could set off a firestorm. They all remembered the Third Precinct going up in flames as thousands cheered.

Once the testimony got underway, the first week was focused on those who witnessed the murder of George Floyd last May. This included 18-year-old Darnella Frazier, who filmed the famous video of Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck. Frazier had acted incredibly cool-headedly and bravely: she walked her cousin into the store, out of harm's way, then came back

to film at a discreet distance. She said she feels awful she didn't intervene to save Floyd's life, but there is no way she could have with four cops all joining in the murder – and it was her video that sent millions of people into the streets to protest. What a country: where parents of black children have “the conversation,” telling young men not to run from cops, no sudden moves, when stopped driving to keep their hands at the “10 and 2” position on the steering wheel – and a 17-year-old knows the protocol about filming a police murder in progress.

Today, Darnella Frazier is hailed as a hero, which she totally is. Ramsey Orta, who filmed the NYPD chokehold murder of Eric Garner in 2014, was not so lucky. In retribution for his courageous act, he was viciously pursued by the cops and sent to prison for four years on weapons charges (he was only released last year).

During the testimony, it was revealed that Chauvin had at least 18 prior complaints on his record. One of his defense lawyers' ploys was to claim that Floyd had supposedly died of drug-induced cardiac arrest. Floyd's girlfriend, Courteney Ross, testified about her and his addiction to opioids. But the medical evidence showed only small amounts in his system, and the doctor who treated Floyd at the Hennepin County Medical Center testified that Floyd's cause of death was “asphyxia,” with complicating factors of “law enforcement subdual, restraint and neck compression.” Another expert testified that a knee to the neck for nine minutes could kill anyone, and that Floyd showed no signs of drug overdose.

The best Chauvin's cynical defense team could do to bolster their case was to bring in David Fowler, former chief medical examiner for the state of Maryland, who claimed that hypertension and carbon monoxide from the cop car exhaust could have been a contributing factor. He was forced to admit under cross-examination that he had not seen any data suggesting carbon monoxide poisoning played a role. Fowler himself is the defendant in a federal civil rights lawsuit for violating forensic pathology principles in attempting to cover up police responsibility for the death of 19-year-old Anton Black, killed by a cop in Greensboro, Maryland in 2018. The defense also tried to blame an “aggressive crowd” that was demanding that Chauvin stop kneeling on Floyd, suggesting that this could have “distracted” the killer.

The prosecution portrayed Chauvin as a rogue cop who violated proper police procedure. Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) officials, trainers and other “experts” lined up to denounce his conduct and show that he is a very “bad apple.” Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo criticized Chauvin for kneeling on the neck of a man who was restrained – but did not say that this is unacceptable in all circumstances. The head of MPD training in 2020 criticized Chauvin's “improvised position.” Chauvin's immediate supervisor when he killed Floyd also testified against him. A professor at the University of South Carolina said Chauvin's restraint of Floyd was neither “appropriate” nor “reasonable.” Rarely has the police establishment turned so uniformly against one of its own. They were acutely aware of what a wrong verdict could bring.

So was the defense, which rested after



Riot police outside Brooklyn Center, Minn., police headquarters screaming at demonstrators protesting cop murder of Daunte Wright, April 13.

calling only seven witnesses in two days. It didn't call on Chauvin to testify, since everyone knew that the city could blow the minute he opened his mouth. The prosecution, in turn, didn't highlight the fact that Chauvin had used neck or head restraints on seven prior occasions, including when he kicked an intoxicated man in the gut and applied neck restraint until the man fell unconscious – *but was only disciplined once*. No wonder the murderer acted like he could get away with it. But with Floyd's death, even Chauvin knew that he had to take the fall for the team (“law enforcement”), and the system. He had agreed to plead guilty to third-degree murder (a lesser charge), but this was rejected last June by Trump's attorney general William Barr, who worried that it would look lenient and inflame protesters.

But right in the middle of the trial, on April 11, Daunte Wright, a 20-year-old black man, was murdered by police in the Minneapolis suburb of Brooklyn Center, by a cop who “mistakenly” shot him with her gun instead of her taser, after stopping him for expired license plates and an air freshener hanging from the rearview mirror (see “Fury Over Cop Killing of Daunte Wright” on the “Revolutionaries in the Class Struggle” blog). Police violently repressed protests with rubber bullets and tear gas. And on April 15, release of the body-cam footage of the cop who shot Adam Toledo to death revealed that the 13-year-old had his hands up. This recalled the murder of 12-year-old Tamir Rice in 2014 by a Cleveland, Ohio cop. Authorities worried that protests against the upsurge of police violence could derail the well-cho-reographed Chauvin trial.



“Veto-proof” majority of Minneapolis city council announced on 7 June 2020 it would “dismantle” the police department. Result: zero.

cratic Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party attorney general Keith Ellison, hoping that some identity politics will keep the lid on.

But a few “black faces in high places” does not change the system, and all of these are part of the capitalist police apparatus. The Attorney General is the state's “top cop,” as now vice president Kamala Harris described herself when she was the California AG (her specialty was keeping people in prison despite proof of innocence). In the state's closing argument, another of the prosecutors defended the “noble profession” of policing, and emphasized that “this is not an anti-police prosecution ... it's a pro-police prosecution.” By parading “good” cops before the jury, the state is trying to send the message that the problem is “bad cops” like Chauvin, not the police as a whole and the system of exploitation and rampant inequality they exist to defend. The “law enforcement community” (forces of repression) closed ranks and gave up one of their guard dogs, in order to reduce the heat on the rest.

The Myth of Police Reform

Last summer, we wrote that, “In Minneapolis, virtually every one of the police ‘reforms’ that have been bandied about in the U.S. have been tried, and failed” (“To Uproot Racist Oppression: Socialist Revolution,” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020). That included the liberal-utopian call to “abolish the police.” Two weeks after George Floyd was murdered, a veto-proof majority of the Minneapolis city council (which is entirely Democratic except for a lone Green) got up on a stage at Powderhorn Park to announce that they were going to “dismantle” the city's police department. Instead, they kicked the hot button issue to the voters, putting forward a ballot measure to replace the police with a “Department of Community Safety and Violence Prevention” – which, of course, would still be a police agency, just with a different name.

But even this didn't make it to a vote, as the city councilors then sent the ballot initiative to a judge-appointed Minneapolis Charter Commission, which in August asked for an additional 90 days to consider the measure. This ensured that it would not be on the ballot in November. The obscure commission has no power to veto such a measure, but it did serve as a convenient device to block it. So what started out as a supposedly radical change to the Minneapolis police became by December a paltry \$8 million budget cut (less than 5% of the total MPD budget). Still, some Democrats tried to spin this as a win. Ilhan Omar (DFL), the U.S. Representative for Minnesota's 5th Congressional District and a member of the Democratic “Squad” that has been the target of vicious right-wing hate propaganda and death threats, tweeted that the budget cut constituted “transformative change.” Hardly.

In the talk of dismantling the police, Camden, New Jersey, was often cited as an example. In 2012, that city disbanded its police force, but then replaced it with county police. Far from ending racist police repression, the number of cops patrolling the city shot up from 268 to 418. Closer to home in Minnesota, the Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park police were hailed as a “police reform model” by the *Star Tribune* (3 August 2020). Since 2005, those police departments had a “Joint Community Police Partnership,” which produced

Agence France-Presse

Twitter/Caty Wagner



Internationalists at Juneteenth NYC march against racist police terror, 19 June 2020.

an “embedded community liaison” and a “Multicultural Advisory Committee” in each. But no “partnership,” liaison or advisory committee prevented the murder of Daunte Wright by a Brooklyn Center cop, or stopped police from shooting at protesters with rubber bullets and tear gassing hundreds protesting this murder.

Last June, as the city and country were engulfed with protests, Minneapolis Public Schools voted unanimously to end its relationship with the MPD, which took the form of 14 “school resource officers” (SROs) stationed in public high schools (see “Minneapolis Public Schools Give Cops the Boot,” in *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-June 2020). At the time, we warned that “replacing the MPD with private security guards or simply another police department will mean back to business as usual.” Just a month later, Minneapolis Public Schools began hiring “private safety support specialists” many of whom were ex-cops. As we wrote then, such private cops must be opposed just as much as the SROs, as part of a larger fight for **teacher-student-parent-worker control of the schools**.

Across the country there have been a number of state laws and city ordinances passed for police “reform” and “oversight” since George Floyd’s murder (140 by one count). This includes mandating use of body cameras, restricting chokeholds, limiting no-knock warrants, opening police disciplinary records to public scrutiny and eliminating “qualified immunity” of police from civil suits. But none of those measures have made a bit of difference in the systematic racism of the police, any more than enacting “civilian control boards” did in the past. Moreover, attempts to cut police budgets have nearly all failed, or been overturned. Instead, various state legislatures have enacted “back the blue” laws to criminalize protest. In Iowa, “rioting” was made a felony, blocking streets can lead to a year in jail and defacing a statue is now a crime, while drivers who hit and injure protesters were given immunity from civil liability.

Even calls to do away with qualified immunity for police, a centerpiece of the Congressional Democrats’ policing “reform” bill, would have little impact. Where cops have been sued for excessive force, wrongful death and other misconduct, they almost never pay a penny – the municipality, county or state foots the bill. Given the amounts involved (\$1.1 billion since 2015 for suits involving NYPD officers; Chicago, \$253 million; Los Angeles, \$238 mil-

lion; Minneapolis, \$22.3 million) and their frequency, many city governments include anticipated amounts in their annual budgets. Smaller jurisdictions get insurance coverage, like the village of St. Anthony, MN whose \$6 million settlement with the family of Philando Castile came from the Minnesota League of Cities. The families deserve every cent they can get – and far more – but the killer cops pay zero, and for the cities that employ them it’s just a “cost of doing business.”

Efforts at police “reform” and “oversight” are inevitably futile, just as cutting the cops’ budget (grandly called “defunding” the police) is ineffectual and dismantling/disbanding/abolishing the police is an illusion. The reason why comes down to the basic Marxist truth that the very purpose of the police is to act as enforcer of the interests of the capitalist class, defending its property and wealth, and upholding its rule over society. As Friedrich Engels wrote in *The Family, Private Property and the State* (1886), the capitalist state consists of special bodies of “armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons, and institutions of coercion of all kinds” who serve the economically and politically dominant class in “holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.” Lenin spelled out in *The State and Revolution* (1917), written on the eve of the Bolshevik Revolution, that “A standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power.” As we wrote during the protests last year:

“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.’”

–“‘Abolish the Police’ Under Capitalism?” *The Internationalist* No. 60

The function of the police as the armed fist of the capitalist state was seen concretely in the 1934 Teamsters strike that made Minneapolis a union town. In his classic account, Farrell Dobbs, one of the Trotskyist leaders of the strike, aptly describes the nature of the police:

“Under capitalism the main police function is to break strikes and to repress other forms of protest against the policies of the ruling class. Any civic usefulness other forms of police activity may have, like controlling traffic and summoning ambulances, is strictly incidental to the primary repressive function. Personal inclinations of individual cops do not alter this basic role of the police. All must

comply with ruling-class dictates. As a result, police repression becomes one of the most naked forms through which capitalism subordinates human rights to the demands of private property.”

–Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Rebellion* (1972)

Minneapolis cops were just as brutal then as today. On 20 July 1934, “Bloody Friday,” 67 people were wounded when police armed with riot guns fired on striking workers. Two were killed, Teamster Henry Ness and an unemployed strike supporter, John Belor. In the face of mounting police/military repression and legal maneuvers, the Trotskyist leadership fought back with mass labor action. And they won the strike.

But eventually the Minneapolis Teamster leaders were ousted by the national union tops, working hand-in-glove with the Democratic administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and along with Socialist Workers Party leaders were imprisoned for their revolutionary opposition to the imperialist World War II. If today police strikebreaking is less prominent than cop attacks on antiracist mobilizations, it is because the pro-capitalist union officialdom rarely calls strikes, and when it does it meekly obeys injunctions and prohibitions of effective labor action (mass picketing, flying squads, sit-down strikes), ensuring defeat or at best a stand-off, rather than defying the bosses’ anti-labor legal arsenal.

Last summer, bus drivers of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1005 in Minneapolis refused police orders to transport

arrested protesters to jail, as did Transport Workers Union Local 100 in New York City, with the backing of their union leaders. In the Twin Cities, members of several unions also came out to protest the killings of George Floyd last summer, Philando Castille in 2016 and Jamar Clark in 2015. But far more is needed. The next time killer cops strike, unions should shut down the whole metro transit system along with flagship stores of the Minneapolis-based Target and Best Buy chains, plus manufacturing facilities like Medtronic in Brooklyn Center and Fridley, and the 3M Cottage Grove. The point is to hit the capitalists where it hurts.

The Democratic Party would have us believe, as Nancy Pelosi grotesquely said after the Chauvin verdict was announced, that George Floyd “sacrificed his life for justice.” Yet the conviction of one murdering police officer does not alter the system of racist repression that is integral to American capitalism. In reality, just over 1% of killer cops are ever charged (140 out of a total of 13,000 police who have killed civilians since 2005); fewer still are convicted. Repression is what the police do, it can’t be reformed away. In fact, the repressive apparatus has expanded, along with the prison system, and become increasingly militarized as decaying capitalism produces millions of unemployed people and poverty-stricken communities, while the middle class is hollowed out and the tiny layer of mega-capitalists grows more aggressive.

Last year, massive protests against racist police brutality were further stoked by indignation against Trump, whose racist comments and threats to use the military fueled the fires of outrage. Now the Democrats are in, but the police murder machine grinds on. To stop it will take nothing less than a revolution to sweep away the capitalist system, and with it, its murderous thugs in blue. As the Internationalist Group/Revolutionary Internationalist Youth banner that we carried last Juneteenth proclaimed, “The Police Can’t Be ‘Reformed,’” and “Democrats Are the Bosses of Racist Killer Cops.” It’s necessary for labor, black people, Latinos, immigrants and all the oppressed to break with the Democratic Party and get started on building the **revolutionary workers party** that we urgently need to put an end to the unending plague of racist police repression. **Black liberation through socialist revolution!** ■



Internationalists in march to New York’s Manhattan Bridge protesting the police murder of Daunte Wright, April 12.

For Workers Control of Safety – End Poverty Wages –
Expropriate For-Profit Chains

Nursing Home COVID Horror Show: Health Care Workers Held Hostage

JUNE 7 – For the last three weeks, some 6,100 unionized healthcare workers in Connecticut nursing homes and group homes have been preparing to strike. The main demands of Service Employees International Union (SEIU) District 1199NE are for raising the horrendously low pay for their dangerous work to \$20 an hour; for affordable health insurance, paid sick leave and childcare; and for increasing Medicaid funding by taxing the rich. As the initial nursing home strike deadline on May 14 loomed, Democratic governor Ned Lamont outrageously called up the National Guard to act as strike-breakers, to move patients out of struck facilities. Meanwhile, the long-term care facilities sought to contract “replacement workers” – i.e., scabs. Last-minute deals with the governor averted that walkout and a subsequent strike deadline for group homes on June 4. But as of this writing, the facility owners have yet to sign on the dotted line.

