

Puppet Government Collapses, U.S. Personnel Flee, the Taliban Take Over

## Afghanistan: Humiliating Defeat for U.S. Imperialism

On August 15, the two-decade-long occupation of Afghanistan by Western imperialists led by the United States came to an inglorious, and predictable, end. In the face of the rapid advance by the forces of the reactionary Islamic fundamentalist Taliban, the deeply corrupt puppet government collapsed and its president Ashraf Ghani fled the country. Police stripped off their uniforms. A stampede of thousands of collaborators – but also many middle-class professionals – headed to the airport seeking to flee. Helicopters lifted off from the grounds of the U.S. embassy, ferrying personnel to a staging area near the airport. The next day, crowds clambered atop passenger planes and clung to military aircraft as they taxied on the runway, falling to their death after take-off. The chaos was an ignominious end to the failed imperialist terror war.

In Washington, the blame game of “Who lost Afghanistan” immediately began. Republicans, of course, blame Democratic



Kabul, August 15: Chinook helicopter evacuating personnel from U.S. embassy in the Afghan capital as Taliban take over the city and country.

president Joe Biden, who had declared that U.S. troops would be pulled out by September. Of course, they didn't mention that Republican president Donald Trump signed a deal with the Taliban for them to leave by

May 1. “Moderate” Democrats were upset with Biden for making them vulnerable to attacks from Republicans. “Progressive” Democrats were upset with Biden because they were made to look bad with antiwar

liberals and youth. Biden is indeed guilty, of course, as they all are, of imposing two decades of brutal occupation on the Afghan peoples. Meanwhile, all his pretense of being a competent manager of U.S. imperialism's affairs of state went down the drain with the scenes of mayhem in Kabul.

The media asked, “how can it be that an army that the U.S. trained, with all that money and equipment and everything, could collapse so quickly.” The imperialists did drop a ton of cash on their failed venture: not just the \$83 billion the U.S. spent on training and equipping the Afghan army, the overall cost of the U.S. invasion and occupation was over \$2.26 trillion.<sup>1</sup> The Afghan military and police supposedly numbered over 300,000, although the actual number of troops was far less, as corrupt commanders ripped off the

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Brown University *Costs of War* project. See <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/figures/2021/human-and-budgetary-costs-date-us-war-afghanistan-2001-2022>.

**All U.S. Troops, Military/Security Forces, Agencies and Mercenaries Out of the Middle East, Now!**

**Expropriate the Ruling Class Through Socialist Revolution!**

## “Tax the Rich” No Answer to Capitalist Inequality

Inequality in the U.S. – which has long been acute – reached staggering proportions as a result of the economic crisis set off by the coronavirus pandemic. Low-paid essential workers were made to bear the brunt of the deadly plague at the front lines with little protection from the virus. Millions forced out of work had to rely on financial assistance, many facing the threat of eviction. Meanwhile, the wealthiest capitalists made out like bandits. Since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, as the workers' income from wages fell, some 660 U.S. billionaires received a windfall of \$1.1 trillion (that's 12 zeros). Of this, \$300 billion went to five modern-day robber barons: Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Bill Gates,

Mark Zuckerberg and Warren Buffett.<sup>1</sup>

Now a report by the non-profit investigative journalism organization ProPublica has come out revealing that the same five, plus the other 20 richest Americans, paid a minuscule amount in federal income taxes on their growing wealth. How much? A mere 3.4% on their collective haul of \$401 billion in increased net worth from 2014 to 2018.<sup>2</sup> Some, including Bezos, Musk, Michael Bloomberg and George Soros, managed to pay no federal income tax at all in

<sup>1</sup> “U.S. Billionaire Wealth Surpasses \$1.1 Trillion Gain Since Mid-March,” Institute for Policy Studies, 26 January.

<sup>2</sup> “The Secret IRS Files: Trove of Never-Before-Seen Records Reveal How the Wealthiest Avoid Income Tax,” ProPublica, 8 June.

some years. Buffett, the hands-down champion in tax avoidance, paid 0.1% (that's one-tenth of one percent) on his earnings of almost \$24 billion in that period. The median taxpayer in the U.S., in contrast, paid an average of 14% in federal income taxes.

While the titans of U.S. capitalism were raking in their pandemic winnings, the Institute for Policy Study and Americans for Tax Fairness, two liberal think tanks which calculated these figures, noted that that over 73 million U.S. workers lost their jobs after late March 2020, with 16 million still unemployed at year's end; 12 million lost employer-sponsored healthcare; 29 million adults reported not having enough food in December, while 14 million were behind on

their rent. The glaring spectacle of the ruling class gouging megaprofits from disease and death, and being rewarded for doing so with free money in bailouts and tax cuts from the CARES Act, has led to a resurgence of calls to “tax the rich.”

This slogan has become the calling card of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and groups that tail after and adapt to it (Socialist Alternative, Left Voice, Freedom Socialist Party, Party for Socialism and Liberation and others). In New York City, the DSA had a whole “tool kit” with an elaborate infographic at <https://taxtherichnys.com/>. It put forward a series of legislative proposals to raise state

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# Democrats, Republicans: Enemies of Immigrants

## Stop Racist Deportation of Haitians!

A year ago, Democrat Joe Biden was running for president promising to undo Trump's vicious attacks on immigrants and replace them with a supposed "fair and humane" U.S. immigration policy. But since taking office, the exact opposite has happened. The Biden administration has been deporting at an even faster rate than the Trump administration ever did. Within the first seven months of the Biden presidency, 605,509 people were deported and expelled under Title 42 of the 1944 Health Services Law, the same clause that Trump used to refuse to admit immigrants and asylum seekers due to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> In Biden's first week in office, hundreds of Haitians were deported back to Haiti, and now the situation on the island has grown even worse following the murder of Haitian President Jovenal Moïse in early July, and then an earthquake that destroyed much of the southern part of the country.

By mid-September, thousands of Haitians started appearing at the Texas border with Mexico. The U.S. Border Patrol reported that 9,000 migrants, mostly Haitian, had crossed the river at Del Rio, Texas. Stunning photos showed them being held in a pen under the International Bridge where conditions were unsanitary and overwhelmingly crowded, while make-shift tents provided little to no shelter against dust storms and extreme heat. This soon expanded to over 15,000 migrants corralled under the bridge, many of whom had traveled thousands of miles

<sup>1</sup> In comparison, immigrant-basher Trump expelled 255,163 between March 2020 and January 2021.

from Chile and Brazil. They had fled to South America after the 2010 earthquake that leveled Port-au-Prince, killed up to 300,000 and displaced millions. But in the pandemic, most lost their jobs.

The Internationalist Group, Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas started immediately looking to protest this atrocity. We sent emails and made phone calls to several Haitian and immigrant rights organizations, but initially did not find any actions to mobilize against these horrific unfolding events. This reflected the fact that since Biden took office, mass protests against deportations have all but disappeared, when there should be militant action to stop the expulsions and deportations. Instead, most of those who marched in 2018 against Trump's caging of immigrant youths placed confidence in the Democratic Party. So the response to Biden's deportations has been to write letters beseeching the administration, even to the Department of Homeland Security (!), headed by Cuban exile Alejandro Mayorkas.

Then the photos and video footage



U.S. Border Patrol using horse reins against Haitian immigrants in Texas, September 19.

surfaced of Border Patrol agents mounted on horses using long reins against Haitians attempting to cross the Rio Grande, causing even greater outrage among the Haitian population, and many others. On Tuesday, September 21 a demonstration was called by Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees and other groups at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn, where a small crowd of several dozen gathered. A sign of one of the groups, Komokoda (Committee to Mobilize Against Dictatorship in Haiti), read, "U.S. Border Patrol = Slave Catchers." Another sign read: "Biden Is a Bogus Democrat." The IG, RIY and TIC brought a contingent with signs calling to "Stop Biden's Deportation of Haitians Now!" and "Democrats, Republicans, Enemies of Immigrants – Full Citizenship Rights for All!"

The IG also called to "Stop Racist Deportations of Haitians! No Asylum for Afghan Collaborators with Imperialist Occupation," referencing the U.S. transporting over 100,000 people from Afghanistan following the fall of the Kabul government in mid-August. Our signs also called "Stop the deportation of Haitians from the U.S. and Mexico," as well as the Dominican Republic. The D.R. has deported hundreds of thousands of workers of Haitian origin over the years ("Stop the Expulsion of Haitians from the Dominican Republic," *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015). And the Mexican government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador has been acting as border guards for the U.S., both under Republican Trump and now Democrat Biden. Following Biden's lead, Mexico rounded up the Haitians on the other side of the river in Villa Acuña and along with others in Tapachula, Chiapas and Villahermosa, Tabasco and put them on planes to Haiti.

The response of the Biden administration to the chaos at the border has been to deport already more than 1,000 Haitians on flights back to Haiti, a country in total breakdown. Meanwhile, the camp



Protest in Grand Army Plaza denounced Border Patrol slave catchers.

was emptied out to get rid of the "visuals." Aside from those sent to Haiti, some arriving shackled, it's not entirely clear where the others ended up. In the midst of the uproar, the U.S. special envoy to Haiti, Daniel Foote, resigned after having been appointed after the assassination of Jovenal Moïse, saying in a stinging letter that he refused to be associated with the "inhumane, counterproductive" U.S. policy toward Haitian migrants.

Last year, there was an outpouring of rage against the racist police and vigilante violence and murdering of black people. But now when black Haitians are literally being chased down by mounted border patrol agents acting as slave catchers, where are the mass protests of this racist atrocity? Evidently "black lives matter" to liberals and reformist leftists only when it's to elect Democrats. All the talk of "fair and humane" immigration policies has come to naught, and don't forget that Barack Obama was the notorious "deporter-in-chief." Virtually the entire opportunist left fell into line to support Biden against Trump. The thunderous silence in the streets over the horrendous treatment of Haitian immigrants is the result. Those who would fight against exploitation and oppression need to forge a revolutionary workers party to lead the struggle to sweep away the moribund capitalist system. It's a matter of life and death. ■



Brooklyn protest against deportations of Haitians, September 21.

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# Revolutionary Perspectives vs. Bourgeois Reaction “At Home” and Abroad

## Biden Escalates Anti-China War Plans

The following is an excerpt, slightly edited for publication, from a report to a recent meeting of the Internationalist Group/U.S.