So far, details of the tentative agreements are sparse. Newspaper headlines declared that “Nursing home workers will earn at least \$20 per hour” while articles declared that the deal “lifts the wages of certified nursing assistants to \$20 per hour,” and that “Licensed practical nurses would earn an hourly minimum of \$30” (*Hartford Courant*, 14 May). But that does not square with the reference to a 4.5% raise in 2022, a 6.2% raise the next year and no raises in the following two years, which would only bring pay for CNAs up from \$16.25 to \$18 by 2025. Moreover, 1199NE president Rob Baril later said that the nursing home deal would create “a pathway to \$20 an hour minimum,” and that a June 3 deal for group homes achieved “substantial progress toward our goals for a \$20 minimum wage,” and other benefits. ***If the advertised \$20/hr. minimum was not achieved, this amounts to a sellout of the union membership.***

Even \$20 per hour is a poverty wage, and nothing has been specified about health insurance, which even at that pay rate would certainly not be affordable. Anything



Connecticut nursing home workers of SEIU District 1199NE outside Department of Public Health in Hartford, April 8, demanding Long-Term Care Workers Bill of Rights including \$20/hr. minimum wage, affordable health care.

that even purports to be a “living wage” in Connecticut would have to at least ***double nursing home workers’ wages*** and provide ***fully paid quality health care*** for workers and their families with no deductibles, “co-pays” or other scams. Residential healthcare workers are in an unusually strong position right now to fight for a fundamental change in their intolerable situation. As billions of dollars are being lavished on bailing out whole industries, the horrors of the pandemic, as death stalked the corridors of nursing homes, are fresh in everyone’s mind. A militant strike could win. That such a struggle is ***not*** taking place today is an indictment of the labor bureaucracy that plays by the bosses’ rules and chains workers to the capitalist Democratic Party.

Almost one-third of all deaths from COVID-19 over the last year were of residents in long-term care facilities. At least 1,800 healthcare workers in these facili-

ties died.¹ This was murder, a monstrous crime fueled by the profit system that discards those it cannot exploit profitably, warehousing seniors in jam-packed quarters with woefully inadequate staffing, and then infected them with a deadly disease by bringing back COVID patients in order to save the hospitals from collapse. The entire labor movement and its allies, including students and defenders of black and immigrant rights, in Connecticut and elsewhere, should come to the aid of those who toil in this dangerous and sleazy industry. The cause of these terribly overworked and underpaid workers – 92% of them women, a majority black, Latina and Asian, many of them immigrants – is a fight for all working people.

Nursing Homes and Capitalism: “Neglect for Profit”

Long-term care (LTC) workers in Connecticut, both in nursing homes and group homes for adults and youths with developmental difficulties, include registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, certified nursing assistants and staff. They have been working right through the COVID-19 pan-

¹ An investigation by the *London Guardian* (8 April 2021), “Lost on the frontline,” found that of the more than 3,000 healthcare workers who died of COVID, a big majority, 1,814 (58%), worked in nursing and residential care facilities.

demic in some of the most deadly conditions in the U.S. Since March, unionized workers have been on the job without a contract. Most of the staff have been struggling to keep above water on poverty wages of \$12 to \$15 an hour and no or unaffordable health insurance. They faced a massive shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, masks and gowns that workers had to either reuse and/or share among each other. Many CNAs have overwhelming workloads of 15 or more residents each, which includes waking, dressing, toileting and feeding residents, and completing piles of paperwork. Staff shortages are rampant.

Nationally, 70% of the U.S.’ 15,400 nursing homes are operated by for-profit companies; in Connecticut the rate is even higher, with 83% for-profit and only 17% non-profits, with over half part of a corporate chain. Yet 85% of their financing comes from government Medicaid and Medicare programs. The nursing home industry has long been notorious for short-changing patient care and worker pay, a “business model” of “neglect for profit.” Early in the pandemic, when outside the New York City epicenter the large majority of COVID deaths were in nursing homes, the *New York Times* (22 April) called them “deadly petri dishes for the worst pandemic in generations.” Many of those deaths were profit-driven. Nearly half of residents of for-profit homes lived in facilities with substandard staffing levels, compared to less than a quarter in government or non-profit facilities. And as data from Connecticut shows (see below), homes with staff shortages had almost five times as many deaths as those without staff shortages.

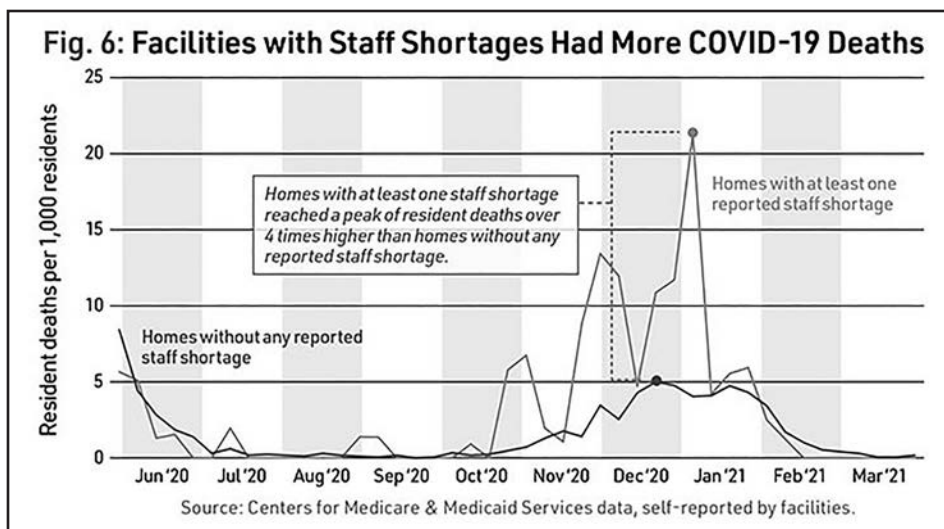
Recently, many homes have been snapped up by private equity firms (whose finances are not public) which have used them as a cash cow, to be milked for every last dollar. As thousands died weekly last year, a *New York Times* (25 April 2020) article, “Push for Profits Left Nursing Homes Struggling to Provide Care,” reported: “Private equity firms and other investors first gravitated to nursing homes more than a decade ago, betting that aging baby boomers would create demand irrespective of economic cycles and counting on a steady stream of Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements.” A study published last year of nursing homes nationwide, including 1,674 taken over by private equity firms with “high-powered-for-profit incentives,” found that due to staffing cutbacks “private equity ownership increases short-term mortality by 10%, which implies about 21,000 lives lost due to private equity ownership” over the period of 2000-2017.²

There are endless horror stories of the ravages of COVID in nursing homes and how this is related to the ownership of the industry. There was the case of the Ando-

² A. Gupta, et al., “Does Private Equity Investment in Healthcare Benefit Patients? Evidence from Nursing Homes,” Social Science Research Network, November 2020.



Ambulance workers prepare to transport body at Andover Subacute nursing home where 84 died.



Graphic from report by Yale Law School Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic
At height of COVID second wave, Connecticut nursing homes with staff shortages had vastly higher mortality rates than those with no shortage.

ver Subacute & Rehabilitation complex in Sussex County, New Jersey, where an anonymous tip led to the discovery of 17 bodies crammed into a tiny on-site morgue in April 2020; the death toll later rose to 84. The complex is owned by nursing home slumlord Chaim Scheinbaum, whose Alliance Health Care chain also owns three other facilities where according to *Times* data there were an additional 90 deaths from COVID-19. But Alliance only leases the Andover buildings from a Chicago-area investor, William Rothner, who has a stake in more than 60 nursing homes, and whose companies charge millions in rent in addition to supplying ventilators.

Another of the LTC chains is Genesis Healthcare, the largest nursing home operator in the U.S. with more than 357 homes, that is also No. 1 in Connecticut, where it has 19 facilities. Genesis was bought out in 2007 by private equity firms led by Formation Capital in Atlanta, which loaded it up with debt. When it returned to public markets in 2014, Genesis was “paying more than \$750 million a year on interest, rent, and transaction fees related to the constant cash-juggling” to keep the company afloat.³ Now the Welltower real estate trust unloaded Genesis, whose share price has plummeted, in exchange for cash investments of \$86 million to pay off Welltower. The new private equity operation, ReGen Healthcare, is led by one Joel Landau, infamous for buying up Rivington House and another NYC nursing home, CABS, kicking out elderly

³ Maureen Tkacik, “Despite Pandemic Carnage, Predatory Nursing Home Financiers Keep Thriving,” *The American Prospect*, 14 April.

tenants and reselling the property to a luxury condo developer for a \$72 million profit.

Such financial skullduggery makes for scandal headlines, but the reasons for the nursing homes’ COVID disaster go much deeper than asset stripping by private equity speculators and service cuts by for-profit chains. Overall, 31% of all COVID deaths in the United States are from long-term care facilities, although they account for only 4% of cases nationwide – meaning those nursing home residents who contracted the disease were *eight times* more likely to die. Over 184,000 people who lost their lives, or 12% of the 1.5 million residents in these homes. In Connecticut, the percentage of COVID deaths accounted for by residents of LTC homes is even higher: 4,361 died of the disease, amounting to 53% of total statewide deaths.⁴ Both for-profit companies and non-profit social service agencies are guilty of negligence and mismanagement with the complicity of the bourgeois state, which foots most of the bills. *They all uphold the interests of capital, for which residential-care residents are only dollar signs.*

Health Care Workers: Hailed as Heroes, Abandoned on the Front Lines

Although the scandalous conditions that have turned many nursing homes into death traps are national in scope, this crisis has been more closely investigated in Connecticut with at least two major studies of deaths in long-term care facilities: *A Study of the COVID-19 Outbreak and Response in Connecticut Long-Term Care Facilities* (September 2020) by the public policy research company Mathematica, advised by the University of Connecticut Center on Aging, commissioned by the state government; and “*We Were Abandoned*”: *How Connecticut Failed Nursing Home Workers and Residents During the COVID-19 Pandemic* (May 2020), by the Worker and Immigrant Rights Advocacy Clinic

⁴ See <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-nursing-homes.html> (as of 1 June 2021).

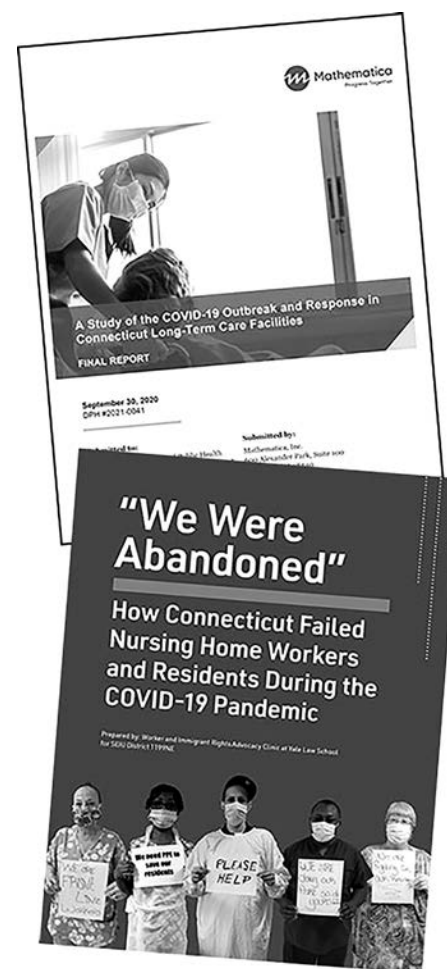
at Yale Law School, for SEIU District 1199NE. Both studies arrive at a key conclusion: high rates of infection and death were the result of chronically understaffed facilities with “severely underpaid” workers.

One of the main reasons for the rapid spread of coronavirus infections in nursing homes is that patients were sent back to LTC facilities when discharged from hospitals after being diagnosed with COVID-19. Unlike New York (and other states that copied it), which officially ordered this, there was no such order in Connecticut. Yet it occurred anyway because of financial incentives, as residential care facilities are reimbursed by Medicaid and Medicare at far higher rates for short-term rehabilitation patients coming from hospitals than for long-term residents. While Connecticut readied field hospitals, they were never used, and a couple of COVID-only facilities sat mostly empty. According to the September 2020 Mathematica study, “Early planning and response efforts focused on hospital capacity, with nursing homes viewed primarily as a backstop to alleviate high demand for acute care beds.” I.e., they were dumping grounds.

The high death toll reflects the chaotic conditions in the industry, where many facilities are constantly on the brink of financial ruin, as well as turmoil among public health authorities. On March 5, the day the first COVID case in Connecticut was announced, the deputy commissioner in charge of coronavirus response resigned complaining of racial discrimination. Eight weeks later, the commissioner of the Department of Public Health was fired by Governor Lamont, after being invisible for most of the period. Lamont then essentially privatized the state’s pandemic response, handing planning over to a task force led by the Boston Consulting Group. At the same time, he issued an executive order (as did New York and other states) granting nursing homes “immunity from civil liability even when facilities are ‘unable to provide the level or manner of care that otherwise would have been required in the absence of the COVID-19 pandemic.’”

But the crucial element was the nursing and group home workers themselves, overworked and underpaid on the front lines of the battle against the coronavirus. The Yale study found that there was “a significant association between staff shortages and risk of COVID-19 infection and deaths among residents” because “staffing levels correspond directly to quality of care.” Based on data reported to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the study showed that facilities “with at least one staff shortage reached a peak of resident deaths over 4 times higher than homes without any reported shortage.” At the peak of the winter 2020-21 second wave, facilities with staff shortages had five times as many cases as those with normal staffing levels. Workers were overwhelmed and there weren’t enough to work the units.

One nurse described workloads of up to 14 residents at a time, “which is really difficult because you have to get them up, get them dressed, toilet them, exercise them, feed them lunch, toilet them again after lunch, put them down again, and then you have your paperwork.” The understaffing was chronic, both before and during the COVID crisis. The horror of the situation was reflected in the candid observation of another worker,



“In all honesty, the only time staffing wasn’t horrible was during the pandemic ... only because half our people died. That’s the only reason staffing was halfway okay. Half of the residents passed away due to COVID-19.” Nationally, one in ten LTC residents who fell ill with the disease died; in the hardest-hit facilities in Connecticut (Riverside, 60 dead; Shady Knoll, 55 dead; Arden House, 54 dead) it was one in three.

The workers themselves were also hard-hit. According to data submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), at least 3,400 workers in Connecticut LTC facilities either tested positive or were assumed to have contracted COVID-19. District 1199NE reports that up to 4,000 of its 7,000 members working in health care were infected with the coronavirus or had COVID-like symptoms. According to the Yale study, as workers had no sick leave, they often “downplay[ed] their own symptoms” because calling out was considered “abandonment” by administrators. When ill employees were able to take off, they were allotted only seven days so that when they returned to work, there was a more than likely chance they were still contagious. Staff testing was either non-existent, unreliable or results were delayed, and often “administrators withheld information about positive [resident] tests in a facility.”

For a long time, there was no data at all on the number of infections and deaths from COVID among long-term care workers because they weren’t required to be tested and no count was kept of those who were, even though known COVID cases had to be reported to the DPH. Financial incentives were offered to keep workers on the clock, including “bonuses, hazard pay, and providing meals during shifts,” but according to the Mathematica study “nursing homes tied many of the financial incentives to on-time arrival. Staff expressed frustrations with these requirements because public transportation was limited at the height of the outbreak, and many staff had caregiving responsibilities at home that might have occasionally made them a few minutes late to work. Staff also reported bo-



Connecticut governor Ned Lamont announces extension of state of emergency at Genesis Healthcare facility, 20 April 2020. Genesis is a prime example of private equity milking long-term care facilities for profits while residents die.