The repercussions of the stunning defeat of the U.S. occupation of Afghanistan have reverberated around the world. The image of staffers being airlifted from the U.S. embassy inevitably recalled the imperialists’ precipitous departure from Saigon in April 1975, although, as we have said, the situation is different. While both were imperialist defeats, Vietnam was a victory for the workers of the world, whereas the new rulers in Kabul are reactionary enemies of working people and the oppressed, women and national minorities first and foremost. We fought against the imperialist invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, calling for defeat of the imperialists, but we did not give any political support to the Islamic fundamentalists.

That image was quickly followed by the indescribable chaos of thousands who had been associated in some degree or other with the occupiers swarming to the Kabul airport, desperate to get out. Then there were the images of some of them falling to their deaths from the wheels of U.S. aircraft as these took off with their cargo of collaborators. And now we have confirmation that the retaliatory U.S. drone strike killed a longtime employee of a U.S. aid group and murdered nine other civilians, including seven children. The image of the imperialist monster fleeing with its tail between its legs will have a lasting impact. The myth of the military invincibility of U.S. imperialism was punctured and exploded in front of everyone’s eyes.

It is well known that the United States has a bloated military machine. There are by one count 750 significant U.S. military bases scattered across the globe, and hundreds more smaller facilities. There are close to 200,000 U.S. military personnel stationed outside the U.S., and that figure doesn’t even include the hundreds of thousands of “contractors” – or more accurately, mercenaries – working for the Pentagon, both U.S. citizens and lots of others: Colombian army vets, Nepalese Gurkhas and others. This monstrous military apparatus is bloated, but not exactly



**U.S. president Joe Biden with Australian premier Scott Morrison (left) and British prime minister Boris Johnson, announcing deal to provide Australia with nuclear submarines, whose only purpose would be to attack China.**

hypertrophied, because it does serve a function, of enabling the U.S. to act as global gendarme, the cops of the world, extending from Latin America to Africa, the Middle East, southern Asia and what they are now calling the Indo-Pacific theater. As in theater of war.

This globe-spanning military machine is not just a leftover from the anti-Soviet Cold War, although the people running it these days are superannuated Cold Warriors. The U.S. has actually expanded its reach since George Bush the First proclaimed a unipolar, U.S.-dominated New World Order in 1990-91. As we have pointed out on a number of occasions, the vast reach of the U.S. military reflects the economic hollowing out of the United States, which has exported much of its manufacturing base to lower-wage countries, from Mexico to Bangladesh, China and elsewhere. So as U.S. capitalism putrefies, its imperialist rulers have had to emphasize military might far more. A little like the Roman Empire in its terminal decay – obviously in a very different world. But even this globe-spanning military machine is not enough to police everywhere at once, so they need to intimidate the rest of the planet into submission. So for the U.S. military, the ignominious flight from Afghanistan by the U.S. is an absolute disaster.

The Pentagon brass, which tacitly backed Joe Biden against Donald

Trump’s bid to stay in office, opposed the total withdrawal from Afghanistan and will no doubt hold it against the Democrat in the White House. But meanwhile, Biden is charging ahead, this time by financing a fleet of nuclear submarines for Australia. This would make Australia only the second country to share U.S. nuclear technology (the other is the not-so United Kingdom). The White House has proclaimed a new tripartite alliance – or perhaps an Axis, like Germany, Japan and Italy in World War II – called AUKUS. I think you pronounce it something like *ostrich*. This greatly annoyed Emmanuel Macron, the would-be Jupiter-like president of France, but also the U.S.’ imperialist allies in Europe generally. Although they had joined in the occupation of Afghanistan, Biden didn’t consult them at all about the sudden pullout. And now he is gearing up for war with China, when his NATO “allies” want none of it. They would prefer “engagement” with China, not a shooting war.

For a shooting war is exactly what those nuclear subs signify. We have warned in every one of our recent newspapers that the U.S. is gearing up for large-scale military conflict with the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state. It’s literally happening before our eyes, and this is another proof. The conventional submarines France was building, before the contract was pulled out from under them by Biden, were not “obsolete,” as the U.S. is now claiming. They were state of the art, but they were primarily to patrol Australia’s coasts and maybe Indonesia and the Straits of Malacca, through which something like 60% of all world trade and all world petroleum production pass every year. But the nuclear subs have one purpose only, and that is to attack China. They will be armed with cruise missiles, of course, but there’s nothing to stop them from carrying smaller nuclear weapons. Maybe they’ll call them tactical but they would still be nukes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See “High Speed, Low-Yield: A U.S. Dual-Use Hypersonic Weapon,” War on the Rocks, 17 September 2020.

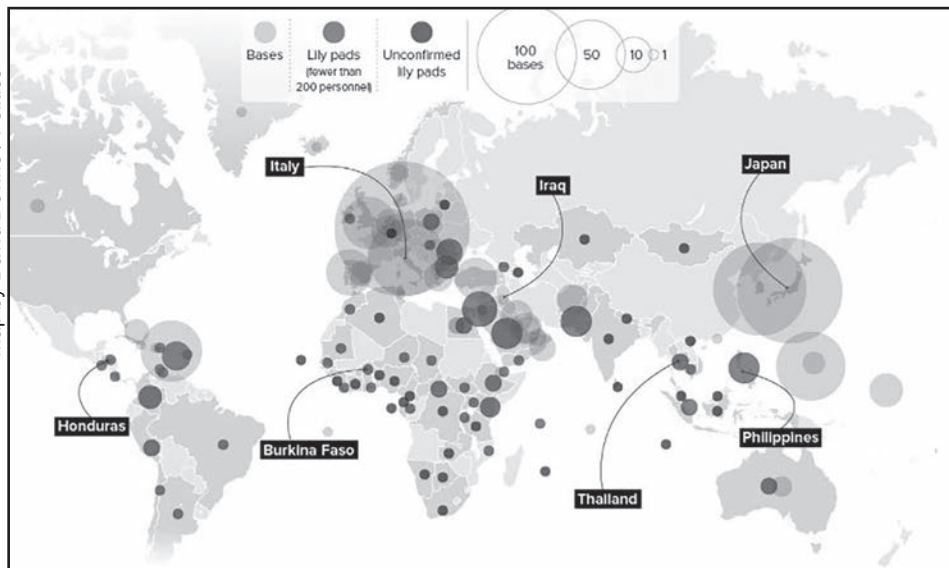
This is an announcement of a coming U.S. war on China. In that conflict, and in the lead-up to it, the League for Fourth International uniquely calls to defend China against imperialism and counterrevolution. The opportunist left, almost unanimously, is lined up with imperialism against China – as they were against the Soviet Union over Afghanistan and then Poland – and is actively pushing counterrevolution, as in their backing of the anti-Communist Hong Kong rioters.

The Australia submarine deal will also have a major impact in Europe, whose rulers have slowly come to the realization that the U.S. actually wants to start a war with China. There is considerable hesitation and opposition to this, so that Macron and others are pushing now, and have been pushing for some time, for Europe to develop its own military capacity. It’s unclear how far they will get with that, but there will be pressure in that direction and it could also have an effect on their relations with Russia.

We’ve noted before that there is a very interesting match between the capacities of now-capitalist Russia, a regional power with nuclear weaponry, and Europe, which is economically strong but militarily weak. So it is conceivable that there would be moves to break to a degree with the U.S. and have a less contentious relation with Russia. If that were ever to happen, the German Social Democrats would probably play a key role. As of now, that is only speculation looking towards the future. But one important thing, that all military strategists keep in mind, when you look at the situation in the world, or at a particular point, you don’t only look at the declared intentions, but above all you take into account the capabilities.

Domestically we have a sharply polarized bourgeois political scene, which has not become less contentious since the advent of the Biden administration with its election program of supposed politeness, “we’re all going to get together,” reconciliation, and so on. In fact, the Trump forces have kept up their efforts to keep the Republican base mobilized. This is reflected in two recent developments. The first is the campaign against “Critical Race Theory,” which of course has nothing to do with that theory. It’s a drive to prevent any kind of education, or even discussion in the schools, about the racism that is built into American capitalism, and which is reflected year after year in the pervasive police murders and the double and triple oppression of the African American population, the Latino population, Native Americans, immigrants and others. They want to outlaw any discussion of this.

We’ve recently published several articles about this which originally appeared on the Class Struggle Education Workers website and are now on the Internationalist web site, where we take a very different position from much of the left. They have basically bought into the politics of the so-called “1619 Project,” which sees the origin of racism in generalized white supremacy rather than racist American capitalism. What’s interesting is the way that these anti-“CRT” laws have been written. They



**U.S. military bases and installations outside the United States, 2015.**



empower individuals to go after school districts, or schools or even individual teachers, and to launch a localized witch hunt at any time. The purpose of this, which was openly discussed, is to keep the issue before the electorate's eyes right up to the 2022 election.

The second development is that now Texas has passed a draconian law against abortion. It practically eliminates all abortions, because after six weeks [since the last menstrual period] it will be illegal to provide an abortion. That is when many women first discover that they are pregnant, so in practice, the effect is to outlaw all abortions. The authors of this bill have also argued, in a "friend of court" brief, that the Supreme Court should overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision which declared abortion constitutional on the grounds of a woman's right to privacy. This led to the establishment of abortion clinics throughout the country. Now the Texas law has essentially legalized bounty hunters, so that any individual can go after abortion doctors, nurses, Uber drivers, whatever – and get a \$10,000 bounty, plus court costs. Again, the intent is to keep that base mobilized.

So there's likely to be the kind of mobilizations that took place from 2017 on right up to the 2020 elections, and the assault on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, with far-right forces – the so-called "alt-right," and fascistic and outright fascist forces – acting as the cutting edge of a mobilization of the hard right wing supporting Trump. Quite possibly this could escalate. It would not be surprising if there are attempted murders of abortion providers, as has happened on a number of occasions in the past. It's also possible that there would be confrontations at demonstrations. So that scenario is likely to continue, and we have to be very aware of and prepared for that. Our perspective is for mass workers mobilization, independent of the Democratic Party, against the threat of fascist and fascistic forces.

On top of that, we're now seeing spectacular scenes reflecting the decay of U.S. capitalism and the total submission of the left to the Democratic Party. In the last few days we have the grotesque scene of 9,000 immigrants [later surging to over 15,000] being held under the International Bridge in Del Rio, Texas, with a total of 22 port-a-johns. The Border Patrol is not only torturing them, exposing them to the

elements, when the temperature has been ranging to 99° and up, but this is a health emergency waiting to explode.