Connecticut nursing home workers ready to strike. The overwhelming majority of long-term care workers are women, most black, Latina and Asian.

nurses or hazard pay were available only during a short period (even though the pandemic lasted for months)."

Grotesquely, some administrators (and the bourgeois press) blamed staff working at more than one location for the spread of the virus. As one certified nursing assistant (CNA) nurse who worked 32 hours a week at one facility and 24 hours a week at another told the Yale researchers, "If we have a decent paycheck, then we wouldn't have to do that." With a median hourly wage of \$16.19, CNAs have no choice but to work more than one job to keep a roof over their head and food on the table for their families. But instead of doubling or tripling wages, administrators tried to limit the number of shifts, making the situation worse. The reality is that the close-contact work provided by CNAs and other staff was key to keeping residents alive, even as it endangered the workers. CNAs "provide 80% to 90% of direct care" in nursing homes, yet the pay is so low and pressures so great that there is a 50% annual turnover rate.

When it came to PPE, workers were often left without. Staff had to share gowns when entering COVID-19 positive resident rooms and were told to "continue wearing single-use protective Tyvek suits for 'numerous days,'" even at facilities that had ample supplies. Some had to wear garbage bags, held together with duct tape, which caused a stir in the press. Yet DPH leaders grotesquely claimed this was "by choice"! Single-use disposable gloves were routinely cleaned with hand sanitizer for reuse and N95 masks were not properly fitted. One CNA was told at the start of the pandemic to remove her disposable mask because it was "sending the wrong message," and administrators "threatened to write people up if they refused to remove their masks." In addition, workers reported that administrators "hid the reality of the employees' appalling working conditions from the government during inspections."

Mounting infection control violations flew under the radar with only 34 citations for COVID-related incidents in Connecticut from March 2020 to February 2021. And although fines could range up to \$10,000 per incident, the average was \$2,885, a slap on the wrist. At Riverside Health and Rehabilitation, where 80 residents died from COVID-19, there were *zero* fines for COVID-related violations. Moreover, in July-August 2020, after months of putting their lives on the line providing direct, in-person,

close-up care to one of the most vulnerable populations, 2,000 "essential" workers were rewarded by being laid off or their hours cut by half or more. Why? Because the huge number of residents' deaths meant a reduced need for labor!

"As nursing home residents die and the facilities see far fewer short-term residents... homes are left with more empty beds. Weakened by revenue loss and added expenses associated with the pandemic, nursing homes in Connecticut are now resorting to widespread layoffs and reductions in employee hours."

"Hundreds of nursing home workers are laid off as financial crisis hits the facilities," *CT Mirror*, 31 August 2020

So whether facilities are private or "public," for-profit or non-profit, amid a deadly public health crisis vital decisions are made according to financial criteria not patient need. Capital rules.

Capitalist Control of Health Care Is a Disaster

In New York this January, Governor Andrew Cuomo's nursing home scandal epitomized the lengths the capitalist order will go to save their own political hides: send nursing home residents to their deathbeds and cover it up. Cuomo came under fire issuing his March 2020 directive ordering nursing homes to accept COVID-19 positive patients unless they declared they were unprepared to handle them. Up to late January 2021, the Cuomo administration was reporting 8,711 nursing home deaths. But then NY attorney general Letitia James issued a report saying this undercounted nursing home deaths "by approximately 50 percent," mainly by not counting those who died in hospitals. NY health commissioner Howard Zucker then discovered another 4,000 nursing home residents dead. (The toll has since climbed to over 15,000.) Cuomo replied, "But who cares = 33 [percent], 28 [percent] – died in the hospital, died in a nursing home? They died."⁵

Well, it turned out quite a few people cared, including Cuomo's numerous political enemies. Last July, Zucker used the low count to blame "thousands" of nursing workers for infecting the patients. Cuomo's next line of defense was to say that the nursing homes said they were prepared to accept the patients. Yet on 8 April 2020, when the director of the Cobble Hill Health Center in Brooklyn emailed the state Department of

⁵ "Cuomo callously addresses COVID nursing home report: 'Who cares!'" *New York Post*, 29 January.

Health saying the facility had "over 50 symptomatic patients scattered through the building and almost no gowns," and a day later asked to transfer patients to the hospital at the Javits Center or the U.S. Navy hospital ship, he got a reply with an attachment on how to preserve PPE and was told that the empty Center and ship were only for hospital overflow patients. Two weeks later, 55 Cobble Hill residents were dead of COVID.⁶

As pressure mounted on Cuomo to explain why the death totals were undercounted, his top aide, Melissa DeRosa, let the cat out of the bag during a private videoconference call with state Democratic leaders. She apologized on behalf of the administration for "inconveniencing" the legislators, saying that the actual numbers were purposefully obscured to keep Donald Trump from "tweeting that we killed everyone in nursing homes," because the real death toll "would be used against us."⁷ Cuomo evidently figured the top Democrats would keep this hush hush, but some of them had their own bone to pick with the high-handed governor. When it was later revealed that, at the same time that his administration was covering up the nursing home death toll, he had also gotten a book deal for over \$5 million for a vanity tome on how great he supposedly did in fighting the coronavirus, it only added fuel to the get-Cuomo bonfire.

Cuomo's fallback was that his order was in line with guidance from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). That much is true, but all it meant was that around the country Democratic governors were working in tandem with Republican Trump's CDC to push "stabilized" COVID patients out of hospitals. As the bourgeois media were lauding Cuomo's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, we pointed out that China, with its collectivized economy, managed to build emergency hospitals in days and with rigorous quarantines corralled the virus, while in New York "the way ... medical authorities managed to avoid a complete breakdown of the hospital system was by sending large numbers of coronavirus-positive people back out into the community instead of isolating and hospitalizing them!" ("A Tale of Two Cities: Wuhan – New York," *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020).

For Workers Control of Safety – Fight for Socialized Medicine

While coronavirus-denier Trump was cynically counting on "herd immunity" to set in after enough COVID deaths, the Democrats only sought to "flatten the curve" of infections, to spread them out so that the hospitals (which had been downsized and closed in the name of efficiency) weren't overwhelmed. Both figured on large numbers of deaths while awaiting a vaccine. Neither seriously tried to stop the spread of the virus. The COVID disaster was a bipartisan affair and an indictment of the entire capitalist medical system. The liberal/reformist elixir of "single-payer" medical insurance would not have changed the outcome. As Marxists and communists, the Internationalist Group calls for *socialized medicine to provide high quality free health care for all*. That will require *breaking with the Democratic Party* and all capitalist parties and politicians, and building a *revolutionary workers party to*

⁶ *New York Post*, 24 April 2020.

⁷ "Cuomo aide Melissa DeRosa admits they hid nursing home data so feds wouldn't find out," *New York Post*, 11 February.

fight for a workers government.

This is also the case when it comes to care for the elderly. Under the production-for-profit system, those who are no longer of an age where their labor can produce value and be exploited by the owners of capital are simply a burden, a "social overhead" cost to be minimized. Those whose families can afford it are housed in luxurious "assisted living" communities, while those that can't depend on relatives or go onto Medicaid. But to get on Medicaid their assets can be no more than \$2,000, so if they can't deed over their houses to their kids, the nursing homes will quickly eat up their meagre savings by charging thousands of dollars a month. Thus these centers care only for poor and working-class or pauperized middle-class residents. There, depending on the owners, they are isolated from society, get rationed care and often (particularly in private equity owned centers) are drugged up on anti-psychotic medications to keep them "manageable."

It doesn't have to be this way, of course. Bills such as SB 1030 to require greatly increased nursing and attendant care hours per resident (and maintaining a sufficient stockpile of PPE) should be passed, and fully funded at top union wages as this would require hiring thousands more workers. The capitalist predators who feed on the elderly and have been buying up long-term care homes in order to get on the government gravy train like defense contractors are parasites – they should be driven out. Revolutionary socialists would call for *expropriation without compensation of the LTC chains and slumlords*. But control of nursing homes by the same capitalist government which has been short-changing Medicaid for decades is no solution. The Internationalist Group calls for *control of scheduling, hiring and safety in every facility by union-led workers committees independent of management*.

Over the decades, social theorists have developed various models for a range of different settings providing services and needed medical care for older people so that they can still be part of a multifaceted community rather than being segregated off. In Scandinavian countries, most senior care is through municipal services in their own homes. There have been "garden communities" such as Tapiola in Finland, sponsored by the trade unions, with mixed housing, including in high-rise apartments with older residents on the ground floor for easier access, and so they are not surrounded only by older people. But under capitalism, such models will only be experimental and few in number, for a simple reason: they are not profitable, any more than decent housing or health care for working people is.

Whether it is taking the necessary measures to keep a deadly disease from unleashing a holocaust, as has happened with the COVID-19 pandemic, or providing humane care for those who require special services, this is only possible in a system in which production is to fill social needs rather than to produce private profits. Then necessary measures to deal with a public health emergency will not lead to economic catastrophe. And in that setting, the socialized services and care needed by the elderly will not be a burden on society but an opportunity for creative efforts to enable all to enjoy the fruits of collective labor according to their needs. It will take a socialist revolution to get there, and that is the task the Internationalist Group has undertaken. ■

Understaffing, Overwork, Super-Exploitation and Abuse – It All Goes Together

The Pandemic in Connecticut Group Homes: Not Just the Virus, It's the Capitalist System

By Nathan

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a devastating event, killing millions worldwide, over half a million in the United States alone. But it is not simply the coronavirus itself which has wrought these horrific effects upon the world. The chaotic and criminal mismanagement of the pandemic by the ruling class has hugely multiplied the damage, from haphazard lockdowns in the capitalist countries, to misinformation based on science denial regarding safety precautions, to exclusion of millions of immigrants and others from the emergency aid dished out to those rendered jobless by the layoffs. The consequences of the pandemic have rendered naked the destructive nature of a society whose rulers are driven by the profit motive rather than fulfilling human needs.

As a worker in the healthcare industry, I witnessed the effects of this sinister system first-hand. I worked in a unionized long-term care facility in Connecticut. These facilities serve individuals who require support in their activities of daily living, from showering to toileting, dressing themselves, and so on. Most of the individuals living in these homes have multiple, comorbid disorders and disabilities, many of which affect either their respiratory or immune systems, and in many cases both. Therefore, I and my fellow workers immediately understood that our clients, whose lives and well-being we cared for deeply, were at an extremely high risk for not only contracting this virus, but dying from it.

This understanding, intuitive to us workers, was not at all apparent to the management of the company, which was criminally slow to introduce safety precautions, such as temperature checks of all staff coming on shift, mandatory mask-wearing in all the homes, thoroughly cleaning the house several times a day, or even ending community outings for the disabled individuals that we served. When they did introduce these life-saving measures, they did little to accommodate workers who did contract the virus and thereby could not work, as doing so would put the lives of our clients in mortal danger.

Thus the company required workers to use our own paid-time-off (PTO) if we caught COVID-19. This meant that any of us taking the necessary action of quarantining ourselves to protect others would have to pay for it ourselves. The union bureaucracy made a half-hearted attempt to force the companies to pay workers sick from COVID-19 separately from their normal PTO. But this failed miserably, despite strong rank and file support from the workers in the union. It failed because it wasn't backed up with action.

The dangers of having workers who cannot afford to call in sick if they have COVID-19 are not hypothetical. One of



Connecticut long-term care workers had to use garbage bags as gowns for lack of adequate PPE.

the houses run by the company I worked for had four individuals living in it before one of them became infected with the virus. Two weeks later, all but one of the people living in that home had died of the disease. When the news of this tragedy reached me, I was at first horrified, but that horror turned to anger. Three people had been cut down by a brutal illness due to the mismanagement of the bosses. This was not just a phantom lurking in the shadows, this was a real threat to the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

The criminal negligence of the companies made clear that the bosses were incapable of taking the proper measures to ensure everyone's safety. Their main concern was money, and only when the threat of the pandemic posed a risk to that money did they exhibit any care at all; even then it was the bare minimum needed to avoid a serious loss of profit. When you have a society as a whole operating on this principle, the result is a disaster waiting to happen. So it happened. And the experience of the COVID-19 disaster has not changed that at all. Just look at the chaotic vaccine distribution, which is still very partial instead of universal as it should be.

Another instance of barbarity exhibited by management during this time was their refusal to provide hazard pay of any kind until May 2020, well after the first wave had begun and receded. We won hazard pay only after struggling against the bosses, forcing them to concede. Then we had to fight again in July, not only against the companies at which we worked, but against the state departments which provide the majority of funding to such organizations. The state was planning on doing away with the meager hazard pay at the end of July, but by protesting at the offices of the various departments, we were able to extend it until September. These gains, small as they are, show the power that we the workers have against our bosses. Appeals to morality won't cut it, we need militant union action, up to and including strikes with *picket lines that no one crosses*.

These problems did not start with the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to this out-

break, many issues plagued group homes, nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. A particular problem was the chronic understaffing. It's not because of the often-repeated lie that "no one wants to do this kind of work," rather it was key to the "business model" of the private and public corporations which run these facilities. Wages for workers in group homes and nursing homes are criminally low, despite the demanding nature of the work.

Group home employees, myself included, are regularly expected to perform duties that used to be the domain of nurses, such as delivering medications, communicating with doctors, checking and correcting doctor's orders, operating feeding tubes, and transcribing doctors' orders into medication administration records. Despite the fact that much of our work is nurses' work, we have never been paid to reflect this fact. As it stands now, wages for group home employees range between \$13 and \$16 an hour. Without even minimally adequate pay, it is inevitable that turnover rates among group home staff is so high.

Not only are we expected to perform work that in any other circumstance requires at least an undergraduate degree, we are held liable for mistakes made in our duties to the same degree that nurses are, with our errors tracked directly by the state. This creates a high-stress environment which only exacerbates the emotionally and physically grueling task of performing personal care, often for clients who deal with serious behavioral issues that can range from self-harm, violence against staff and their fellow housemates, and even sexual aggression. The bosses figure they can get away with paying healthcare workers just above the minimum wage. That's how they make their money. That's how exploitation works, unless we fight to put a stop to it.

Along with chronic understaffing and low pay goes overwork. Management places incredible pressure on healthcare workers to work far beyond a 40-hour week. My coworkers and I were frequently pushed to pick up extra shifts on our days off, or to work two shifts in a row, making long hours and little time to rest more of

a norm than an exception. And with the low wages we make in our profession, many healthcare workers, especially those with children, have to work overtime and long hours just in order to make ends meet. This ultimately has a detrimental effect on both the clients we care for and the staff ourselves.

An overworked and exhausted healthcare worker is much more likely to make mistakes on the job, sometimes mistakes which have dire or even fatal consequences. I have seen clients not receiving important medication due to the fact that the person administering said medication was doing so on the 14th, 15th and in some cases 20th hour of their double shift. It is unreasonable and unsafe to expect people to work such long hours, often seven days a week, and perform their jobs safely and correctly all the time. Yet the bosses see it as a solution to the understaffing which plagues these facilities. To them, it only becomes a problem when people end up hospitalized, in which case all blame, in my experience, is placed on the healthcare worker, and not on the management which put them into that situation in the first place.