The new issue of *Revolution*, the paper of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth, has a front-page article on how the experience of the last year and a half – a deadly pandemic (over 650,000 have died in the U.S.), rampant police murder, a looming eviction crisis – showed that capitalism can't even provide the basic needs of the population. So many young people are saying that this experience "really opened my eyes," and the headline draws the conclusion: "Why We Need a Socialist Revolution." That would seem sort of obvious for socialists, but not so. In the U.S., protests have been called off about everything: whether it's over fascists in the streets, or police murder, deportations, U.S. military actions. Absolutely nothing, no protests of any size, whereas in 2018 and 2020 the streets were full day after day, night after night. Those were election years, and while the protesters were sincerely protesting the locking up of immigrant kids in cages or the racist police murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others, the agenda of many of the protest organizers was to elect Democrats.

The Internationalist Group, the RIY, and the class-struggle labor and immigrant groups fraternally allied with us were the only tendency out there in the streets fighting against this attempt to channel this justified outrage into the Democratic Party, and fighting to bring workers power to bear. We were the only ones exposing the fraud of "defund the police," and who were calling to "set them free, let them stay," about immigrants, notably from Haiti. Now the Biden administration is responding to the emergency at the border by organizing to fly these desperate people back



Andress Latif / Reuters

**Thousands of mainly Haitian immigrants being held in terrible conditions under the International Bridge at Del Rio, Texas. Biden's response was to launch biggest mass deportation in decades, sending them back to devastated Haiti. But where are the protests?**

to the disaster of Haiti today where there are no public services, much of the country destroyed by the latest earthquake, followed by a hurricane, the streets controlled by gangs. Biden is carrying out deportations and expulsions (almost 600,000 in his first six months) at an even higher rate than Trump, using Trump's anti-immigrant laws (Title 42).<sup>2</sup> Yet there is no mass protest against that – another proof that the entire opportunist left is effectively an adjunct of the Democratic Party. It's not just the DSA (Democratic Socialists of America).

As for the DSA, everyone is well aware of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's stunt at the Met Gala the other night, which was very telling. She goes in with her gown (the train is carried by an assistant) with the message on it, "Tax the Rich." As another article in our press explains, this is not at all a radical demand, it's the demand of a section of the Democratic Party. In any case, it isn't any kind of protest against capitalism at all, it's just AOC hobnobbing with the "one percent." Yet with all these major catastrophes in the world, what passes for a protest by "the left" is this stunt.

The situation cries out for revolutionary leadership. So there are three countries in the world where there are significant numbers of people claiming to be Trotskyists. One is Brazil, where the government of Jair Bolsonaro has been threatening military action. First this was directed against the Congress, trying to intimidate it into voting a constitutional amendment, and then that was followed up by threats against the Supreme Court – all of this pointing to a "self-coup" [such as carried out by Peru's then-president Alberto Fujimori in 1990]. Bolsonaro has pulled back to a degree, after mobilizing several hundred thousand supporters on September 7, but the threat is still there, with a government that is already chock full of generals.

But what is the left doing? The opportunist left has only one mode in Brazil, which is to try to push the PT [Workers Party] to the left. Except the Workers Party is assiduously trying to form a coalition with the traditional conservatives to support Lula [former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva] in

the next elections. It is not the least bit interested in being pushed to the left, and as a result the entire political spectrum to the left of the PT, which is mostly pseudo-Trotskyists, is essentially paralyzed. They are just going through the motions waiting for the 2022 elections in a situation where you have an active mobilization potentially for what could really be a coup d'état.

Then in France, the pseudo-Trotskyist left is essentially tailing the anti-vaxxers. So there's a very authoritarian government, a president who thinks he is Jupiter riding rough-shod over the population, which is experiencing considerable economic hardship because of the pandemic and the lockdowns. What the left is doing is not presenting a class program but tailing after protests sparked by the right-wing populists of the Yellow Vests against a vaccination mandate.

Finally, in Argentina there were primary elections. The Peronist government lost a lot of support, with most of the discontent picked up by the right wing, but the coalition of left-wing parties, the FIT-U [Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores – Unidad], an electoral cartel of groups claiming to be Trotskyists, won a million votes and together with other pseudo-Trotskyists got about 1.6 million votes. It was a significant vote, but in a situation where the population is facing an economic crisis the likes of which have not been seen since 2001, where the minimum wage is one of the lowest in Latin America (\$82 a month, lower even than Bolivia), with considerable unemployment, the left is only mobilizing electorally.

So in each of these countries, in Brazil, France and Argentina, you have up to perhaps 10,000 people who are members of ostensibly Trotskyist groups. Yet these different tendencies are mainly engaged in impotent electoral activities, or tailing after other very alien class forces. The PSTU in Brazil is a blatant example of what we call "State Department socialism," supporting everything that U.S. imperialism backs, from Syria and Egypt to now in Cuba. And, of course, most of the left is supporting, to one degree or another, the U.S.-backed protests led by anti-communists in Cuba. As the pseudo-Trotskyists tail after whatever is popular, our fight to lead struggles on the basis of genuine Trotskyism is key to building a world party of socialist revolution. ■



U.S. Navy

**Virginia class attack submarine to be provided to Australia under deal with U.S. Although the subs are said to be armed with cruise missiles, they can carry W76-2 low-yield ("tactical") nuclear arms, a "first-strike" weapon for "regional deterrence." Likely target: Chinese military installations in the South China Sea.**

<sup>2</sup> See [www.BidenStopDeportations.com](http://www.BidenStopDeportations.com) and U.S. Customs and Border Patrol monthly reports at <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/cbp-enforcement-statistics/title-8-and-title-42-statistics>



# Backlash Against Mass Protests of Racist Police Murder

# Mobilize to Fight Racist

# “Anti-CRT” Gag Laws!

## They Want to Force You to Stop Teaching About Racism

**By Class Struggle  
Education Workers**

As the 2020-21 school year drew to a close, there was an explosion of laws and regulations restricting how teachers could discuss racism, sexism and other controversial issues in class. By now, some 28 states – all with Republican-controlled legislatures and/or Republican governors – have introduced bills (more than a dozen of which have been enacted) or issued state education department rulings that would outlaw teaching “divisive concepts.” Concepts prohibited from “a course of instruction” include that the United States is a racist country (Tennessee Dept. of Ed.), that racism is embedded in American society and its legal system (Florida Board of Ed.), or even discussing anything that would cause anyone to “feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex” (Georgia Board of Ed.).

In a round-up article on this wave of racist gag laws, *Education Week* (19 July) summarized: “Republicans proposing bills like this say that teachers who discuss these topics – who suggest, for example, that Black Americans are systemically oppressed – are practicing ‘critical race theory.’” “CRT” has become the bugbear of conservatives, setting set off a new round of “culture wars” in the schools. In fact, the anti-“CRT” campaign has nothing to do with Critical Race Theory, which is a sub-discipline of academic/legal studies and is not taught in secondary schools. Rather, the reactionary proponents of these laws seek to prevent teachers taking up discussion of “systemic racism” in response to the massive nationwide protests sparked by the racist police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May 2020. In targeting “CRT,” they are trying to keep any mention of “BLM” (Black Lives Matter) out of the schools.

The current all-sided attack on “CRT” is a racist backlash on the cultural front, akin to the mobilizing-propaganda campaigns of the White Citizens’ Councils in the 1960s. The summer 2020 protests had a profound cultural effect, and the racists perceived they had lost ground. Racist cops were captured on video committing murder, monuments of the Confederacy were under physical attack across the country, people were talking about the Tulsa massacre, there were TV shows about Juneteenth, high school and middle school classes were talking about slavery and Jim Crow, and so on. It’s not Critical Race Theory they want to ward off, it’s slavery they don’t want discussed, and Jim Crow segregation, and racist cop terror today. Chris Rufo of the Manhattan Institute, a conservative think tank, spelled out the strategy of making “CRT” a toxic buzzword to give cover this racist reaction in a March tweet:

“We have successfully frozen their brand – ‘critical race theory’ – into the



**In the summer of 2020, reacting to the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis cop, millions took to the streets to denounce racist police brutality. The campaign against “critical race theory,” initiated by Donald Trump, is a racist backlash against those protests. Above: mass meeting called by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in Oakland, California on 19 June 2020. On Juneteenth (the celebration of the end of slavery), the ILWU shut down all ports on the U.S. West Coast to protest police terror and systemic racism.**

public conversation and are steadily driving up negative perceptions. We will eventually turn it toxic, as we put all of the various cultural insanities under that brand category.”

This was the clear purpose of Republican president Donald Trump when he issued Executive Order 13950 last September 22, which is where the language in the state laws and regulations comes from. In banning racial “diversity training” and promoting “unity” (!), the order denounced “offensive and anti-American race and sex stereotyping and scapegoating.” It listed nine “divisive concepts” that must be rooted out, including (in addition to those cited above) “meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist.” The Executive Order was repealed by Democratic president Joe Biden within hours of taking office on January 20. But Trump Republicans are hellbent on upholding the ex-president’s overtly racist legacy, while Biden Democrats hide behind the (not very) covert racism of “supporting the police.”

So in Georgia, Republican governor Brian Kemp’s appointed state Board of Education unanimously resolved that “the United States of America is not a racist country, and that the state of Georgia is not a racist state” – and for a teacher to say any different is henceforth illegal. Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Montana, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee and Texas have already passed laws or issued state education department regulations or executive orders banning “CRT.” In other states, bills are pending which will set off fireworks in upcoming elections. The vagueness of the

various laws and regulations is deliberate. The point is to keep this contentious issue alive until the next presidential election – in other words: it’s all about “Trump 2024.”

This raises the spectre of McCarthyite repression in the schools. At the dawn of the anti-Soviet Cold War in the late 1940s and early ’50s, right-wing Republican senator Joe McCarthy – with the connivance of Democratic liberals – launched witch hunts to ferret out “reds” from the government, schools, wherever. State laws were passed to fire any teacher deemed a “Communist.” Hundreds of teachers were purged from New York City schools alone. Today’s witch-hunting regulations list all kinds of dire consequences if they are violated. In Arizona, school districts will be fined \$5,000 and teachers could lose their licenses. In Tennessee also, a teacher could have their certification revoked, while funds could be massively stripped (up to \$5 million, or 10% of all state aid) from any school or district that “knowingly” violates the anti-“CRT” law after a state education department investigation of parent complaints.