Another key aspect of the exploitation of healthcare workers is race and racial oppression. A majority of the staff in group homes are black Americans, Jamaicans, Haitians, other West Indians and other immigrants from African countries like Ghana, Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. This means that the struggle of healthcare workers is indivisibly bound up with the struggle for black liberation against this racist, capitalist system, and with the struggle for immigrants rights. The long history of racist exploitation and brutality against black people in the United States has meant that millions of black people are forced into low-wage jobs, due to exclusion from high-quality education, the absence of supportive societal structures, and many other factors.

The same is true of immigrants, who are frequently forced to accept whatever jobs they can find, despite any educational background they may have in their countries of origin. Since anti-black racism is baked into the DNA of American capitalism, as is the super-exploitation of immigrant workers, this system will not provide solutions. You only have to look at China or Cuba to see how a workers state – even if bureaucratically deformed – with a collectivized planned economy not determined by profit can mobilize resources to effectively prevent a natural disaster – like a deadly disease – from turning into a social catastrophe. Only the working class, through the act of international socialist revolution and the establishment of workers states across the globe, can end the barbarity we have experienced. That's our job. ■

SEIU District 1199NE

Cover-Up for SL Boycott of Protests Against Racist Police Terror Spartacist League's Lockdown Lunacy

JUNE 3 – For the past eleven months, the moribund Spartacist League/International Communist League (SL/ICL) has maintained a sepulchral silence, save for a single pro forma statement by the SL's *Workers Vanguard* on the November 2020 elections to say nothing much had happened during their absence (no mention of the coronavirus pandemic, the massive marches against police brutality or the words "George Floyd"). But now there's been a second croak from the crypt, in the form of a *Spartacist* leaflet (19 April) titled "Down with the Lockdowns!" This is a truly bizarre piece of propaganda, at several levels.

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, it categorically declares:

"The bourgeoisie's lockdowns are a **reactionary** public health measure. Workers must oppose them! Lockdowns may well temporarily slow the spread of infections, but they **weaken** the fighting ability of the working class."

So the ICL admits that lockdowns "may" slow the rate of infection, but only to dismiss this. Does it recommend any public health measures to deal with the deadly coronavirus – selective quarantines, emergency hospitals and isolation facilities for those who have contracted the disease or are in danger of infection, anything at all? Nothing. Nor does it even mention that worldwide over 3 million people have died of COVID-19. Frankly, these poseurs who besmirch the name of communism and the Fourth International don't give a damn. Like so much of what they say they are for or against these days – until the next wild line change – it's all just words to them. In contrast, public health measures against this modern plague are of enormous concern to the working class.

At one level, these are the ravings of an outfit that has gone off the deep end. The degeneration of the once-revolutionary Spartacist League and its affiliates has led it to take refuge in its own "alternate reality." As one former SLer, today a supporter of the Internationalist Group, commented: "Yikes! What has happened to the SL? As I read their article, I couldn't help but think of our WV headline, 'The Politics of Crazy'!"¹ about "the decomposition of the hopelessly bizarre residue of the New Left radicalization. Who is now writing this stuff for the SL? It reads like a sophomoric parody, an anti-Marxist 'modest proposal' by a confederacy of dunces, a programmatic flyover of political reality." That captures it pretty well.

Back in the real world, the SL/ICL's statement is a *disingenuous attempt to excuse its boycott of the massive protests against racist police terror* last summer. "Gatherings, protests, travel, strikes, union organizing: all have been restricted or banned," they write. A little later we learn: "For the last year, the position of the ICL was to accept the lockdowns as necessary. We repudiate this position. It was a capitulation to the 'national unity' rallying cry that all classes should support the lockdowns because they save lives." So the SL "accepted" and evidently obeyed the lockdowns – yet we and millions of people in the United States did not. We certainly didn't see the

¹ The front-page article in *Workers Vanguard* No. 78 (26 September 1975). At the time WV was the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism, which *The Internationalist* continues today.

SL at mass marches that were attacked by police for violating curfews and bans.

When the first protests over the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis cop broke out a year ago, they were almost everywhere illegal. The Internationalist Group, Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, Class Struggle Education Workers and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas joined hundreds of thousands of others in *defying* the bans on gatherings and protests. As we remarked to SL supporters at the May Day march in New York City this month, "Look around you. Of all the people here, you are probably the only ones who obeyed the protest bans. And you still have not mentioned George Floyd anywhere." An SLer responded, "I'm hearing that a lot. Why is that so important?" It wasn't important to protest? Not for the SL. The Internationalists, in contrast, intervened heavily combatting illusions in the Democratic Party.²

Strikes and union organizing stopped? When an SL supporter on May Day claimed that lockdowns prevented class struggle, an IG activist responded, "What about packing-house workers who walked out, what about Amazon workers, what about Yakima?" The women workers in the fruit packinghouses in Yakima, Washington struck for health and safety protections and hazard pay during a lockdown in the West Coast epicenter of coronavirus infection. Supporters of the IG and Class Struggle Workers – Portland violated state travel bans to go to the strike lines to support them. Bans and lockdowns didn't stop the class struggle. But the SL/ICL "accepted" them. And how convenient it is for them to denounce quarantines now that they have been vaccinated.

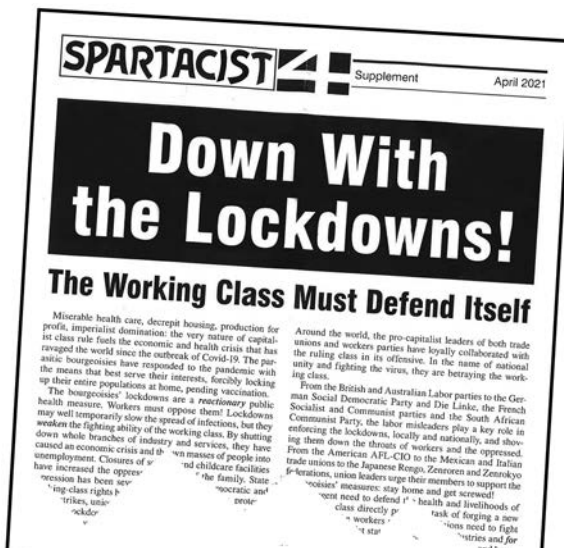
The ICL "repudiates" its acceptance of the lockdowns, and now pleads guilty to capitulating to "national unity" appeals. It wouldn't be the first time, on both counts, capitulating and repudiating. In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, when U.S. rulers were making fevered pitches for national unity as they invaded Afghanistan, the ICL dropped its call for the defeat of U.S. imperialism, while slandering the IG as "anti-American" for our refusal to abandon this fundamental Leninist position against imperialist war.³ And then in 2010, the SL/ICL vociferously supported the U.S. invasion of Haiti, buying into the claim that this was "humanitarian aid," only to, months later, "repudiate" this "capitulation to U.S. imperialism" and admit that our denunciation of their "social-imperialist" betrayal was correct.⁴

Later on in its unhinged tract on lockdowns, the ICL accuses the Internationalist

² See "SL Silence = Capitulation to the Democrats," *The Internationalist* No. 61, September-October 2020.

³ See "ICL Refuses to Call for Defeat of U.S. Imperialism, 'Anti-American' Bait the Internationalist Group," *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001.

⁴ See "Open Letter from the Internationalist Group to the Spartacist League and ICL," *The Internationalist* No. 31, Summer 2010.



Group along with several other tendencies of having "embraced the lockdowns, betraying the proletariat." But since a few lines earlier it admitted that it "accepted" the lockdowns as "necessary," it is saying that the ICL also "betrayed." So let's see if we got this straight: from March 2020 through 18 April 2021, for over a year, the ICL betrayed the proletariat (again), yet it still fancies itself the revolutionary vanguard! In part what's going on here is that these *ex*-Trotskyists are trying to cheapen what it means to betray, pretending that everyone does it, so what's the big deal. But boycotting the massive protests against racist police murder, as the SL did, *was* a betrayal, whatever its excuse.

And then there are the *facts*, which like the horrendous COVID death toll have little meaning for these latter-day Know Nothings. For the record, the lockdowns were hardly an expression of "national unity," as they were ordered in emergency decrees and were met with considerable opposition from reactionary forces (that the SL/ICL is now sidling up to). More importantly, the ICL's claim that workers were "weakened" by the lockdowns is made doubly absurd by the fact that *for the vast majority of the proletariat, there never was a lockdown*. In the United States, transit workers and truckers, rail and dock workers, auto and metal workers, hospital and sanitation workers, meatpacking and poultry plant workers, grocery and deli workers, delivery and agricultural workers – all were kept on the job, in highly unsafe conditions. The same was true in Europe and elsewhere. Those who worked remotely during lockdowns were overwhelmingly white-collar petty-bourgeois sectors.

The ICL's portrayal of "labor misleaders play[ing] a key role in enforcing the lockdowns" is another fiction. In fact, as we documented, in Michigan plants, the United Auto Workers tops only called on the companies to shut plants *after* local unions walked out at plants where COVID cases had been reported. Packinghouse workers were directed to stay on the job by a presidential order under the Defense Production Act, yet despite wildcat walkouts by workers the UFCW and RWDSU union leaders did *not* call to shut down manifestly unsafe meatpacking and poultry plants.⁵ And what about workers at the Smithfield packing plant in South Dakota

⁵ See "As the COVID-19 Pandemic Rages, Workers Fight for Health and Safety," *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020.

where over 1,000 workers got COVID? Were they *stronger* because there was no lockdown there, because they had to come to work with little or no personal protective equipment? Let the ICL try selling its latest deranged revelations in Sioux Falls, SD.

The ICL statement parrots the complaint of the bourgeois media and politicians – first from Trump and Republicans, then embraced by the Democrats after Biden took office – that "the teachers unions have fought for governments to keep schools shut," saying this was a "refusal to fight for safe schools." Actually, in New York the teachers union agreed to school opening plans after threatening to strike if safety measures were not taken. And the Internationalist Group – which the ICL statement falsely claims "embraced the lockdowns" – along with Class Struggle Education Workers called to "Use Union Power to Reopen Schools Safely," and for "the formation of *union-led teacher-parent-student-worker committees* at every school to *inspect and sign off on reopening plans*, and to see that they are rigorously followed afterwards."⁶

This brings us to the fictitious program that the ICL supposedly puts forward "to defend the health and livelihoods of the working class," including the call "For Union Control of Safety!" Where did they ever call for this in the U.S., or anywhere – save a mention in a leaflet by their Italian group (never translated) in response to an article by our comrades of the Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia which demanded, "Trade-union and worker safety committees must shut down production in the case of unsafe working conditions."⁷ In contrast to the SL/ICL, the Internationalist Group and supporters in the unions from early in the pandemic widely promoted the crucial demands raised in the call by Class Struggle Workers – Portland (18 March 2020) "For Workers Action in Coronavirus Crisis."⁸ This included the call to form "*health and safety committees*, to be elected at every workplace, both union and unrepresented, to ensure that all safety measures are being enforced for all workers, and that all necessary equipment is available." Not only did we make specific demands, we fought for them with New England Teamster UPS workers,⁹ in Los Angeles transit,¹⁰ with Yakima fruit packers.¹¹

The IG also issued a leaflet and 12-page special supplement in May 2020 on New York City transit, where 120 active-duty members (and 40 retirees) of Transport

⁶ See Class Struggle Education Workers/UFT, "Chaotic Reopening of NYC Schools: This Is What Mayoral Control Looks Like," in *The Internationalist* No. 62, January-March 2021; and CSEW, "A Class-Struggle Program to Reopen New York City Schools Safely," reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 61.

⁷ See "Coronavirus Pandemic Ravages Italy, Overwhelms Capitalist Medical System," *The Internationalist* No. 59.

⁸ See "CSWP Calls for Workers Action in Coronavirus Crisis," *The Internationalist* No. 59.

⁹ See "No Safety, No Work!" *The Internationalist* No. 59.

¹⁰ See "L.A. Transit Workers Facing Deadly Conditions – It's Up to Us to Fight for Health & Safety Now!" in *The Internationalist* No. 59.

¹¹ See "Victory to Yakima Packinghouse Strikers!" *The Internationalist*, May 2020.

Workers Union Local 100 died of COVID, calling for *workers control of NYC transit*, with detailed demands that class-struggle trade unionists should put forward to protect bus drivers, track and shop workers who were particularly hard hit.¹² We also called for round-the-clock subway service to be restored, and adequate shelter provided for the homeless.¹³ What did SL supporters do about *any* demands for safety during that time, we would like to know. The fundamental fact is that the phony “program” put forward in the ICL’s statement against lockdowns is a **total fraud**. They never fought for any of these demands. Again, it’s all just words – after the fact, motivated by the latest round of their own endless internal crises and convulsions.

The SL/ICL’s ex post facto “program” seeks to put a “working-class” gloss on its *sharp turn to the right* in recent years as it has *increasingly oriented to chauvinist forces*. This was particularly evident in its support for British exit from the European Union (“Brexit”) fueled by virulent immigrant-bashing,¹⁴ and later when the ICL’s “Brexit Now!” line echoed right-wing Tory prime minister Boris Johnson’s “Get Brexit Done!” campaign slogan.¹⁵ It is also seen in the ICL’s opposition to calls for asylum for refugees from imperialist devastation, in the Near East or Latin America.¹⁶ Now the *Spartacist* “Lockdowns” leaflet argues that labor/left support for lockdowns “has ceded the ground to the far right, allowing sinister reactionaries and outright fascists to posture as defenders of democratic rights and champions of the ruined petty bourgeoisie.”

So here is the pseudo-Trotskyist ICL vying with the likes of the fascistic militias that staged an armed assault on the Michigan state capitol to protest lockdowns. Moreover, those protests were explicitly to keep capitalism going and profits flowing. It is not alone. The decrepit remains of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) have lately championed “‘deplorable’ workers” (ironically taking up Democrat Hillary Clinton’s sneer about Trump supporters). For example, the SWP’s *Militant* (2 June 2017) denounced the “breaking up of meetings” of fascists and racists, alibiing this with criticisms of “middle-class left and liberal groups” that “increasingly blame workers – most of whom they consider ignorant, racist, xenophobic and dangerous.” In Portland, Oregon, where in June 2017 the IG and CSWP brought out some 300 union supporters to stop a provocation by the Patriot Prayer fascists,¹⁷ the SWP was selling to and discussing with the fascist/racist provocateurs (*The Militant*, 19 June 2017).

The Internationalist has exposed the

¹² See “MTA Bosses’ Coronavirus Disaster: For Workers Control of NYC Transit!” *The Internationalist*, May 2020.

¹³ See “Shutting Down 24/7 Service Is No Answer to NYC Subway Crisis,” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020.

¹⁴ See “ICL: The Main Enemy Is in Brussels,” *The Internationalist* No. 44, Summer 2016.

¹⁵ See “Some History Ex-Trotskyists Would Like to Keep Hidden,” *The Internationalist* No. 59.

¹⁶ See “Strange Encounters with the ICL,” *The Internationalist* No. 44; and “Spartacist League vs. Refugees,” *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017.

¹⁷ See “Portland Labor Mobilizes to Stop Fascist Provocation,” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017. In addition, about 1,000 anti-fa protesters came out, while a roughly equal number of liberals and reformist leftists lined up behind police lines at City Hall while the SWP was hobnobbing with the fascists and pro-Trump racists.

On the “Spartacist Penny Saver” Sheet

By R. Titta

I picked up the leaflet [the ICL “Down with the Lockdowns” statement] announcing the repudiation of their line on the COVID-19 response, and studied it. That is one weird little subculture.

If I were the editor of the “Spartacist” penny saver sheet¹, I would forbid the use of exclamation marks. Because if you say one thing, and then a bit later say the opposite, and denounce yourself for saying the first thing, and then denounce everyone else for taking the position that you took before – well, the silliness of it all is only emphasized by the exclamation marks.

But that is a small matter. The larger truth, noticed by all, is that while the Spartacist Penny Saver Sheet (SPS) is denouncing the lockdown as a bourgeois measure to freeze the class struggle, outside there has been a mini-strike wave in the U.S. and – much more significant – a massive coast-to-coast rebellion against the relentless murder by the police of black and brown people. As other comrades saw at a glance, the SPS does not mention the name of George Floyd. The social tension that existed in this country around the recent verdict was unprecedented in recent years. Everyone knew that if that jury did not return a guilty verdict the country would explode in mass rioting. Everyone except the SPS. So that is the plainest evidence that the old group has thoroughly unhinged itself from reality.

Aside from completely ignoring the black question today (hard to get my head around that), the SPS has nothing useful to say about the pandemic or China. There is an odd sentence stuck in on China, and that is it. On the pandemic and China, the *Internationalist* has made all the points. “Developing” China (4,600 deaths) showed the “developed” world (almost 600,000 deaths in the U.S.) how it is done. Only a planned economy, in the absence of capitalist control, could have achieved such a feat. In China, since April 19, 2020 four people have died of COVID-19. That is the number 4, in one year, in a country of 1.4 billion people.

About the lockdowns, China had them, first in Wuhan (population: 10 million), then, eventually, in Hubei province (50 million people). And they were pretty strict

¹ Flyers or small publications with ads for items for sale by local businesses.

liberal/reformist myth that dismisses all white workers who voted for Donald Trump as racists,¹⁸ noting (among other things) that many of them had voted for Obama, in many cases twice. But that is very different from contending on the same “anti-lockdown” capitalist political terrain as pro-Trump racists, as the Trumpified SWP does, with the ex-Trotskyist ICL tagging along behind. Moreover, by the time that the ICL called to “Reopen the Economy” and for “increased production,” *this was the common program of the entire bourgeoisie*. It all gets “curiouser and curiouser,” as Lewis Carroll quipped in *Alice in Wonderland* (see the trenchant comment by R. Titta on the ICL’s strange evolution above).

One final thing: when asked by an IG

¹⁸ See “The Myth of a ‘White Working Class,’” *The Internationalist* No. 46, January-February 2017.

– but they also had massive food deliveries, emergency hospitals, mask wearing, oxygen, anti-viral medications (what? there are anti-viral medications?), and, eventually vaccines – though the Chinese vaccination program is proceeding at a relaxed pace because in the whole country (where there is frequent testing), it has been more than one year since 2,000 active cases were recorded.

SPS is virtually silent on China. And on something else too. What lockdowns are they talking about? In Britain, perhaps? In the U.S. the lockdowns were not lockdowns at all – relatively lax strictures were in place. In Brazil, lockdowns in Rio and São Paulo were also lax, but were widely defied anyway. Why? Because poor people had to go to work to find enough to eat. Many did not succeed, true, and starvation is on the rise in Brazil. But deciding between catching the virus and having enough to eat becomes the awful calculus. Most defy bans and look for work. Thousands are dying of COVID-19 every day. The death count in Brazil is now 465,000 (deemed low by most experts).

And now there is the catastrophe of India. There, the SPS program was put into effect by the Modi government. They wanted people out in the streets, going to political rallies (and religious festivals). Of course, the political content of those rallies is Hindu-nationalist, but the result is the same: a COVID-19 storm, with most experts saying that the actual infection rate and death count – which is underreported in most capitalist countries – is false by design in India. The death count in India is 330,000, but that is the number of patients pronounced dead of COVID-19 in hospi-

supporter (and former SLer) in Los Angeles where the SL/ICL stood on China’s use of massive lockdowns that contained the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, an SL supporter said they did not have a position. So much for the ICL’s empty “defense” of China. In contrast, the IG and LFI have underlined how the Chinese workers state, despite being bureaucratically deformed, was able to marshal resources of a collectivized economy to treat the infected and stop the spread of the deadly virus.¹⁹ We have also warned of the mounting imperialist threat of war and counterrevolution from both Republican Trump and Democrat Biden, whom the reformist left worked so hard to put in the White House.

We will leave the last word to the IG supporter, ex-SLer and CSEW member whose comments on the ICL’s lockdown

¹⁹ See “A Tale Of Two Cities: Wuhan – New York,” *The Internationalist* No. 59.



Mad Hatter in SL/ICL wonderland.

tals. Those dying in hospitals of “comorbidities” (heart or lung conditions) are not counted, though these patients would have lived if they didn’t have COVID. More important, poor people (80% of India’s 1.35 billion people) don’t make it to hospitals. They die in their beds, on the street, in a ditch, wherever. The death count, consequently, is almost inestimable, but many experts believe it to be above 1 million.

Closer to home, in U.S. factories and packing plants, as we know, hundreds of thousands of workers have been forced to work without vaccines or protective equipment and the COVID-19 rates there, along with mortality rates, are very high. So really, what lockdown is SPS talking about that workers should break, to “get back to work”? What world do they live in?

In the end, though, I think these people are off their nut. They seem to be saying that they, themselves, recently capitulated to class collaboration and calls for national unity. (I can believe it.) And like a crazy person they are standing up and objecting, vehemently, to everything that was just said – though they were the ones, they tell us, who said it. ■

lunacy we quoted at the beginning:

“This abstract mess of an article doesn’t even make sense as an apology for the SL’s abstention from the Black-led protests against racist police repression. Instead, they have adopted the slogan of the fascistic militias – ‘liberate Michigan,’ liberate the working class from rational public health measures.

“I really don’t understand how the SL became so alienated from reality so fast.... I can’t believe that the SL I was a part of would have simply absented itself from the massive street protests against racist police terror and shut down its press in the face of a public health crisis that disproportionately ravaged the working class. Crazy may be a generous characterization of the current SL. More grim, maybe the SL has just given up. What a waste of Trotskyist cadre who once dedicated their lives to revolutionary socialism.” ■

Germany...

continued from page 5

individuals targeted were not informed. In November 2019, the Berlin prosecutor's office filed charges in 14 cases against Sebastian T. and Tilo P., but not for arson and death threats. Now, due to the decision of the bourgeois justice system, the two are walking free again.

Another example is the Berlin state parliamentary deputy Anne Helm from Die Linke, who was on this enemies list, whose mailbox was blown up at the end of 2013 in an attempted break-in, and whose personal mail had been intercepted. The police only investigated for property damage, without results. Or the fascist arson attack in February 2018 against Kocak, also a member of parliament for Die Linke, whose car was completely destroyed. Although Sebastian T. and Tilo P. were investigated in this case, there were no results here either. The Soko Focus also stated in its report that there were nine other crimes that could be attributed to the series of right-wing attacks. Almost all of those targeted were either repeated victims of attacks or were anti-fascist activists. These obvious connections were simply ignored in the original investigation.

Compare this with what happened with a series of arson attacks between 2009 and 2011 against luxury cars, behind which in several instances there was an apolitical frustrated 27-year-old unemployed man. After his confession, the then Berlin state interior minister Ehrhart Körting (SPD) justified targeting prosecution of leftists as perpetrators. The State Security Department, which was responsible for politically motivated acts, was given responsibility for investigating arson against expensive vehicles because the Senate did not want to be accused of being "blind in the left eye." In 2009, a left-wing 21-year-old woman spent five months in pre-trial detention as a result of this hunt for leftists, which cost the Berlin Senate several million euros a month for special police nighttime operations. She had to fight through three long trials before her innocence was established in 2011.

One reason for the lack of results in the attacks over the last few years came to light in the summer of 2020. In June, it became known that a police chief inspector had passed on details of the investigation to an AfD chat group. Then in August it came out that the previous head of the State Security crimes department, Matthias Fenner, was said to have signaled to Tilo P. himself that there was nothing to fear from his side. "The prosecution is on our side. He is an AfD voter," Tilo P. boasted as early as March 2017 (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 6 August 2020). This statement was uncovered by the lawyer of one of the victims; it was ignored by both the police and various prosecutors. Not coincidentally, Fenner was the driving force behind the mass arrest of 100 demonstrators who peacefully blocked a reactionary anti-abortion march in Berlin in September 2019.

When the first results of this Soko were released in a report in the spring of 2020, SPD Interior Senator Geisel immediately declared it a classified matter. The report was presented to the members of the Interior Committee on short notice and only behind the closed doors of a high security room, without minutes being taken. Die Linke, which has been

part of the Berlin city-state government since 2016, called for a parliamentary investigation committee (PUA). But the Greens, as the third component of the ruling coalition, called for a special investigator instead of a PUA, ostensibly because a PUA would work sluggishly. A special investigator, as in the Amri case,⁵ would put things in order, i.e., sweep the state's dirt under the rug and drag out the investigation endlessly.

So it happened that after Fokus's final report, in order to further muddy the waters, Geisel appointed two more "independent" special investigators. One of them, Herbert Diemer, was the lead prosecutor in the case of Beate Zschäpe, the last surviving member of the NSU, or at least that part of it that has been officially uncovered.⁶ That trial and the endless investigations in several German states that accompanied it were prime examples of how to uncover nothing important about the networks of the fascist underground and their connections to the police and intelligence services.

It was therefore hardly surprising that Geisel's special investigators presented an interim report in February 2021 that basically exonerated the police. What matters to the Greens, as well as to Geisel and his SPD, is to prevent the unvarnished truth from coming to light – the state should retain control over what is and is not published. The special investigators only pointed out the obvious: that a large part of the population of Neukölln has no trust in the police. Die Linke is offering to restore this trust with its endless demands for toothless parliamentary committees of inquiry.

"In Neukölln, the Population Is Losing Confidence in the Rule of Law"

What is motivating the rulers was summed up in the words of the spokesman for the public prosecutor's office, Martin Steltner: "In Neukölln, the population is losing confidence in the rule of law. All the more so when the police were finally able to solve some crimes, but then most were not punished after all" (*Tagesspiegel*, 19 February 2020). Concern about trust in the state and its institutions was also the driving force behind the transfer of two prosecutors suspected of sympathizing with the Nazis. Attorney General Margarete Koppers justified the transfer: "There must not be even the slightest doubt that we do not prosecute criminal offenses from the right-wing extremist milieu, that we do not do so with sufficient intensity, or do so only sluggishly" (*Die Welt*, August 19, 2020). As if to mock her own words, both prosecutors then received a clean bill of health from her, and were merely transferred to another post.

The bourgeoisie and its executive organs are worried that the legitimacy of their rule is

⁵ The case of Anis Amri, the Islamist truck driver who killed eleven people in the Berlin Christmas market in December 2016. The Berlin state attorney's office had had engaged in cover-ups to justify the fact that it had stopped tapping his phone four months before the murderous attack.

⁶ NSU affair: The National Socialist Union, a Nazi terror network, was implicated in at least nine murders of immigrants, the murder of a policewoman, bombings in Cologne in 2001 and 2004, and more than a dozen bank robberies. After it was uncovered in late 2011, a scandal broke out when it was revealed that the NSU was infiltrated by German (and possibly U.S.) intelligence agencies, which had undercover agents present during some of the murders. It is suspected that not all of the network was rolled up.



On 19 June 2020, a delivery van outside the Konditorei Damaskus bakery in the Berlin district of Neukölln was firebombed and the shop window defaced with a swastika.

increasingly slipping away. Meanwhile, for those targeted, leftists, women, trade unionists, journalists and all potential victims of the fascists, it is a matter of life and death: "Our problem is that we don't know whether we can trust the police officers on our doorstep or not," said Ferat Kocak from personal experience after he and his family became targets of the fascist arson attacks, and as an activist in the campaign to clarify the series of attacks (*Tagesspiegel*, 17 February 2020). Trust in the police, or not? We Marxists have long given the answer to this question. The state and its organs are the repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie. They protect the fascists in order to keep them ready for the moment when their services become urgently necessary for the ruling class.

At the same time, Die Linke (Left Party), as a government party of the "red-red-green" popular front that administers Berlin today, is involved in the racist repression of immigrants, in the destruction of left-wing housing programs while bolstering the profits of speculators and cartels, and in general in the systematic and massive expansion of the state repressive apparatus. The sorry state of the Left Party is linked to the fact that, due to its governmental responsibility, it makes common cause with the perpetrators and opposes the struggle for truly independent working-class action. And this miserable condition extends to the smaller left groupings in and around Die Linke. Characteristic of this is the Revolutionäre Internationalistische Organisation (RIO), internationally linked to the misnamed Trotskyist Fraction.

So after years of turning a blind eye to the fascist contamination of the Berlin police, the SPD resorts to an investigation by an in-house special commission; the Greens want a special investigator (and get one); Die Linke calls for a parliamentary investigative committee, to no avail. For its part, RIO wants

an independent commission of inquiry. Last summer, when the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in the U.S. also sparked protests in Germany, RIO wrote: "There needs to be a consistent investigation of all cases and deaths" resulting from police use of force and also of fascist violence "by independent commissions of inquiry" (*Klasse gegen Klasse*, 13 June 2020). Now it has expanded the demand: "We need independent commissions of inquiry, elected by migrant organizations and trade unions" (*Klasse gegen Klasse*, 2 March 2021).

The title of the latter article is "Series of Attacks in Neukölln: Police Will Not Help Us." In the summer, RIO opined that "the state is not an honest broker" ("Right-Wing Terror in Neukölln," *Klasse gegen Klasse*, 6 July 2020). In the fall, it wrote: "Neo-Nazi structures in the NRW police. Not an #Isolated case. No Trust in the State" (*Klasse gegen Klasse*, 16 September 2020). All of these formulations, in one way or another, rest on the mistaken notion that the bourgeois state is some kind of third force, one that admittedly "can't be trusted," that "won't help," and that won't mediate "honestly," but that should be pressured. And this is exactly what these pseudo-Trotskyists did when they wrote after the [February 2020] mass murder in Hanau: "The government must be forced to take certain measures: disarm the fascists and their associations, dissolve the Office for the Protection of the Constitution..." (*Klasse gegen Klasse*, 26 February 2020).

These are fatal reformist illusions in the capitalist state, hallmarks of the politics of class collaboration. While they look to the state to disarm the fascist gangs, the state is much more likely to disarm the workers organizations, as Salvador Allende's Chilean Popular Front did in 1973, paving the way for the victory of the Pinochet coup. The idea that the police, military, secret services and

Photos: Morris Pudwell; Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg



The IG at a protest outside the Neukölln borough hall, February 2020. Signs say: “Instead of Illusions in Bans – Stop the Nazis with Worker/Immigrant Mobilization” and “SPD/Left Party Administer Capitalism – For a Multi-Ethnic Revolutionary Workers Party.”

judiciary would allow trade unionists, leftists, migrants and targeted people access in order to “disclose all files” is pure idiocy, as is the demand for the dissolution of the political police, or the police itself, within the framework of capitalism. Moreover, the “democratic” bourgeois “constitutional state” is ultimately a much greater danger to the working people and the oppressed than the so far relatively small fascist gangs, whose danger rests precisely on their connections with the state.