Now the anti-“CRT” crusade is linking up with anti-transgender, anti-vaccine and anti-masking hysteria to create an all-round toxic environment at the opening of school this fall (“Venom of Political and Culture Battles Seeps Into School Halls,” *New York Times*, 20 August). It will intersect massive learning deficits suffered by students after what has been a lost year for millions due to pandemic shutdowns and the disaster of “remote education,” particularly for the most disadvantaged students. Already there are a slew of recall

campaigns by racist right-wingers against school administrators and school board members (61 at last count, against 157 officials, more than double the average over the last decade). And given the explosive-ness of these multiple issues, there could be clashes with rabid reactionaries at some of the hottest spots.

### Right-Wing Frenzy Against “Critical Race Theory”

The striking similarities between the various anti-“CRT” laws, and their sly use of liberal anti-discrimination terminology to prevent discussion of racism, come from the fact that they are based on model bills cooked up by right-wing think tanks. The “Partisanship Out of Civics Act” was drawn up by the Ethics and Public Policy Center, an ultra-rightist outfit founded by Ernest Lefever, a supporter of the racist pseudoscience propaganda of William Shockley.<sup>1</sup> This cookie-cutter legislation was concocted by one Stanley Kurtz, a senior fellow at the center and Harvard faculty member. Outlawing discussion that could cause a student “discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any form of psychological distress on account of his or her race or sex” was a conscious effort to craft the laws in such a way that they could be used by parents to go after individual teachers.

Other model bills banning discussion of systemic racism come from the Heritage Foundation, Citizens for Renewing America, the Alliance for Free Citizens and the David Horowitz Freedom Center, an anti-Muslim foundation. The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a linchpin of the longstanding corporate/right-wing offensive to take over state governments, held a workshop in December, attended by 20 state legislators and led by anti-“CRT” propagandist Chris Rufo of the Manhattan Institute.<sup>2</sup> ALEC, set up after the 1972 defeat of the presidential bid by Barry Goldwater, specializes in writing model state laws for repression of immigrants (Arizona), “stand your ground” laws legalizing vigilantism, and “parent trigger” laws to force school districts to permit charter schools (California and Connecticut).

The anti-“CRT” laws and orders are being pushed by right-wing groups that have sprung up over the last year. One group, No Left Turn in Education, which boasts of 30 chapters in 24 states, was founded in June 2020, explicitly in response to the mass protests against racist police murder, which led to more teaching in schools about the roots of racism. NBC News (15 June) listed “at least 165 local and national groups that aim to disrupt lessons on race and gender.” In New Hampshire, the campaign against education

<sup>1</sup> This served as the model for the Texas law and bills in Ohio and Arizona.

<sup>2</sup> “Who’s Really Driving Critical Race Theory Legislation? An Investigation,” *Education Week*, 19 July.





Lily-white crowd of parents swarm school board meeting in Loudoun County, Virginia, on June 22, protesting “critical race theory” and policies respecting transgender students. Loudoun was one of the last segregationist holdouts, not desegregating its schools until 1968, 14 years after Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling declared separate schools unconstitutional. “Anti-CRT” protests are the new “massive resistance” to racial equality. For mass mobilization to defeat this racist attack on public education!

about racism has seen fascists such as the Proud Boys, and Nazis of the “NSC 131” (Nationalist Social Club Anti-Communist Action), demonstrate outside the Nashua Board of Education with a banner saying “CRT = Anti-White.” These Nazis also staged anti-Semitic protests outside the Holocaust Museum in Boston in May.

Although billed as a rejection of “critical race theory,” the witch-hunting gag laws are aimed at banning any discussion in schools of the social roots of racial, sexual and other forms of social and class oppression. They are also avowedly anti-communist. We are dealing with a concerted effort to whitewash the history of U.S. capitalism, founded on genocide of Native Americans and enslavement of African Americans, whose oppression continues to this day. With all their concern about causing distress to white racist students (and parents), these measures victimize African American, Latino, Native American and Asian students. And by banning discussion of gender issues, they reinforce the oppression of students on the basis of their gender or sexuality.

This is no abstract debate over curriculum, but an attempt at systematic regimentation of the population and *censorship* of any discussion of racial oppression. It would grant racists veto power over what and how curricula is taught. These laws create breeding grounds for fascist vigilantes. Most require that “alternative views” be presented. So if there is discussion of the ominous 2017 white-supremacist mobilization in Charlottesville, Virginia, where torch-bearing right-wingers chanted “Jews will not replace us” and a Nazi ran over and killed anti-racist Heather Heyer, what would be the “alternative view” – justification for fascist murder?

Public school educators are forced to walk a very fuzzy and perilous line just to keep their jobs, unclear on how to teach mandated subject matter, and what language to use without breaking the law. Meanwhile, students, parents and administrators are transformed into McCarthyite spies in this racist witch-hunt. (Don’t like your grade? Out your teacher!) They even want to make educators and parents complicit in this racist censorship by forming committees to purge texts and libraries of “prohibited concepts.” Books will be banned – is book burning next?

How this will play out is already clear. On Fox News (which has railed non-stop against “critical race theory”) ultra-rightist

fanatic Tucker Carlson has called to “get cameras in every classroom ... to oversee the people teaching your children,” and to put a stop to the “civilization-ending poison” of CRT (*Newsweek*, 19 July). You can bet that right-wing parents will deputize their offspring to use their cellphones to nail any teacher who so much as utters the words “systemic racism.” This racist backlash is so widespread that spokesmen for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund compare it to the “massive resistance” to the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* school integration decision that spawned over 200 whites-only private “academies” across the South. Anti-“CRT” activists such as the founder of “No Left Turn” are pulling their children out of public schools.

The gag laws take aim at standards, curricula, lesson plans, textbooks, instructional materials and practices. In some districts, school officials have vowed to fight the racist onslaught. In Oklahoma, school superintendents in Tulsa and Millwood, with overwhelmingly black student bodies, and in Hanna, a small district most of whose students are Native Americans, have vowed that they will “Risk Breaking State Law to Continue Anti-Racism Work” (*Education Week*, 6 August). The Zinn Education Project (named after Howard Zinn, author of *A People’s History of the United States*) is seeking 12,800 signatures to a pledge to “refuse to lie to young people about U.S. history and current events,” names to be publicly posted. The teachers are brave, but this is potentially problematic, as “alt-right” web sites and fascists are doxing signers.

The racist onslaught against teaching about – or even discussing – the roots of racism *must be fought in an organized, massive way*. Yet the two national teachers unions – American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA) – have only responded weakly, largely leaving it up to local affiliates and individual teachers to fight the anti-CRT witch hunt. At its annual meeting at the beginning of July, the NEA passed a resolution saying it would prepare materials to “fight back against anti-CRT rhetoric” and “convey its support for the accurate and honest teaching of social studies topics,” that would “be informed by academic frameworks ... including critical race theory.” The NEA also said it would call together with the Zinn Project



After the defeat of desegregation by busing in the 1970s, founders of Critical Race Theory abandoned the struggle to integrate the schools. Marxists reject the defeatist doctrine of CRT and counterpose the fight for revolutionary integrationism. We demand integrated, high-quality, public education for all. Above: Class Struggle Education Workers, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas and Internationalist Group at Juneteenth march in New York City last year.

for an October 14 “national day of action to teach lessons about structural racism and oppression.” Not a word about the racist gag laws – much less about fighting them – in this resolution that then disappeared from the NEA site.

Over at the AFT, union president Randi Weingarten gave a July 6 speech declaring that “culture warriors are labeling any discussion of race, racism or discrimination as CRT to try to make it toxic.” She criticized the Texas law that makes it illegal to teach that “slavery and racism are anything other than deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to, the authentic founding principles of the United States.” But as far as doing anything about it, all she offered was that “our union will defend any member who gets in trouble for teaching honest history,” that it has “a legal defense fund ready to go” and is “preparing for litigation.” The AFT and NEA are *not* fighting these *racist censorship laws* themselves, demanding they be revoked, but instead are leaving it to individual educators to stand up and fight. That goes against the whole purpose of unions, to organize collective defense of and struggle for our rights and interests.

Around the country the anti-“CRT” campaign has led to swarming of school board meetings by hundreds of right-wingers – from Las Vegas, Nevada to Rochester, Minnesota to Loudoun County, Virginia and Cherokee County, Georgia – as they seek to bully members into approving the racist ban on education about racism. But the national teachers unions, and the educators around the Zinn Project, despite their desire to resist this onslaught, are not countermobilizing on the ground against the racist reactionaries. This leaves the initiative in the hands of the racists. *These racist gag laws should be shredded by mass mobilization and broken by concerted action of the education unions – backed by anti-racist and class-conscious educators, students, parents and school staff – against the whitewashing of U.S. history.*

A central reason for the failure to mobilize is the *political subordination of the unions to the capitalist Democratic Party*.<sup>3</sup> Across the U.S., teacher unions are the backbone of Democrats’ get-out-the-vote efforts. The union bureaucracy fears that direct confrontation with the Trump mobs would hurt Biden and Democratic candi-

<sup>3</sup> AFT president Randi Weingarten is a member of the Democratic National Committee.

dates in “swing” districts, endangering the Democrats’ narrow control of Congress. Yet the Democrats are key players in the *bipartisan* bourgeois attack on public education. Unionized teachers in Republican-controlled states mobilized by the tens of thousands in the 2018 “red state revolt.” But to do so they had to overcome resistance from the pro-Democratic union tops. Class-conscious educators fight to *oust the bureaucrats, break with the Democrats and build a class-struggle workers Party*.

### Critical Race Theory: An Anti-Marxist Program of Defeat

Critical Race Theory itself is very different from the caricature presented by the anti-“CRT” racist reactionaries. From the mouths of Trump, Republican politicians, right-wing TV hate-mongers and “blue lives matter” apologists for police murder, “CRT” is universally described as “Marxist” or “neo-Marxist.” But Critical Race Theory is actually deeply anti-Marxist, locating the origins of racial oppression not in the racist capitalist system but in what they call “white supremacy.” By this its proponents do not mean the rule of the slavocracy of the Confederacy, or the terror of the hooded white supremacists of the Ku Klux Klan, or even the laws of the Jim Crow South but rather a society dominated by an undifferentiated mass of white people. Yet “white Americans” in general did not impose slavery, the planters, merchants and bankers did. The rulers of the U.S. are not white people in general but the owners of capital and their politicians.