No, it is not about isolated cases, nor only about “structures” within the state apparatus: it is about the state itself. As much as RIO may stress the “independent” character of its dream commission, and that it should be based on “mobilization”, its purpose is to exert pressure on the state “from the outside”, instead of taking to the streets against the capitalist state and its organs of oppression. And when such idealized commissions of inquiry “reveal” the fact – big

surprise! – that the state power is riddled with fascist and fascist elements and their accomplices, what then? Our task as revolutionaries is not to lure the masses into the dead end of an impossible “denazification” or even “democratization” of the bourgeois state, but to lead them to hard class struggle on the road to revolution. The Internationalistische Gruppe says: **The police cannot be reformed. Police officers are not “workers in uniform” but the armed organ of the ruling class. Police out of the DGB (German Union Federation)!**

The call for “independent committees of inquiry” is a trademark of the “Trotskyist Faction,” which they repeat all over the world. Currently they are calling for an “independent investigation into the right-wing violence” of January 6, when a racist mob attacked the U.S. Capitol. This investigation “must be democratically led, by independent lawyers, anti-fascist organizations and labor groups. They must have access to what the state knows...” (*Left Voice*, 13 February). How they intend to bring about this nonsense goes unmentioned. Such slogans, like their favorite demand for a “constituent assembly” everywhere and always, constitute a “democratic” stagist program. Today they justify themselves by claiming that the masses are too immature for the final struggle. But such “truth commissions” can only be realized at the moment when an overthrow is possible, and then they serve only to distract from the struggle for revolution.

For Worker/Immigrant Defense on the Road to Revolution

All these demands to investigate what has already been proven – that the state apparatus is shot through with Nazis – are an appeal to the state to undertake a purge of the state apparatus of fascists. In the early 1930s, the Social Democrats cried, “*Staat, greif zu!*” (State, act fast). Leon Trotsky polemicized against this slogan several times. In his article, “Bourgeois Democracy and the Struggle Against Fascism” (January 1936), the Bolshevik revolutionary stressed that the bourgeois politicians “never would eradicate fascism, or even totally isolate it, because it serves the state in keeping its real enemy, the proletariat, at bay; at most the state will keep it in check. Therefore, the demand for the state to dissolve and disarm the fascist gangs (the German Social Democrats cried, ‘State, act fast,’) and voting for similar measures is thoroughly reactionary.” RIO, take heed!

Instead of looking to the state, Trotsky repeatedly stressed the need for a united defense by the working class against the fascist thugs. In 1930, after the Nazis’ first electoral success, he wrote that Communists should “call for the defense of those material and moral positions which the working class has managed to win in the German state,” i.e., “workers political organizations, trade unions, newspapers, printing plants, clubs, libraries,” and “in every factory, in every working-class neighborhood and district” (“The Turn of the Comintern and the Situation in Germany”). Today, in besieged Neukölln, this means fighting for **full citizenship rights for all immigrants**, and for **joint worker/immigrant defense to mobilize working-class power against the fascists and their official protectors**.

The bourgeoisie has shown itself unwilling to even apply the cosmetics for the democratic masquerade of its increasingly undisguised dictatorship. Part of it thinks that an all-too intimate close-up look at the ugly grimace of their dictatorship might be too scary; another part has long been working to return to the days when any masquerade was dispensed with. As we have repeatedly pointed out, the rulers are aware, and not only in Germany, that they need a beefed-up state with bonapartist features to prepare for the foreseeable unrest of working people and the oppressed in decaying capitalism, whose descent into barbarism has become increasingly evident in the spotlight of the coronavirus pandemic.

What we can observe in Neukölln is the pervasive networking of fascists and the bourgeois state apparatus. At the federal level, we see many examples – Nazis and “preppers”⁷ with death lists in the KSK (special forces commandos) and other federal military units; NSU connections with the police in the state of Hesse; Hitler images and swastika symbols in Nordrhein-Westfalen police chat groups; fascist infiltration of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution – of what in Neukölln is shown to be pervasive at the local level. The Berlin police have always been stuffed with Nazis, it was a hotbed of fascist Republikaner in the mid-’80s. Police officers regularly cover up for Nazis as they do their dirty work, LKA investigators block investigations, *Verfassungsschutz* officers leak internal information to suspects,

⁷ Fascistic right-wingers who are preparing for “Day X” when, in the midst of apocalyptic social collapse, they aim to wipe out all those on their enemies lists, i.e., leftists, immigrants, etc.

office staff download personal data to pass on to Nazi perpetrators.

It is not only about “right-wing extremist structures” in the police, which obviously exist, but about the fact that the whole repressive apparatus (police, military, secret services, state attorneys) – the core of the bourgeois state – is in a protection racket with fascists. One can also see in Neukölln the cooperation of the AfD – and not only of its *völkisch* (German nationalist) and fascist “Flügel” (wing)⁸ – with Nazis of the NPD, from the very top in the Criminal Investigation Department down to the precinct level and on the street. This is all the more important because both the bourgeois media and politicians and the reformist left label the AfD with the trivializing label of “right-wing populists” (in juxtaposition to “left-wing populists” like Wagenknecht’s *Aufstehen* (rise up) movement?).⁹ Rather, the fact that there is a division of labor between the fascistic AfD and outright fascists is confirmed here in the district.

One also sees how anti-communist and xenophobic terror are linked. Everything indicates that it is the same fascists who carry out arson attacks against left-wing politicians and smash shop windows of Arab cafes. Both are incited by the police through raids against shisha bars and bans on leftist demos. Nazi hounding of Jews continues, and is compounded with constant aggression against immigrants and people of Middle Eastern and African descent. The German nationalist hysteria spreads simultaneously with – and as a consequence of – the decay of rotting capitalism based on the nation-state. The imperialist alliance of the European Union cannot overcome this, as the fiasco of the struggle against COVID proves. Only the struggle for a Socialist United States of Europe offers a way out.

The capitalist class and its state keep the fascists on standby to unleash them as a spearhead for racist divisions among the oppressed and the working class, and to crush burgeoning resistance to their economic and social austerity plans, their imperialist wars to divide up world markets, and over spheres of exploitation within the country. At the same time, the popular-front policies of the reformists, who look to the bourgeois state for their salvation, serve to divert the masses from class struggle. As Trotsky noted in the 1938 Transitional Program, “‘People’s Fronts’ on the one hand – fascism on the other: these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.”

Pressuring the bourgeois state for protection against the Nazis disarms the working class; appeals to the state for a ban on the Nazis further strengthen the oppressive state apparatus – harsher laws and bans will be put into use primarily to persecute leftists, immigrants and the entire working class. The Internationalistische Gruppe fights instead for worker/immigrant mobilizations. The struggle against the fascists requires a revolutionary, multi-ethnic workers party to lead the fight for socialist revolution, which alone is capable of eliminating the brown plague once and for all. ■

⁸ The openly Nazi wing of the AfD, headed by Björn Höcke in the eastern German state of Thüringen.

⁹ In 2018, Left Party Bundestag deputy Sara Wagenknecht cofounded the *Aufstehen* movement, modeled on Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s *La France Insoumise* (France Unbowed), on a nationalist program of “left” populism to compete for voters with the AfD. The latter, however, is not simply “right-wing populist” but a fascistic party with close ties to Nazi fascists, as this article details at the local level.

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Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of Eastern Europe, U.S. rulers proclaimed a “New World Order,” inaugurated with a bloodbath in Iraq (the 1991 Gulf War) with a toll of more than 100,000 dead.

Ten years later, in 2002, Lula again ran for president heading a new popular front, this time with the Liberal Party of textile entrepreneur José Alencar. As proof of his submission to the dictates of Washington, the PT leader wrote a Letter to the Brazilian People (in reality to Wall Street investors) in which he promised to pay the foreign debt. He then served as sheriff in the Caribbean for the U.S. government by occupying the black republic of Haiti (with Brazilian soldiers in U.N. blue helmets). When the bourgeoisie needed to pull him out of the game, Lula accepted his arrest, limiting “resistance” to legal defense. And now that the bourgeoisie needs his services again, he is offering himself as the candidate of a “broad front” with those that only yesterday he denounced as “coup plotters.”

The “New Order” withered and died in the devastating crisis of 2007-2008, but the PT remained. The capitalist governments of the PT-led popular front served imperialism and the national bourgeoisie by stifling protests from below, just as other populist governments of the “pink wave” in South America did, or Syriza in Greece. With leftist rhetoric, many applied “neoliberal” policies as previous governments did. Soon the “popular” regimes were replaced by rightists, in Brazil by the would-be Bonaparte Bolsonaro. With Donald Trump in the White House, the retired captain rules with generals and admirals nostalgic for the military dictatorship. Together with Congress, they approved almost all the anti-worker “reforms” that PT governments were unable to impose.

However, the hard core of the bourgeoisie, the *centrão* (the “broad center” of the traditional right-wing parties) led by the PSDB,⁴ was defeated four times in a row by the PT and its Brazil Popular Front. Recall that the PT and its administrations did nothing more than give a left gloss to the “social” programs of FHC and his gang. The *Bolsa Família*,⁵ for example, is a program that didn’t even originate in the PSDB; it was the intellectual brainchild of the American ultra-right-wing economist, the neoliberal Milton Friedman, according to whom one should give the hungry something to eat while slashing programs that entitled working people in general to certain rights. Since the right wing failed to win by the vote, the owners of Brazilian capital had Rousseff removed, Lula imprisoned and beginning in 2014 they launched a “Fora PT!” (PT Out) campaign in the mass media, led by the Globo TV Network. To finish the job, they plucked Bolsonaro from the catacombs.

For seven years now, the Brazil Popular Front and its components have faced one brutal attack after another, subjecting

⁴ Party of Brazilian Social Democracy, the main conservative party, of former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC).

⁵ Family Stipend, a social welfare program that provides small monthly payments (currently averaging US\$50/month) to the poorest families. It was the PT’s expansion of the *Bolsa Escolar* (School Stipend) of Henrique Cardoso, and was financed by slashing health care and pension programs.



Mass burial site for victims of COVID-19 in Manaus, Brazil. The Amazon city was the hardest-hit in the country, with an estimated 76% of the population infected with the coronavirus by last December. Then a third wave of the pandemic hit, and thousands more died there. So much for Bolsonaro’s claim that “herd immunity” would stop the pandemic.

PT leaders to public execration. Its pallid reforms vanished like ice cream in the sun. Under the Bolsonaro government, the price of gasoline and fuel in general, including cooking gas, skyrocketed, pushing the overall cost of living into the clouds. Millions of people were left jobless, homeless and landless. As if all this were not enough, unemployment produced millions of starving people and a mountain of dead, devoured like flies by COVID-19, which was criminally denied by Bolsonaro. Now it is revealed in the CPI, which hundreds of thousands are following live on Senate TV, that the denialist government was offered, but refused to buy, 70 million doses of vaccines against COVID-19 from the Pfizer pharmaceutical company.

But Bolsonaro’s management of the COVID crisis has been so chaotic that the Brazilian bourgeoisie has had enough of the comic opera bonapartist who is impeding economic recovery and may provoke an explosion of popular protest. May 29 indicates that the masses are beginning to overcome fear, and consider the virus less deadly than the government. The ruling class again needs a guarantor of the capitalist order, which could be the Lula 22 candidacy. As Leon Trotsky, Lenin’s partner in the 1917 October Revolution and founder of the Red Army, wrote in the Transitional Program (the founding document of the Fourth International), “People’s Fronts’ on the one hand – fascism on the other: these are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.” The capitalist hard core feels it must act preemptively, and soon.

COVID Parliamentary Inquiry, Just Another Maneuver – Fight for Revolution!

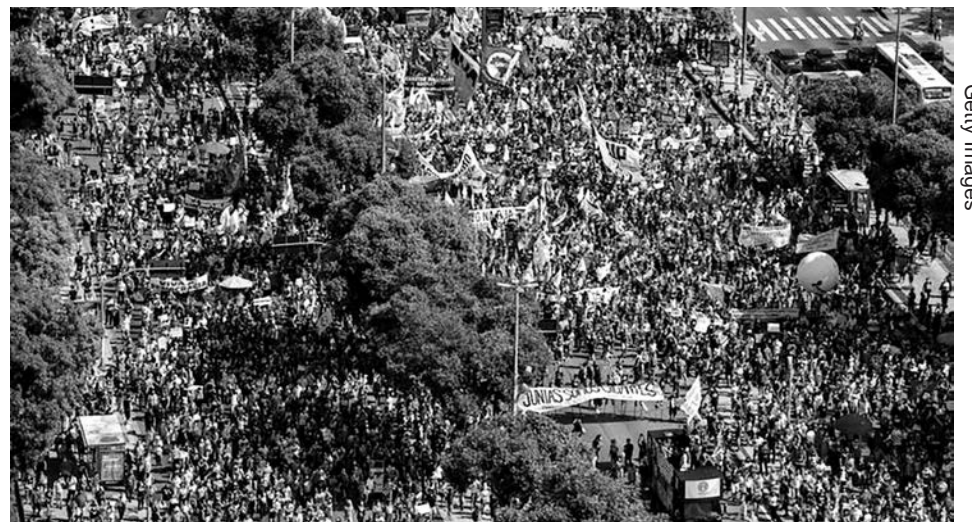
The new soap opera that has the population mesmerized is the COVID-19 CPI. It only gives proof of what everyone already knew, although there are always new revelations. The rapporteur Calheiros is undoubtedly the master of political maneuvering, with a graduate degree in juggling. As president of the Senate at the time of Rousseff’s impeachment, after holding back as long as he could, when finance capital said it had had enough of Lula and Rousseff’s PT, Calheiros did not hesitate to strike the right blow at the right time and place. Now, in the pandemic hour, he is trying to build a na-

tional salvation movement, like *Diretas Já*,⁶ to eject Bolsonaro by impeachment.

But there will not be a second edition of *Diretas Já*. At the time (1984), the movement in favor of democratic elections for the presidency of the republic crystallized opposition to the military dictatorship. It gave rise to large rallies of hundreds of thousands of demonstrators and managed to subordinate the militant metal workers’ unions to a bourgeois leadership (of the Brazilian Democratic Movement). In this way it prevented the struggle to bring down the dictatorship from leading to a revolution. However, the current crisis is much deeper – it precedes the pandemic and the Bolsonaro government. The onslaught of privatization, militarization and attacks on workers cannot be solved by “democratic” reforms within the bourgeois regime.

The current process of privatizing the state-owned power company Eletrobras, the largest electricity generating company in Latin America, as well as the preparations to hand over Petrobras to imperialist investors, is not simply a policy choice by Bolsonaro and his minister of the economy, the *Chicago boy* Paulo Guedes, a disciple of the father of neoliberalism Milton Friedman and admirer of the Pinochet military dictatorship in Chile (which Friedman advised). The privatizations, together with “reforms” to social security, public health, education and labor laws, are a reflection of decaying capitalism and falling profit rates. They are a matter of the survival of

⁶ Direct Vote Now, a mass movement against the military dictatorship of 1964-1985.



On May 29, as the pandemic raged, 100,000 marched in 200 cities around Brazil (above, Rio de Janeiro) demanding “Bolsonaro Out!” and “Vaccines for All.”

this system of exploitation and oppression.

We have not forgotten that the previous popular-front governments initiated many of these attacks on workers – and also the extreme militarization of the country, with the formation of the National Security Force by Lula and military occupation of the favelas of Rio at the time of the World Cup (2014) and the Olympics (2016) by Dilma. But the PT failed to impose most of the anti-worker “reforms.” That’s why the bourgeoisie ordered her impeachment and his arrest.⁷ Now freed, Lula advocates the privatization of Eletrobras and Caixa Econômica Federal, by converting them into mixed capital companies, like Petrobras. Simultaneously he is seeking to collaborate with the “coup plotters,” from Rodrigo Maia to Eduardo Paes. And in this he is accompanied by the former spokesmen of the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL), Guilherme Boulos and Marcelo Freixo.

We now know with an abundance of evidence that none of the left forces, much less the PT, nor the union leaderships have the slightest intention of breaking bourgeois institutionality. On the contrary, they all are looking to the 2022 elections. While in the streets people are shouting “Bolsonaro Out,” the left is moving in the other direction and trying to build a broad front, a new version of the popular front. As the pieces begin to move on the electoral chessboard, the PT and PCdoB are calling on the PSDB, MDB, PSB and PSD and others from the center and even the extreme right (DEM) to join the horse-trading.⁸ The PSOL, which is a small break-off from the PT, calls for “unity of the left” with a “ongoing dialogue round-table,” and the PCO,⁹ with its one-note

⁷ See “Brazil: No to Impeachment – For Workers Mobilization Against the Rightist Bourgeois Offensive – No Political Support to the Bourgeois Popular Front Government,” in *The Internationalist* No. 43, May-June 2016.

⁸ **PSDB:** Party of Brazilian Social Democracy, see footnote 4. **MDB:** Brazilian Democratic Movement (formerly PMDB), heir to the opposition party tolerated by the military dictatorship, which is based on civil servants and provides the main bourgeois component (and greatest recipient of bribes) in popular-front governments. **PSB:** Brazilian Socialist Party, a bourgeois party whose main leader for many years was the *cacique* (political boss) of the Northeast, Miguel Arraes; a component of almost all popular-front governments. **PSD:** Social Democratic Party, composed mainly of defectors from other parties, until recently aligned with Bolsonaro. **DEM:** Democrats, formerly the Liberal Front Party, successor to ARENA (Aliança Renovadora Nacional), the official party of the military dictatorship.

⁹ Partido da Causa Operária, Workers Cause Party, which in the distant past originated in the tendency of Argentine “Trotskyist” Jorge Altamira.

song, shouts “*Lula presidente.*” What does this all add up to if not the formation of a bourgeois broad front?

Within the PSOL, a multitude of internal currents have already indicated that they would vote for Lula in 2022, either in the first round or the second round of voting, or they want him to put together a “single left front.” A smaller current, Esquerda Marxista (EM – Marxist Left),¹⁰ has positioned itself to the left and mildly criticizes Lula (for not showing up on May 29), but insists, like all the other currents, on the slogan of “Bolsonaro Out.” It brags that it was “the first organization in the country in 2019 to raise the slogan *Fora Bolsonaro*, against all the left-wing organizations that were trying to boycott it.” However, today “*Fora Bolsonaro*” is the cry of almost the entire left and even large sectors of the bourgeoisie.

EM insisted for a long time that “Bolsonaro Out” should be the only slogan, without additives, that “Only the working class and the youth can consistently lead the struggle for ‘*Fora Bolsonaro*’.” But now that the slogan has “taken the streets,” EM switched gears and is now calling for “Down with Bolsonaro! For a Workers Government Without Bosses or Generals!” However, even as reworded and “putting an accent on the second part” of the slogan, these would-be Trotskyists march with banners of “Bolsonaro Out,” the slogan of all the popular-frontists, which opens the gate to another bourgeois government.

A bit to the left of Esquerda Marxista’s shame-faced popular-frontists, is another current that claims to be Trotskyist, the Movimento Revolucionário de Trabalhadores (MRT, Revolutionary Workers Movement¹¹), with its “virtual newspaper” Esquerda Diário (Left Daily), which is now calling for the slogan “Bolsonaro, Mourão and the Military Out.” The MRT criticizes the “group of parties that present themselves as left alternatives to the PT (PSOL, PSTU, PCB, UP and PCO) ¹²for centering their politics around the impeachment of Bolsonaro.” It also criticizes the different components of the PSOL for their orientation to a broad front around Lula. However, the MRT does not criticize the popular-frontism of the reformist PT and PSOL left as such. Instead, it proposes other kinds of fronts, and above all, its “alternative” program is always (bourgeois) “democratic.”

The MRT calls, “against the policy of adaptation of the left to the coup political regime,” for “the policy of a Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly, imposed by mobilization, which will discuss the major problems of the country.” The constituent assembly is the favorite slogan of the

¹⁰ Internationally affiliated with the International Marxist Tendency of Alan Wood.

¹¹ Internationally affiliated with the “Trotskyist Faction”; in 2015 it sought to join the PSOL but was turned down.

¹² **PSTU**: United Socialist Workers Party, of the LIT (International Workers League), the main tendency of followers of the late Argentine pseudo-Trotskyist Nahuel Moreno. **PCB**: Brazilian Communist Party, a traditioinal Stalinist party. **UP**: Popular Unity, a reference to Salvador Allende’s Chilean popular front of the 1970s.

CORRECTION

It has been brought to our attention that the reference in our last issue to demonstrations of support to the union organizing drive at Amazon in Bessemer, Alabama being initiated by the Workers World Party was inaccurate. The solidarity demos on February 20 were in response to a call by the Southern Workers Assembly.

Trotskyist Fraction in almost every country and at all times. However, such an assembly *would be a bourgeois institution*, being held within the framework of the capitalist state. Such was the National Constituent Assembly of 1987-88 in Brazil, “imposed by the mobilization” of “*Diretas já.*” Trotskyist revolutionaries would have intervened in this mobilization against the dictatorship, even advocating the slogan of a *revolutionary constituent assembly*, but with the main call to fight for a *revolutionary workers and peasants government*.

Even if one adds a mention of “moving towards a government of the working people that breaks with capitalism,” what the MRT proposes is a *stageist* scheme, in which the first stage would be the constituent assembly (democracy).¹³ As for the “government of the working people” (as the PT calls its bourgeois popular-front governments), these would-be Trotskyists do not insist that this government can only be based on organs of workers power – soviets. For Trotsky, on the contrary, “The slogan, ‘workers and peasants government,’ is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks,” that is, as “a popular designation for the already established dictatorship of the proletariat” (Transitional Program). Furthermore, the idea that the expropriation of the bourgeoisie would be resolved in an assembly that “discusses the major problems of the country” with representatives of the PSDB or DEM is absurd.

In the more than half a century since the Cuban Revolution, the bourgeois rulers of Brazil have alternated in power between military dictatorship and democracy by popular vote. With the end of the USSR, imperialist capitalism imagines itself the master of the world and financial capital wages its Game of Thrones-like infighting with abandon. Imperialism has multiple masks. Now it adorns itself with the woman’s face of a Margaret Thatcher or Angela Merkel, now with the black face of Obama or the whacked-out Trump, or the swashbuckling Captain Bolsonaro. Capitalism wages both *hot* and *cold* wars. Recall World Wars I and II, and we cannot rule out that a dynamic may already be underway pointing to a World War III, this time primarily targeting the deformed workers state of China. As necessary, the capitalists when in trouble dress up as democracy, military dictatorship, popular front, or as bonapartists with militias and pastors.¹⁴ Whatever: anything goes!

We recall the “Ficha Limpa”¹⁵ (Clean Record) campaign, which the PT embraced, ending up being the main one devoured by it, via the Lava Jato Operation.¹⁶ Today we observe in the pseudo-left

¹³ See “The Electoralist Campaigns of the Brazilian Left,” in *The Internationalist* No. 53.

¹⁴ Bolsonaro and his family have close ties to drug-trafficking “militias” in the Rio slums and with powerful evangelical pastors.

¹⁵ The 2010 “Ficha Limpa” law calls for judicial panels to rule on the eligibility of all candidates to run for office based on whether they have been found guilty of corruption, even if their cases are still in the courts. This law (supported by the PT and PSOL and praised by the MRT as a “popular conquest”) was used to bar Lula from running in the 2018 elections.

¹⁶ Operation Car Wash, the judicial investigation of kickbacks on contracts of Petrobras, the semi-privatized Brazilian oil company which Wall Street has heavily invested in; the earliest cases involved payoffs at a car wash. The Lava Jato task force was headed by the judge Sérgio Moro, who then expanded its targets to include ex-president Lula, whom he convicted on bogus corruption charges unrelated to the original investigation.

the search for institutionality through the CPI of COVID-19, and a discourse on morality. Recall that before he came up with the plan for the PT to join the neoliberal rich man’s club, Lula said that in Congress “there are more than 300 *picaretas*” (crooks). Clearly he was right about that. But one point he really screwed up on: capitalism itself, anywhere in the world, is the main generator and source of corruption. Whether the PT, PSDB, DEM or MDB are the managers of the bourgeois state, they cannot survive without maintaining this rotten system. We can only end corruption if we put an end to capitalism!

After months of paralysis due to the terror spread among the masses by the terrible COVID-19 deaths, it is quite possible that there will be an awakening of the fighting spirit of the masses. We will soon see. However, in order to be able to break the infernal cycle of military/police-type regimes and corrupt bourgeois democracies, to get out of the nightmare of the COVID pandemic and the pandemic of police terror, it is essential to break the “Bolsonaro Out” framework in order to attack the roots of these capitalist plagues, by fighting for a revolutionary workers and peasants government.

On this path, authentic Trotskyists call for a series of transitional demands that point to socialist revolution. In the municipal elections of November 2020, the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International, the Class Struggle Committee, and the Union of the Working Class of Southern Rio de Janeiro State launched a Workers Power Candidacy Against Capitalist Rule,¹⁷ which demanded:

- Against the contempt for the lives of workers and the poor in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic: ***free, rapid COVID-19 tests for all.*** Today we add ***vaccines for all, now.*** Also: ***immediate expansion of the public health care system to provide high-quality hospital care to all the sick, under workers control and led by medical professionals.***
- Against poverty wages and insufficient welfare grants: a ***huge increase in the minimum wage*** (to more than R\$ 4,200 monthly) and a ***sliding scale of wages adjusted by inflation.***
- Against the constant killings of the population (particularly those with black skin) by the police and the militias: ***Military Police, Military Firefighters, all armed agencies out of the slum districts, and police of all kinds out of the unions.***
- Against attempts to destroy public education: ***control of the schools by councils of teachers, students, parents and school workers, under union leadership.***
- Against privatizations: ***full state ownership of the oil and energy industry*** and the imposition by the workers of ***workers control of production, to sell gas to the population at R\$1 per liter.***
- Against the harassment of the superexploited immigrant population: ***full citizenship rights for all immigrants, and against all Brazilian participation in imperialist aggressions and occupations*** (Haiti, Bolivia, Venezuela) that cause the flow of refugees.

Above all, the main task is the struggle to ***forge the nucleus of the Leninist and Trotskyist revolutionary workers party*** that must be built to lead the working class and all the oppressed. ■

¹⁷ See “Brazil: Workers Power Candidacy Against Capitalist Rule,” in *The Internationalist* No. 61, September-October 2020.

Palestinos...

sigue de la página 24

en contra de los atacantes israelíes, aunque no damos ningún apoyo político a las fuerzas islamistas,¹ que son enemigas mortales del comunismo, desde Irán y Siria hasta Palestina (donde Hamas fue originalmente patrocinada por Israel). Sin embargo, el hecho es que los palestinos tienen un déficit masivo de armamentos frente al ejército israelí. El baluarte sionista no será derribado mediante cohetes caseros. Lo que hace falta es una lucha de clases revolucionaria dentro de Israel, y a escala internacional.

Con un respaldo imperialista casi unánime a favor de Israel y con izquierdistas oportunistas que se ponen a la cola del nacionalismo palestino y del islamismo, la LIVI es única en luchar sobre la base del internacionalismo proletario. Llamamos urgentemente a favor de ***acciones obreras en contra de la guerra sionista/imperialista contra los palestinos***, incluido el boicot de cargamentos marítimos o aéreos israelíes. Trabajadores portuarios italianos en Livorno declararon que no embarcarían ni desembarcarían cargamento israelí. Ahora el Consejo Internacional de Estibadores ha llamado a los trabajadores portuarios a no tocar pertrechos de guerra destinados a Israel. Los sindicatos portuarios en EE.UU. (ILA e ILWU) y de todo el mundo deben implementar inmediatamente esta medida.

Al llamar a ***poner alto a la “limpieza étnica”*** que se ha realizado desde 1948 y a ***defender el derecho de los palestinos a regresar***, enfatizamos que esto exige una lucha común de los trabajadores árabes y judíos que desemboque en una ***revolución obrera árabe-hebrea***. Palestina es un caso de ***pueblos interpenetrados***. Con dos naciones –árabes palestinos y hablantes de la lengua hebrea– que habitan la misma estrecha franja territorial, la única manera de conseguir un acceso equitativo a los recursos vitales (como el agua) se encuentra en un ***estado obrero palestino árabe-hebreo***, parte de una ***federación socialista del Medio Oriente***, que tenga como anclaje a las poderosas clases obreras egipcia y turca....

La naturaleza de la opresión sionista

Los marxistas revolucionarios nos oponemos a la existencia misma de un “estado judío”, del mismo modo en que nos oponemos a la “República Islámica” de Irán o a estados que se autodenominan cristianos, como la España de Franco, por ser todos inherentemente antidemocráticos. Defendemos al oprimido pueblo palestino en contra de los opresores sionistas. ¿Pero qué va a pasar con los dos pueblos que ahora ocupan la Palestina histórica? Los nacionalistas palestinos corean “Desde el río hasta el mar, Palestina será libre”. Varios grupos de izquierda, después de estar a la cola durante mucho tiempo de la Organización para la Liberación de Palestina de Yasir Arafat y su apoyo a una “solución de dos estados”, recientemente han retomado el llamado a favor de la “solución de un estado” en una

¹ El islamismo, o islam político, es una doctrina que sostiene que la ley islámica (sharia) debe gobernar la sociedad. Para los islamistas no hay separación entre la mezquita y el estado. Aunque hay diversas corrientes islamistas, así como fuertes diferencias entre islamistas de las ramas sunita y chiita del Islam, todas llaman por un régimen teocrático, intrínsecamente no democrático caracterizado por la supremacía de la doctrina y la autoridad religiosas.

“Palestina democrática y laica”.

Para liberales e izquierdistas, estos programas son ilusiones democráticas, mientras que muchos nacionalistas e islamistas palestinos, que han sufrido décadas de tortura y muerte, sueñan simplemente con echar a los judíos israelíes de ahí. Hoy hay aproximadamente 6.8 millones de judíos y 6.8 millones de árabes en la Palestina histórica (más millones de refugiados palestinos adicionales que fueron expulsados a otros países, incluidos Jordania, Líbano y otros). Pero bajo el capitalismo, la potencia mayor va a prevalecer, y esa potencia hoy en día es la de los sionistas, de modo que ya sea con uno o con dos estados, los árabes perderán.