Key to their rule – going back to this society’s origins and continuing today – has been the *special or double oppression* of African Americans. Against this *materialist* understanding, liberal idealists argue “as though the chief business of slavery were the production of white supremacy instead of the production of cotton, sugar, rice and tobacco” for profit, as Barbara J. Fields observed in her classic “Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America” (1990).<sup>4</sup> As she notes, it was the slave plantation system that produced the ideology of race and racism in the U.S.; and it continues to be reproduced every day

*continued on page 9*

<sup>4</sup> Pioneering U.S. Trotskyist Richard S. Fraser made a similar point in his “The Negro Struggle and the Proletarian Revolution” (1953); see section on “The Origin of the Race Concept.”



# The 1776 Report: Whitewashing U.S. History

The racist attacks on public education are not only a virulent response to the electoral defeat of Trump. They are above all part of the racist reaction to the summer 2020 mass mobilizations that brought some 26 million people to the streets, day after day, night after night, to denounce the wanton police murder of George Floyd and call for the end of *systemic racism*. At the height of the protests, Trump delivered a Fourth of July speech at Mount Rushmore against “far-left fascism” and the “left-wing cultural revolution” he claims is trying to “end America” and “our beloved American way of life.” In this tirade of reactionary rhetoric, about how “we settled the Wild West” (genocide of Native Americans) and “pursued our Manifest Destiny across the ocean” (colonizing Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico), the racist-in-chief called to resist “bad, evil people.” He summed up:

“The violent mayhem we have seen in the streets of cities that are run by liberal Democrats, in every case, is the predictable result of years of extreme indoctrination and bias in education, journalism, and other cultural institutions.... Our children are taught in school to hate their own country, and to believe that the men and women who built it were not heroes, but that [they] were villains.”

In September, Trump went further, first with a memo banning “un-American propaganda training sessions” and “any training on ‘critical race theory’” suggesting “that the United States is an inherently racist or evil country”! Then in a 17 September 2020 speech in a White House Conference on American History, he again denounced “decades of left-wing indoctrination in our schools” and vituperated against “CRT,” saying this “Marxist doctrine” holds that “America is a wicked and racist nation.” To combat this scourge he announced an executive order (13950) forming the “1776 Commission” to “promote patriotic education.” Beyond the blatant electoral appeal to “white griev-



**Racist-in-chief Donald Trump displays executive order creating 1776 Commission, calling for “Patriotic education.”**

ance,” this was a call to enforce “national unity” through patriotic indoctrination in the schools.

In the end, Trump’s scheme for the *Gleichschaltung* (forcing into line) of American schools (as Hitler’s regimentation of German educational and cultural institutions was called) did not come to fruition, due to his electoral defeat. But on his last day in office, 19 January 2021, the White House issued the “Final Report of the President’s Advisory Commission on 1776.” *The 1776 Report* was on the White House website for exactly one day, but it became the official textbook for the Trumpers’ anti-“CRT” onslaught. It quotes Alexander Hamilton on the need for “the energy of a common national sentiment; on a uniformity of principles and habits.” It sought to enforce that uniformity in the schools, proclaiming: “Patri-

otic education must have at its center a respect for the rule of law....”

Intended as the antidote to *1619 Project* of the *New York Times* (more on that on page 9), it seeks to erase the legacy of slavery from U.S. history. Indeed, it justified the U.S. Constitution’s provisions implicitly upholding slavery, saying “no durable union could have been formed without a compromise among the states on the issue of slavery.” Of the Civil War it says only that Americans were divided “between the Confederate and Union forces,” while the “conflict was resolved, but at a cost of more than 600,000 lives.” Instead, it blithely says “Constitutional amendments were passed to abolish slavery, grant equal protection under the law, and guarantee the right to vote regardless of race.” So the momentous “Second American Revolution,” which freed

the slaves by force of arms (crucially those wielded by the 180,000 slaves who enrolled in the Union armies), is reduced to legislative action, impossible without Union victory in the war.

Meanwhile, the *1776 Report*’s injunctions against “mob rule” are pretty rich *coming from the crowd that only a couple of weeks earlier stormed the U.S. Capitol with the Confederate battle flag flying*. It calls on states and school districts to reject any curriculum that promotes “activist propaganda, or factional ideologies that demean America’s heritage.” Instead: “Americans yearn for timeless stories and noble heroes that inspire them to be good, brave, diligent, daring,” etc., etc. In other words, comic books fit for a Trump. Among ideologies that are deemed “challenges to America’s principles” it lists slavery, fascism and communism, but adds “progressivism” and “racism and identity politics.” “Progressivism” is rejected for advocating “evolving rights,” while “color blind civil rights” are counterposed to affirmative action efforts to “overcome long-accrued inequalities.”

The *1776 Report* is indeed an often comically simplistic attempt to codify a right-wing “official story” of U.S. history, but it is not therefore harmless. Including a lengthy disquisition tracing the “intellectual origins of identity politics” to “the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, [who] argued that the focus should not be on economic revolution as much as taking control of the institutions that shape culture,” it was written by a coterie of minor-league right-wing academics, lawyers and think-tank hacks. While the Trumpers’ anti-“CRT” crusade aims at censoring any discussion of the roots of racism in the social, economic and political system of the United States, the Report was a blueprint for the kind of supposedly “color-blind” racist indoctrination they would like to impose, while racist police bash in the heads of anti-racist demonstrators. ■



**Trump supporters storm U.S. Capitol, 6 January 2021, brandishing the Confederate battle flag of the slavocracy.**



**Engraving in *Harper’s Weekly* depicting the 55th Massachusetts Colored Regiment marching through Charleston, South Carolina, 21 February 1865. The *1776 Report*, and the *1619 Project* both pass over the significance of the Civil War in ending slavery.**



# The 1619 Project: Misidentifying the Roots of Racism

Donald Trump's *1776 Report* singles out the *1619 Project*, launched in the *New York Times Magazine* (18 August 2019), as the prime example of "Critical Race Theory." The Florida state regulations and a bill introduced in Congress in July, sponsored by Arkansas senator Tom Cotton, specifically ban using the project in schools. (There are lesson plans and other instructional materials for it from the Pulitzer Center.) Trump complained that students used to be taught, "1492, Columbus discovered America.... Now they want to make it the 1619 Project." What sets Trumpers off is the Project's focus on how the United States was built on chattel slavery, starting with the arrival of the first boatload of African slaves in Virginia in August 1619. Yet that along with the pro-slavery provisions of the Constitution and the domination of early U.S. politics by slaveholders are *incontrovertible facts*.

The *1619 Project* highlights not only the centrality of slavery to the rise of the United States as an economic power, but also how that heritage continued after slavery's abolition. This was embodied not only in formal Jim Crow segregation – which was only ended a century after the Civil War – but in everything from the death penalty and the unending racist brutality of the police to the "redlining" of housing to exclude African Americans and others, as well as de facto school segregation, sports, music and every other aspect of U.S. society. To even discuss this enrages the racists, who want to limit racism to overt discrimination.

But the *1619 Project* goes far beyond such realities that the rightists want to erase, and into the kind of mystification that stands in the way of actually clarifying the roots of racism, as part of the fight to uproot it. The *Project's* inspirer, former *New York Times* journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, writes in the introductory essay that "one of the primary reasons the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery." On the *1619 Project's* claim that independence from Britain was "in order to ensure that slavery would continue," five of the leading historians of slavery and racism in U.S. history declared flatly: "This is not true."<sup>1</sup>

Yes, George Washington and Patrick Henry were indignant at Britain's limitation of their ability to speculate in lands to the west of the 1763 boundary established after the "French and Indian War," and slaveowners were enraged when British officials armed some slaves to fight for the Crown. But the most basic cause of independence was the emergence of a distinct American ruling class (of which Northern merchants were a key part) whose interests were incompatible with continued colonial subjection.

The American Revolution was a limited political revolution that left slavery in-

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Victoria Bynum, James M. McPherson, James Oakes, Sean Wilentz and Gordon S. Wood, "Re: The 1619 Project," *New York Times Magazine*, 9 December 2019.



Nikole Hannah-Jones at celebration of the 1619 Project at the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, October 2019.

tact. Moreover, by not mentioning slavery either in the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, the "Founding Fathers" (many of them slaveholders) sought to evade the glaring contradiction between that system of human bondage and the soaring rhetoric that "all men are created equal" with "inalienable rights" including to freedom. U.S. race ideology developed in large part to explain and "justify" the clash between these ideals of universal natural rights and the exclusion from them of a whole, specially oppressed and subjugated group of people whose labor was nonetheless essential for the social system's operation.

Hannah-Jones writes that the U.S. Constitution "preserved and protected slavery without ever using the word," which it did, particularly in safeguarding the political power of the Southern planter class.<sup>2</sup> But she ignores the fact that it also provided for the end to the slave trade – to be sure, after a delay – and enabled abolition in the North. In fact, the Revolution led to the abolition of slavery in all Northern states by 1804 (starting with Vermont in 1777 and Pennsylvania in 1780) and to the clash between North and South becoming, despite each successive "Compromise," an "irrepressible conflict" culminating in the Civil War.

In some striking ways, Hannah-Jones' portrayal of the Constitution parallels that of John C. Calhoun, the leading ideologist of the slave South, who tried to claim it as a positive defense of slavery, thus making abolition unconstitutional. In 1854, William Lloyd Garrison famously burned the Constitution, and two years later fellow abolitionist Wendell Phillips wrote a polemic titled *The Constitution A Pro-Slavery Compact*. But the great abolitionist and former slave Frederick Douglass fought to

<sup>2</sup> See "Slavery and the Constitution: Origins of U.S. Capitalist Democracy," *Revolution* No. 17, August 2020.

abolish slavery in part on the basis of the Constitution. All this expressed not only differences on strategy and tactics but also the *contradictions* lodged in the origins of the U.S. itself, which blew up in the Civil War. Yet significantly, the key role of the abolitionists, black and white, in the struggle to overthrow slavery is largely ignored in the *1619 Project*.