Muchos en la izquierda se refieren a Israel como un “estado colonial”, como si fuera una suerte de colonia de un país al que los judíos israelíes pudieran regresar si las cosas se ponen difíciles, como los colonos argelinos que regresaron a Francia, o los blancos de Rodesia que regresaron a Inglaterra tras la independencia. Nótese que en Argelia los colonos franceses, conocidos como *pieds noirs*, representaban el 10 por ciento de la población; en la Rodesia británica (ahora Zimbabue), los colonos blancos eran el 8 por ciento de la población. En contraste, la población judía de habla hebrea constituye cerca de tres cuartas partes de la población de Israel.²

Aunque el establecimiento de Israel sí fue un proyecto colonial, facilitado por el imperialismo británico tras la Declaración de Balfour de 1917, Israel no es una colonia: es una potencia regional y un belicoso cliente del imperialismo, particularmente del norteamericano. De desencadenarse una guerra a gran escala, aunque muchos podrían despegar con destino al sur de la Florida, la mayor parte de la población judía de Israel no tiene ningún lugar al cual volver. Ningún programa real para la derrota del sionismo puede basarse en semejantes engaños. La población de habla hebrea debe escindirse a lo largo de líneas de clase.

Tampoco es el caso que Israel sea un “estado apartheid” como Sudáfrica, según otra comparación popular. Liberales y reformistas interpretan el “apartheid” como sinónimo de algo muy represivo o muy racista, como el reciente informe (27 de abril) de Human Rights Watch, “Traspassado el umbral: las autoridades israelíes y los crímenes de apartheid y persecución”.³ Es comprensible que la ira provocada por los horrendos crímenes de Israel contra el pueblo palestino lleve a algunos activistas a buscar comparaciones evocativas. Pero en lugar de describir la realidad material del estado sionista, este término sirve para expresar desesperanza liberal.

También está relacionado con un programa, en el caso de Israel, como en Sudáfrica, del “BDS”, es decir, “boicot, desinversión y sanciones”. Rehusarse a comprar humus de la marca Sabra no pondrá fin a

la guerra contra los árabes palestinos, como tampoco el boicot de las monedas Krugerrand llevó a la caída del apartheid sudafricano. Además, ¿quién se supone exactamente que va a desinvertir y a imponer sanciones? Éste es un llamado a las multinacionales capitalistas y al imperialismo norteamericano, que es culpable de crímenes mucho mayores, aún incluso que los asesinos sionistas, en contra de pueblos oprimidos. Por añadidura, quienquiera que piense que el Pentágono dejará de comprar software israelí para sus computadoras, o que cesará de contratar mercenarios israelíes para entrenar sus escuadrones de la muerte paramilitares en América Latina, está soñando.

Sin embargo, más allá de sus implicaciones programáticas, el término no es históricamente adecuado. Como marxistas entendemos que el régimen del apartheid no sólo consiste en una serie de medidas legales como los pasaportes internos, sino que es una forma especial de esclavitud asalariada capitalista que se basa en la superexplotación de los trabajadores negros africanos segregados por la fuerza en pueblos y “bantustanes”. Además, en la Sudáfrica del apartheid, los blancos eran alrededor del 15 por ciento de la población. Se puede decir que la Cisjordania ocupada por Israel está sometida a un dominio semejante al del apartheid, en el que la población árabe palestina está dividida en pequeños cantones, en tanto que algunos patrones israelíes se hacen de superganancias a partir de la superexplotación de la mano de obra de sus trabajadores árabes. Pero en Israel mismo, las poblaciones árabe y de habla hebrea siguen interpenetradas y los sionistas de línea dura no se interesan fundamentalmente en sobreexplotar a los trabajadores palestinos, sino que en cambio querrían expulsar de plano a los árabes.

Esta es la razón por la que hemos escrito acerca del peligro de una “solución final” sionista, y hemos descrito los enclaves de Gaza y Cisjordania avizorados por los planes de anexión como gigantescos campos de concentración para los palestinos. No debe olvidarse que los sionistas –tanto sionistas “laboristas” como David Ben Gurión y los sionistas “revisionistas” dirigidos por Ze’ev Jabotinsky– cooperaron con el régimen de Hitler y se opusieron al Levantamiento del Gueto de Varsovia.⁴ La “solución” que Netanyahu y los herederos de Kahane añoran es mucho más parecida a la Alemania nazi que al apartheid sudafricano y podría ser a final de cuentas, literalmente genocida. Como escribimos en 2014:

“Al rechazar la caracterización de Israel como un ‘estado colonial’ o ‘estado apartheid’, de ninguna manera disminuimos la monstruosa naturaleza de los crímenes sionistas. Al contrario, lo que los gobernantes israelíes están listos para hacer a los palestinos es potencialmente mucho peor que lo que los racistas de Rodesia o Sudáfrica llegaron a hacer”.

–“Defend Gaza and the Palestinian People – For Arab-Hebrew Workers Revolution” (julio de 2014) en *The Internationalist*, No. 38, octubre-noviembre de 2014

¿Qué va a resultar de la bárbara guerra actual contra los palestinos? ¿Otro cese al fuego? Los palestinos seguirán atrapados

⁴ Véanse nuestros artículos “Zionism, Imperialism and Anti-Semitism” y “Zionist Complicity in the Destruction of Hungarian Jewry” y otros artículos en *The Internationalist* No. 9, enero-febrero de 2001.

en las tenazas sionistas. ¿Una guerra regional, “transferencias de población” en masa, como los sionistas fundadores eufemísticamente las llamaron? Para todos estos terribles resultados, la respuesta debe consistir en luchar por una **revolución obrera árabe-hebrea**. Esta vía es difícil, pero es la única verdadera salida.

Aplastar el sionismo y el imperialismo con la revolución socialista internacional

Los incesantes ataques contra la población palestina terminarán desembocando en una explosión. Es vital que la fortaleza sionista sea destruida *desde adentro*. Israel, después de todo, tiene cientos de armas nucleares y una dirección lo suficientemente loca como para usarlas, en contra de Irán o de cualquier otro país. Hasta hace pocos años, los reclutas del cuerpo blindado eran llevados a la cima de la montaña de Masada en el desierto de Judea para declamar su juramento de fidelidad. Ese es el sitio en el que supuestamente un millar de zelotes se habrían suicidado en masa cuando fueron rodeados por legiones romanas en el año 74. Ese fue el final de los zelotes, pero hoy sus autodesignados herederos tienen el dedo en el gatillo nuclear. Hay toda una capa del estrato gobernante israelí compuesto por unos miles de asesinos patológicos que ninguna sociedad humana podría tolerar. Es importante, sin embargo, que sean llevados ante la justicia por la clase obrera y los revolucionarios de habla hebrea, como parte del proceso que pondrá fin al interminable ciclo de matanzas nacionalistas.

La situación que enfrenta hoy la asediada población árabe palestina es nefasta, como ha sido a lo largo de las últimas tres cuartas partes del siglo de ascenso sionista, y antes de colonialismo británico y de dominio bajo el imperio otomano. Pero no todos los judíos israelíes quieren vivir para siempre en un estado guarnición, y muchos se oponen a los colonos fascistas y a los fanáticos religiosos ultraderechistas que ahora acechan en las calles. Hace mucho León Trotsky advirtió que el empeño sionista sería una trampa mortal para los judíos. Hay líneas de quiebre en la sociedad israelí, pero hará falta un choque de grandes dimensiones para romper el candado sionista. La *única* vía para la liberación radica en la lucha *clasista* unida de los trabajadores y oprimidos, tanto en Palestina, como en el resto de la región y a escala internacional. **Acciones obreras en contra de los militaristas israelíes** pueden señalar la vía. **Luchas obreras revolucionarias para derribar a los gobernantes burgueses árabes**, particularmente en Egipto y Turquía, sacudirían la entidad sionista.

En Europa, en don-

de los gobernantes etiquetan de manera mentirosa toda oposición a Israel como antisemita, la lucha contra el militarismo sionista es una lucha contra las burguesías y *los socialdemócratas*. En Estados Unidos, donde hasta los demócratas que posan como más izquierdistas no van más allá de criticar la ayuda *incondicional* de EE.UU. a los carniceros sionistas (y Bernie Sanders ha votado regularmente a favor de enviar millones de dólares para financiar el Domo de Hierro del sistema antimisiles y otros componentes de la máquina de guerra israelí),⁵ una lucha para **poner alto a toda ayuda norteamericana a Israel**, y para **romper con los demócratas y el resto de los partidos capitalistas** tendría un impacto. Sin el respaldo de sus jefes supremos imperialistas, Israel es un país muy pequeño en un mar árabe. Pero a final de cuentas, la victoria sobre el sionismo y el imperialismo (y los otros clientes de los imperialistas y satrapías burguesas en toda la región) sólo puede conseguirse mediante una **revolución socialista internacional**. La Liga por la IV Internacional busca forjar el núcleo del partido comunista leninista-trotskista que es indispensable para dirigir dicha revolución. ■

⁵ El senador de Vermont y candidato en las primarias demócratas para la presidencia que se autodenomina como un “socialista democrático”, dice que es “pro Israel” y se unió a sus colegas del Senado el año pasado para dar unánime consentimiento –¡dos veces!– a la apropiación de 3.3 miles de millones de dólares para Israel bajo el “Programa d Financiamiento Militar Extranjero”. Hoy Sanders sólo llama a Biden para que “eche un vistazo” al uso que hace Israel de la ayuda militar norteamericana para que “considere” reducirla y condicionarla al buen comportamiento. Esto contrasta considerablemente con la *demanda de que se la corte inmediatamente*.

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Biden, Sanders, demócratas pertrechan a los carniceros sionistas

¡Defender a los palestinos contra la guerra de Israel! ¡Por una revolución obrera árabe-hebrea!

Publicamos a continuación una versión abreviada de la declaración de la Liga por la IV Internacional. El texto completo está disponible en www.internationalist.org.

18 de MAYO – La toma por asalto de la mezquita de al Aqsa en Jerusalén por cientos de policías israelíes el lunes, 10 de mayo, marcó el primer disparo de la renovada guerra sionista en contra del pueblo árabe palestino. Aunque los medios imperialistas hablan de un conflicto entre Israel y Hamas, el partido islamista gobernante en el asediado enclave de Gaza, la realidad es que se trata de una matanza unilateral de palestinos a manos de la maquinaria bélica israelí. El saldo mortal da cuenta de lo ocurrido: hasta el momento, más de 220 árabes han sido asesinados, de los cuales más de 60 eran niños, en comparación con los 6 civiles judíos israelíes muertos.

Además, debido a los bombardeos, líneas de transmisión de electricidad han sido derribadas, mientras que la única planta generadora de electricidad está a punto de quedarse sin combustible y los apagones en Gaza duran hasta 16 horas diarias. Al menos 800 mil personas se encuentran sin acceso a agua potable y las aguas negras se desbordan en las calles. Más de 700 unidades habitacionales han sido destruidas, incluidos 76 edificios de departamentos. Escuelas y hospitales han sido alcanzados por las bombas de precisión israelíes y una torre de oficinas de medios noticiosos fue deliberadamente destruida. Las Naciones Unidas informan que al menos 58 mil residentes de la estrecha Franja de Gaza han sido desplazados de sus hogares, de los cuales unos 47 mil se encuentran hacinados en escuelas de la ONU.



Rescatistas buscan víctimas del bombardeo aéreo israelí de un bloque residencial en Gaza, el 16 de mayo.

A esto se suma el terror desatado por bandas de linchadores sionistas-fascistas en contra de palestinos en ciudades israelíes en las que hay poblaciones árabes y judías entremezcladas. En Cisjordania, fuerzas militares israelíes han abierto fuego en contra de manifestaciones de protesta, mientras que colonos ultraderechistas han atacado a palestinos. El derechista primer ministro israelí Benjamín Netanyahu, quien inició la guerra para mantenerse en el puesto, así como el ejército que está destruyendo áreas residenciales en Gaza con artillería y bombardeos, promete proseguir hasta que terminen con su larga lista de ob-

jetivos. No obstante, los sionistas no han logrado quebrar la voluntad de resistir de los palestinos.

Las horripilantes imágenes –de edificios de departamentos derribados por las bombas, de un padre mirando a sus hijos muertos en la morgue, de un árabe linchado por pogromistas judíos– han encendido protestas de decenas de miles en todo el mundo. En Europa, los gobernantes imperialistas han intentado vilipendiar a los manifestantes con la calumnia de que son antisemitas, dispersando y prohibiendo manifestaciones en contra del baño de sangre sionista. En Estados Unidos, el presidente demócrata Joe Biden ha respaldado enfáticamente la acción militar israelí en contra de “grupos terroristas en Gaza”, cuando los verdaderos terroristas son el ejército israelí y las muchedumbres de linchadores sionistas que asolan las calles.

Un resumen de la Casa Blanca de una llamada entre el presidente norteamericano y Netanyahu dice que Biden “expresó su apoyo a un cese al fuego”, pero añadió que ambos “discutieron el progreso de las operaciones militares israelíes” en

Gaza. Entretanto, el gobierno de EE.UU. informó al Congreso que ha aprobado la venta a Israel de 735 millones de dólares en armas de precisión teledirigidas. En contra de todos aquellos que llamaron a favor de poner en funciones una administración de Biden, no hay que olvidar que, una vez más, el Partido Demócrata del imperialismo norteamericano ha pertrechado a Israel con el armamento que emplea para hacer llover muerte sobre la población palestina, como esos aviones caza F-16 construidos en EE.UU. que ahora están bombardeando Gaza para desatar el terror entre la población.

En Cisjordania, ocupada por Israel, la juventud se levanta y, mientras la destrucción de Gaza prosigue sin descanso, se habla de una tercera intifada, o levantamiento, tras las rebeliones de 1987-1983 y 2000-2004 (esta última en respuesta a la invasión del complejo de al Aqsa por el carnicero Ariel Sharon con un millar de policías). Para el día de hoy se convocó una “huelga general y jornada de acción” por parte de los sindicatos y grupos comunitarios árabes en Israel para que en toda la Palestina histórica se proteste en contra de los ataques contra Gaza y contra los palestinos en Jerusalén Oriental e Israel. Cientos de miles pararon labores, cerrando fábricas, tiendas y otras empresas, tanto en Israel como en Cisjordania, donde ha habido choques con el ejército israelí. Convocada originalmente por el Alto Comité de Seguimiento de los Palestinos en Israel, dirigido por Mohammad Barakeh, exmiembro del Knesset (parlamento) en representación del partido izquierdista Hadash, esta jornada concitó el respaldo hasta de la desacreditada Autoridad Palestina.

Frente a este nuevo episodio de la interminable guerra sionista, el Grupo Internacionalista y la Liga por la IV Internacional llaman a **defender al oprimido pueblo palestino** en contra de sus opresores, en primer lugar los militaristas y pogromistas israelíes, respaldados por los imperialismos norteamericano y europeos. Llamamos a **defender a Gaza, el nuevo Gueto de Varsovia**, en contra de los asesinos en masa israelíes; a **romper el sitio israelí-egipcio** que ha convertido esta árida tierra de refugiados en una prisión al aire libre, lista para ser bombardeada hasta hacerla añicos cada pocos años; y a **expulsar al ejército israelí y a todos los colonos sionistas de los territorios palestinos ocupados**.

En esta guerra, entendemos que el lanzamiento de cohetes desde Gaza es un intento desesperado de resistir y de responder *sigue en la página 22*



El Grupo Internacionalista, sección mexicana de la LIVI, protesta en la Ciudad de México el 15 de mayo contra la guerra de Israel en contra de los palestinos.