This reflects the fact that overall, the *Project* treats "white America" as one undifferentiated entity. Thus the introductory essay explains the bloody racist riots against black workers after World War I as a "symptom of the psychological mechanism necessary to absolve white Americans of their country's original sin," saying that "white Americans resorted to the same racist ideology that Jefferson and the framers had used at the nation's founding." In this ahistorical account, all "white Americans" were made responsible for these pogroms – nothing about how patriotic mobs of off-duty sailors and recently discharged Army vets attacked black neighborhoods, about how strike-breaking bosses fueled race-hate to set white workers against black, or how the government's xenophobic "red scare" fed racist attacks.<sup>3</sup>

On the 1960s civil rights struggles, Hannah-Jones wrote: "For the most part, black Americans fought back alone." Hundreds of thousands of black people mobilized for equal rights, but they were not alone. What strides have been made in winning black rights in the U.S. have almost always been the result of *integrated* struggle. This includes advances that came as part of militant mass workers' unionization drives in the 1930s and '40s. In fact, a range of notable figures – Montgomery's Rosa Parks and E.D. Nixon, Ella Baker, Paule Marshall, Lorraine Hansberry, to name just a few – shared roots in radical left and union struggles.

<sup>3</sup> See William Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (University of Illinois Press, 1996).

This goes unmentioned in the *1619 Project*, which reflects a very different, bourgeois liberal, middle- or upper-class outlook, which accounts for some of its glaring blind spots.

It is notable how the prime example of integrated struggle for black rights, the Civil War – in which hundreds of thousands of white and black soldiers died in the struggle that abolished slavery – gets such short shrift in the *1619 Project*. The introduction focuses on Lincoln's August 1862 talk with black leaders about sending black people to another country. But there is no mention there of the already finalized *Emancipation Proclamation* which he had in his pocket and promulgated the next month.<sup>4</sup> It refers to the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments which abolished slavery, provided citizenship for all born here and the right to vote for black men, noting that newly freed black people fought for them. But it does not credit any of the (white) Radical Republicans who pushed the amendments through Congress and state legislatures.

## 1776 Report and 1619 Project Pass Over the Civil War

It is striking how *both Trump's 1776 Report and the 1619 Project pass over the Civil War*. The latter's authors, while seeking to be anti-racists, nonetheless fail to see that *the fight over slavery was at the heart of the Civil War* and that *from the outset, its abolition was key to victory for the Union against the Confederate slave masters*. Frederick Douglass understood this immediately, writing in May 1861:

"The American people and the Government in Washington may refuse to recognize it for a time, but the 'inexorable logic of events' will force it upon them in the end: that the war now being waged in this land is a war for and against slavery; and that it can never be effectively put down till one or the other of these vital forces is completely destroyed."<sup>5</sup>

The founder of modern communism, Karl Marx, said the same in November 1861:

"The present struggle between the South and North is, therefore, nothing but a struggle between two social systems, the system of slavery and the system of free labour. The struggle has broken out because the two systems can no longer live peacefully side by side on the North American continent. It can only be ended by the victory of one system or the other."<sup>6</sup>

And that is what happened. The *1776 Report* seeks to whitewash U.S. history while the *1619 Project* is an idealist indictment of the "sin" and "betrayal" of

<sup>4</sup> See "The Emancipation Proclamation: Promise and Betrayal," and "Lincoln, Lincoln, and the Abolition of Slavery" in *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013.

<sup>5</sup> *Douglass' Monthly*, cited in James M. McPherson, *The Negro's Civil War* (1965), quoted in our article, "What 'Post-Racial' America? Barack Obama vs. Black Liberation," *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Karl Marx, "The Civil War in the United States," reproduced in *Internationalist Class Readings, Marx on Slavery and the U.S. Civil War*.





## Frederick Douglass is hardly mentioned in the 1619 Project.

“democratic ideals” by “white Americans.” Only Marxism provides a materialist analysis of the roots of racism in the capitalist system, and a revolutionary program to uproot it.

The brutal, bloody oppression of black people – from chattel slavery, lynching and Jim Crow segregation to mass incarceration and racist police murder today – is the key defining feature of American capitalism. But it is not unique. The introduction to the *1619 Project* asks:

“What if, however, we were to tell you that this fact, which is taught in our schools and unanimously celebrated every Fourth of July, is wrong, and that the country’s true birth date, the moment that its defining contradictions first came into the world, was in late August of 1619?... [T]hat was when a ship arrived at Point Comfort in the British colony of Virginia, bearing a cargo of 20 to 30 enslaved Africans.”

Revolutionary Marxists do not celebrate the Fourth of July, for the reasons Frederick Douglass laid out in one of his famous speeches.<sup>7</sup> But let us pose another question: if we are offering birth dates for the U.S., how about nine years earlier, in August of 1610? That was the date of the first massacre of Native Americans, when the governor of the Virginia colony, Lord De la Warr (after whom the state of Delaware is named), sent a squad to wipe out the village of the Paspahegh Indians, killing dozens. Even before the introduction of chattel slavery, the United States was founded on *genocide of the indigenous peoples*. But it’s actually not about birth dates, it’s about a system which not only began with but keeps reproducing such horrors over and over. That system is capitalism.

Hannah-Jones writes: “Anti-black racism runs in the very DNA of this country.” Ten years earlier, the Internationalist Group wrote something similar, but very different in content and programmatic consequence. In an article on “Barack Obama vs. Black Liberation” (*The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009), we noted how the ruling class used the inauguration of the first African American president of the United States “to claim that this proves that racism in the United States has been overcome. Don’t believe it. It goes far deeper than legal discrimination – *racial oppression is inscribed in the DNA of American capitalism*” (emphasis in <sup>7</sup> Frederick Douglass, “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” (1852)

original). Not the United States as a country, not white Americans in general, but *American capitalism*. And we added: “It will take a revolution to do away with this scourge.”

## No Program for Struggle

The *1619 Project* has no program for struggle. It states that “the root of the endemic racism that we still cannot purge from this nation to this day” lies in the “belief, that black people were not merely enslaved but were a slave race.” Yet the material reality of enslavement, for profit, made that belief, not the other way around. The Project traces this back to the infamous 1857 Dred Scott decision of the segregationist Supreme Court, that the “Negro race” was not part of “the people” and had “no rights that a white man was bound to respect.” Yes, that was a key codification of slavery’s racist doctrine. That grotesque white supremacist ruling was *overruled by the Civil War*, whose verdict was codified in the subsequent amendments to the Constitution.

Reconstruction pushed toward fulfilling their promise. Its most radical proponents sought to break up the lands and power that Southern rulers had amassed through slavery, and to carry out “40 acres and a mule” even after Lincoln’s successor, Andrew Johnson, effectively nullified General Sherman’s famous order by returning lands to plantation owners. Thousands of black Civil War veterans bore arms and organized in defense of this cause. But the Northern bourgeoisie betrayed the promise of Reconstruction in 1877. Soon came Jim Crow ... and then mass struggles to end it. To essentially pretend that nothing has happened since 1619, or 1857, or that white Americans all share this racist ideology today when millions joined marches against racist terror last summer, is to write off the struggle for black equality in the United States – which is exactly what the proponents of Critical Race Theory do.

Some who have criticized the *1619 Project* have falsely described its program as “black nationalist.” This includes the “World Socialist Web Site” (which should be known as the *World Scab Web Site* for its anti-labor politics, including telling black Amazon workers in Alabama to vote against a union). But the *Project* authors don’t mention any nationalist figures or movements, such as Marcus Garvey or even the Black Panthers. They do not seek separation as doctrinal nationalists would, nor are they radical in any way. In fact, they say “black Americans have made astounding progress” and “became the most American of all.” By this they mean advancement for a narrow layer of middle-class professionals, including themselves. In reality, they are Obama Democrats disappointed that his promised “post-racial America” hasn’t arrived, while past gains and even basic voting rights are flagrantly being rolled back by Trump Republicans. In contrast, we wrote at the outset of Obama’s presidency:

“For the African American Obama to take office in the highest elected position in this country reflected a considerable social change in this country founded on chattel slavery, where Jim Crow segregation continued into the 1960s – and where in the 21st century blacks and Latinos have still been prevented from voting. But this has not changed the system of imperialist capitalism one iota: with Obama at the helm, the U.S. is bombing

Iraq and Afghanistan to hell, marauding in Pakistan, supplying the weaponry for Israeli slaughter in Gaza, throwing millions out of work in the U.S. while enslaving workers with starvation wages around the planet.”

–“Obama Presidency: U.S. Imperialism Tries a Makeover,” *The Internationalist* No. 28, March-April 2009.

The union-bashing WSWS complains that the *1619 Project* passes over Martin Luther King, because “King’s political outlook was opposed to the racist narrative advanced by the *Times*.” These pseudo-socialists – who dismiss any struggle against the oppression of black people, women or over for gay, lesbian and transgender rights as identity politics and who deny that racist police target young black men in their endless killing spree – in fact share the political outlook of liberalism, including defense of key aspects of patriotic Americanism. Critical Race Theory originated in disenchantment with and despair over the *failure* of the civil rights movement to desegregate public schools, ascribing this to all-embracing and undefeatable white racism. Instead, the blame lies squarely with the white racist capitalist ruling class, and the politicians that serve it, Republican and Democrat, notably Joe Biden who led Northern liberals opposed to school integration by busing (and who this crowd voted for in 2020). ■

## “Anti-CRT” Laws...

*continued from page 6*

in capitalist America not because of some timeless disembodied power of “white supremacy” but because the material realities of racial oppression and unending social inequalities in this capitalist society continue to generate and reproduce it.

The founders of Critical Race Theory responded to the defeat of busing in the 1970s by abandoning the struggle for school desegregation.<sup>5</sup> As this defeatist theory gained circulation in academia, the common language in the field of education has shifted to reflect it. Instead of fighting for *integration*, the calls are now for “diversity,” that is obtaining slots for a select few of the oppressed in elite institutions. Instead of fighting for *equality*, we hear sugary phrases about “equity” (meaning what, exactly?). And while there is a lot of talk about “white privilege,” proponents of CRT (the real thing, not the Trumpists’ caricature) have ditched the fight for black liberation that uproots the *special oppression* of African Americans, because they seek some class privilege for themselves and their clientele.

Along with references to *institutional* racism and *structural* racism, it has now become widely accepted that there is *systemic racism* in the U.S. *But what is that system?* As Marxists, we answer that the fact that every advance for black rights has met with a backlash that protracts the oppression of African Americans is not due to irremediable racism of white people in general, but to the racist *capitalist* system which produces and endlessly reproduces black oppression. The answer is to fight for *revolutionary integrationism* through militant *class struggle* against racist reac-

<sup>5</sup> See Charles Brover, “Revolutionary Integrationism vs. ‘Critical Race Theory’” on the CSEW website: <http://edworkersunite.blogspot.com/>

tion. It means a fight for *black liberation through socialist revolution*, which is the last thing that the thoroughly bourgeois liberal pundits of the *1619 Project*<sup>6</sup> and academic CRT theorists would want.

For educators, the task is not to choose between one false “narrative” or another, liberal vs. conservative, but to *fight these witch-hunting gag laws and the bipartisan racist onslaught against public education head-on*. We need to mobilize in the streets and against the capitalist courts and politicians who would regiment students and teachers. Rather than guilt-tripping white teachers, students, parents and workers with “privilege walks” to ferret out “implicit bias” purportedly shared by all, we must deal with the material basis that generates racist ideology. That includes fighting to end racial segregation, tracking and “screening” for elite schools by *uniting teachers, students, parents and workers* in a *union-led fight for quality, integrated public education for all*. That, of course, will be opposed by many liberals, which will make it clear to all, in struggle, who the racists are.

There should be no illusions. Witch hunts in the schools are nothing new. Public education is hardly a zone of “institutional neutrality.” Under capitalism, schools have a class character: public or private, they are *capitalist* institutions, the primary centers of reproducing bourgeois values, principles, and ideologies. As Marx wrote (in *The German Ideology* [1847]) “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.” That is why state education boards go over textbooks with a fine-toothed comb. Any serious effort to teach the real history of racist American capitalism will be met with massive opposition from the rulers, and possibly outlawed. Today, the conservatives are trying to do just that with their caricature of “critical race theory.” Yesterday, liberals and conservatives joined hands to purge anyone they deemed communists. The McCarthyite purges of the 1940s and ’50s were largely successful, but U.S. society has changed and the current racist witch-hunters *can be defeated*.

To combat this onslaught requires a leadership with a program and the determination to fight. The teachers unions, and most “social justice” caucuses in them, lack both. Class Struggle Education Workers is an organization of Marxist educators, working fraternally with the Internationalist Group, that seeks to revolutionize education – and all of society. We fight to provide education that truly serves working people and the emancipation of humanity, still stuck in the Dark Ages of enforced ignorance. We say plainly that such an education is not possible under capitalism, which condemns hundreds of thousands to die of a modern plague, and millions to grinding poverty; where many of our students are homeless; where women and girls are prevented from learning by reactionary thugs who got their start as “holy warriors” for the “free world”; where black youth are executed on the streets by racist police.

Class-conscious educators must be part of the front ranks of the struggle for the liberation of all the oppressed. Is this your fight, too? If so, join us. We’ve got a big job ahead. ■

<sup>6</sup> See “The 1619 Project: Misidentifying the Roots of Racism,” on page 8 of this issue.



# Revolutionary Trotskyism vs. Gramscism: The Programmatic Clash

By Jan Norden

*The following is a translation of the full text of the paper on this subject, an abbreviated version of which was presented at the online event, "Trotsky in Permanence" (<http://encuentrotrotsky.org/>), on 6 August 2021.*

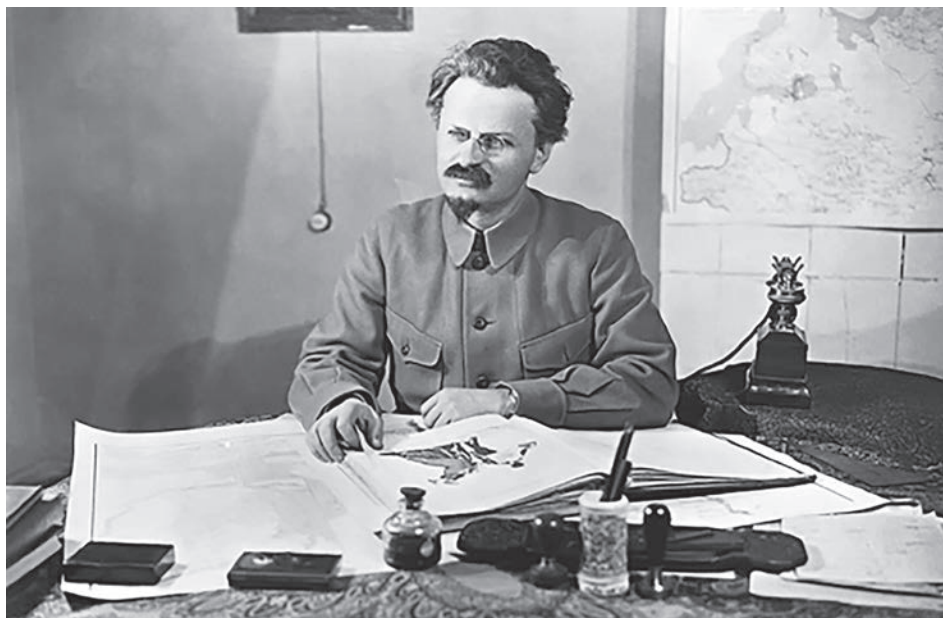
It is well known that for some decades now the thought of Antonio Gramsci has enjoyed all-sided popularity on the international left. Groups and supporters of Stalinist, Eurocommunist, social-democratic, populist, even bourgeois liberal currents, including some who identify with Trotskyism, lay claim to the legacy of the Italian Communist leader. In academia, Gramscian concepts have become common in various disciplines (education, history, sociology, political economy), even in milieus that are hardly radical. In Italy, Gramsci has been adopted as a national icon, one of the fathers of the republic, so much so that even Silvio Berlusconi boasts of the legacy of the Sardinian Marxist who died in Mussolini's prisons.

On the other hand, Gramsci has become the favorite target of the ultra-right, and even of presidents Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil and Donald Trump in the United States. A couple of years ago the Brazilian foreign minister gave a talk at the Heritage Society in Washington, a conservative right-wing think tank, in which he lambasted the danger of "cultural Marxism" in general, and "Antonio Gramsci and drug trafficking" in particular. On his last day in office, Trump's White House issued a document dubbed *The 1776 Report* (named after the year U.S. independence was declared), to orient a cultural war he is trying to unleash in the schools, which blames Gramsci for being the author of identity politics.

So, I want to stress here that those who have embraced Gramsci, and also those who demonize him, do so for their own reasons. Let's leave Trump and Bolsonaro aside and focus on the left-wing supporters of the 1920s Italian theorist and Communist leader.

The first to rediscover Gramsci were the heads of the Italian Communist Party after the revelations about Stalin's crimes made by Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1956. By extolling Gramsci, they could claim a legacy other than that of being unconditional henchmen of the Great Organizer of Defeats, the executioner of the Moscow Trials. In the mid-1960s, Gramsci's writings attracted interest among the New Left in Europe and the United States as a "heterodox" Marxism. After the "French May" of 1968, and more specifically the fact that all the student agitation and factory takeovers by workers did not result in a revolution, there was a new surge of interest in Gramsci among the disaffected *soixante-huitards* (68ers).

Why? They, through characters like the academic Louis Althusser, then a Maoist, were particularly interested in Gramsci's concept of hegemony, and in his proposition that a "subaltern" group – in the



Leon Trotsky

esoteric language so popular among graduate students – that is, in Marxist terms, a sector of the exploited or oppressed, manages to "rise to the stage of political-intellectual hegemony in civil society, and of domination in the state." Gramsci wrote that unlike tsarist Russia, which according to him dominated its subjects almost exclusively by means of state power, Western societies have a fabric of institutions through which the ruling class maintains its dominance by means going beyond police power. In such societies, he argued, before considering the seizure of political power, one would first have to struggle to conquer cultural leadership.

This was very attractive to former leftist students turned academics, who could dedicate themselves to educating a new generation of youth in the direction of breaking the "political-intellectual" hegemony of the bourgeoisie as a stage preliminary to or preparing the revolution. And with that aim, they believed they could take advantage of state initiatives that sought to provide a safety valve for the radicalism of May '68 by founding a whole series of new universities around Paris – Paris VIII (Saint-Denis), Paris X (Nanterre), etc. And not only in France. In Mexico, after each student revolt a new university is founded in which former student leaders are hired – after '68, the Autonomous Metropolitan University (UAM) was founded; after the ten-month strike of 1999-2000, the Autonomous University of Mexico City (UACM) was founded.

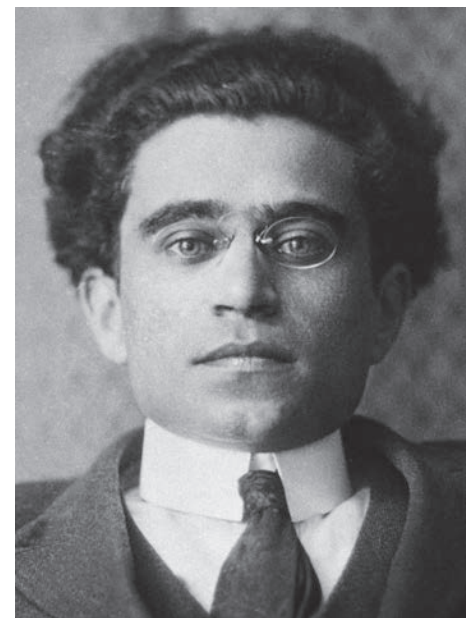
There are two major problems here. In the first place, the following question arises: in this curious "alliance," shall we say, between the Gramscian intellectuals and the state that hired them, who is the rider and who is the horse? In reality, it was the bourgeoisie which profited from the "long march through the institutions" undertaken by the former 68ers, in the phrase of the German New Leftist Rudi Dutschke, who was influenced by Gramsci. And secondly, Gramsci's thesis, and the "praxis" of the post-68 Gramscians, contradicts from top to bottom Marx's thesis, in *The German Ideology* (1847), according to which, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which

is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production...."

In reality, the political-intellectual hegemony of the capitalist ruling class can only be wrested from it in a potentially revolutionary crisis. The conception that there could be a more or less extended preparatory period in which proletarian revolutionaries can gain predominance in society before the seizure of power is profoundly mistaken. In that sense, this differs from the situation of the vanguard of the bourgeoisie that conquered spaces in feudal or semi-feudal societies, such as the philosophers of the Age of Enlightenment. Unable to conquer that hegemony, the academic pseudo-leftists are playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie. The ideological preparation of the coming socialist revolution is mainly the task of the vanguard communist party, through its insertion in the class struggle, in its efforts to form cadres, in dialectical relation with the economic, political and social evolution of capitalist society.

In synthesis, the precept of Gramsci and his supporters of fighting with the aim of conquering the political-intellectual hegemony of society before the revolution is anti-Marxist and doomed to failure. Those who are guided by this scheme serve the bourgeoisie by diverting the struggle towards reformist objectives.

This brings me to the latter-day Gramscians of political tendencies that consider themselves Trotskyist. Here I am referring more than anything to the current called the Trotskyist Fraction. At first glance – and second and third – it is astonishing that groups claiming to represent the politics of Leon Trotsky try to appropriate Gramsci, or to join the contents of these very different traditions, or at least to treat them as complementary. At the programmatic level there are deep contradictions between revolutionary Trotskyism and the body of Gramscian conceptions. It is evident that one cannot speak of a Gramscian doctrine, due to the very nature of his work, which is particularly noticeable in the *Pris-*



Antonio Gramsci

*on Notebooks*, written under repressive conditions that forced linguistic detours, preserved in fragmentary form, with contradictory passages. Thus in some places (the majority) Gramsci distinguishes civil society from the state, while in other essays he refers to civil society as an integral part of the state. Whatever.

This has given rise to multiple humanist, Stalinist-reformist, Eurocommunist, social-democratic, liberal, populist and now Trotskyist interpretations of Antonio Gramsci's ideas. Although one cannot speak of a Gramscian doctrine per se, there are a series of his concepts that have been adopted by various left-wing groups, such as the struggle for hegemony, which we have already mentioned; the struggle to cohere a "new historical bloc," to give priority to a "war of positions" in the West rather than the "war of movement or frontal attack" of the Bolsheviks. All these conceptions contradict the policy of the Bolshevik-Leninists – i.e., the Trotskyists, during the 1930s – and are also contrary to the policy of the early Communist International under Lenin and Trotsky. As a whole, they represent a rightist deviation from Leninism, more or less consistent with the policy of Bukharin's Right Opposition, and in clear opposition to the policy of the Left Opposition.

Let me make a categorical statement: Antonio Gramsci would never have considered himself a Trotskyist, or even that his theoretical-philosophical approaches were compatible with Trotskyism. More than that, each of these conceptions was devised and formulated explicitly *against Trotsky*. Thus, for example, in his *Notebooks*, he posits that "Bronstein's famous theory about the permanent character of the movement" could be posited as "the political reflection ... of the general economic-cultural-social conditions of a country in which the structures of national life are embryonic and loose." He disparagingly calls Bronstein (i.e., Trotsky) a "cosmopolitan," neither truly but only "superficially" Russian or European. He remarks contemptuously of Trotsky that "his theory as such was good neither 15 years earlier nor 15 years later," and

*continued on page 24*



# Nothing In It for Working People and the Oppressed

## Germany: Coalition Dance in the 2021 Election Farce

**No Vote for the Left Party –  
For a Revolutionary  
Internationalist Workers Party!**

*The following article is translated from a September 2021 leaflet of the Internationalistische Gruppe, German section of the League for the Fourth International.*

The last year and a half have been hellish for working people, the poor and oppressed throughout the capitalist world. A deadly plague, COVID-19, that in Germany alone has infected over 4 million people and caused almost 100,000 deaths (out of 230 million cases and almost 5 million dead globally). Stop-and-go lockdowns, millions of workers on short workweeks, hundreds of thousands laid off in the worst recession since 1949. A heat wave in June followed by flash floods in July. An announced military ceremony with torches before the Reichstag to commemorate German imperialism's failed "mission" as junior partner in the bloody U.S. occupation of Afghanistan. Yet the campaign for the September 26 federal elections which will replace federal chancellor Angela Merkel after almost 16 years in office is the same old coalition dance as usual. In this election, there is no choice for the workers.

Too lame to be called a circus, what stands out about these elections is the sinister mediocrity of the candidates of the major parties. The Christian Democrat Union (CDU) lead candidate Armin Laschet, the giggling Catholic reactionary, is only a puppet of investment banker Friedrich Merz, head of BlackRock Germany. Social Democrat (SPD) candidate Olaf Scholz as Hamburg's interior minister ordered the vicious forced feeding of vomit-inducing agents to Africans accused of drug dealing. Then, as mayor, he orchestrated the police-state assault on protesters at the G20 summit in 2017.<sup>1</sup> Later, as finance minister, he claimed ignorance of the massive Wirecard financial scandal.<sup>2</sup> As for the Greens, a 100% bourgeois party, it is so pro-business that it earned a seal of approval from the *Financial Times*, the voice of London bankers. Its candidate Annalena Baer-

<sup>1</sup> See "G20 Summit Police State Terror in Hamburg," *The Internationalist* No. 50, Winter 2017.

<sup>2</sup> A financial scandal of accounting malpractices that led to the 2020 bankruptcy of Wirecard AG, Germany's largest payment processing company.



**Top candidates for federal chancellor in German elections (from left): Annalena Baerbock (Greens), Olaf Scholz (Social Democrats), Armin Laschet (Christian Democrats).**

bock has so far mainly distinguished herself by warmongering talk of "upping pressure on Russia" and taking a "hard line" on China.

With German borders sealed off to refugees, there is an all-party consensus around support for the police and the Bundeswehr (army), subsidies for capitalists and austerity for everyone else. This line-up permits an almost kaleidoscopic variety of possible governmental coalitions, including the free marketeers of the Free Democrats. Scholz can legitimately pose as the continuator of the Merkel era. The contradiction between the bourgeois program of the SPD and its working-class base has been accentuated by decades of coalition, mainly the "grand coalition" with the CDU but also with the other bourgeois parties. After the SPD-Green government of 1998-2005 launched imperialist war in the Balkans and the Hartz IV assault on workers and the unemployed,<sup>3</sup> the official social democrats are in any case not very credible as a "lesser evil." Meanwhile, the fascistic Alternative for Germany (AfD) postures as the only genuine "opposition."

For its part, the alt-social-democratic

<sup>3</sup> In 2004, the Social Democratic-led federal government introduced the Hartz IV reform of social program legislation that introduced forced labor (paying 1 euro per hour) to qualify for welfare payments and steep cuts to unemployment benefits.

Left Party is now begging for a "red-red-green" coalition<sup>4</sup> on the national level, while fearing it could drop below the 5% cutoff point or three constituency seats necessary for representation in the Bundestag. After abstaining in the parliamentary vote on retroactively authorizing additional troops to assist in the departure of German imperialist forces from Afghanistan, the party tops have now rushed out an "Immediate Program" which buries its previous verbal opposition to NATO and leaves the door open to supporting future military interventions, especially if the troops wear UN blue helmets. The Left Party proposes a 13 euros (= US\$15) per hour minimum wage (Scholz is offering 12 euros) but co-chair Janine Wissler underlines that even this is open to negotiation, etc., etc.

What this would mean has amply demonstrated in Berlin, where an earlier "red-red" Senate sold off the public housing that a Berlin referendum being held in conjunction with the September 26 elections now proposes to return to municipal ownership (see "Berlin Referendum: Only Socialist Revolution Can Provide Housing for All," p. 12). The current coalition government of the city-state (the Senate) – under a Green transportation senator – is now privatizing

<sup>4</sup> "Red-red-green" coalition = SPD, Left Party and Greens.

the S-Bahn (Berlin's historic elevated railway). The red-red-green Senate has attacked the workers and oppressed again and again in the service of capitalist austerity. Workers at both Vivantes and Charité hospitals are now striking to raise their wages to the level of other public-sector workers. This is because the cleaning, transportation and food services were spun off into for-profit subsidiaries by a previous "left" government in 2002. The entire labor movement should be mobilized to defend the striking hospital workers.

By putting up Franziska Giffey (who has declared herself opposed to expropriations) as lead candidate, the Berlin SPD is proclaiming its opposition to the housing referendum (for expropriation of the large real estate companies) and underlining its support to the racist crusade against "criminal clans" which alibies both police and fascist terror.<sup>5</sup> The Left Party must also assume responsibility for the police raids on the shisha bars and the continuous repression of leftists and immigrants as part of the ruling coalition. Meanwhile, in Leipzig, when thousands of anti-fascist protesters marched on September 18 to demand freedom for Lina E. – who has been framed by the police and its Soko Linx (special commission on "left-wing violence") squad, and is innocent of any crime – the local Left Party distanced itself from its city council member Juliane Nagel, under vicious attack by the bourgeois press for registering the demo.

With the Left Party losing any kind of credibility as an opposition party, the fake "revolutionaries" buried inside it or buzzing around it are hard-put to find any convincing arguments for voting for it. In a September 7 statement titled "Election Program Chucked" Sascha Staničić, spokesman for the Sozialistische Organisation Solidarität - SOL and the Anti-Capitalist Left tendency in the Left Party, laments that Wissler & Co. have trampled on the party's congresses, program and membership. This, of course, is standard operating procedure for social-

<sup>5</sup> The Berlin police have repeatedly attacked immigrant "clans" on the pretext of a war on drugs, while fascist thugs regularly vandalize immigrants' businesses, housing and cars. See "Germany: The 'Neukölln Complex': State Apparatus Complicit with Fascists," *The Internationalist* No. 63, April-June 2021



**Left Party co-chair Janine Wissler.**



**Striking clinic workers of the Vivantes Hospital in August. All Berlin labor must stand with the hospital workers.**



# Expropriate Real Estate Corporations Without Compensation – But Only Socialist Revolution Can Provide Housing for All

## Berlin Housing Referendum

The following article is translated from a September 2021 *Internationalistische Gruppe* leaflet.

Berlin 2021: Skyrocketing rent, students can't find housing, people forced out of the city because they can't afford to live here. Some 8,000-10,000 homeless living on the street, while 100,000-plus apartments stand empty. The capital and many other cities around Germany are in the throes of a real housing crisis. Behind it are the real estate corporations that are making a killing from speculation. The tenants movement has repeatedly brought tens of thousands into the streets to defend rent control, and now for the initiative for "expropriation of Deutsche Wohnen & Co.," which owns 114,000 apartments in Berlin, along with Vonovia (43,000), Akelius and other real estate sharks that together control 240,000 of the city's 1.5 million housing units.

In the Berlin referendum on September 26, voting "yes" in favor of the expropriation of corporations that own more than 3,000 housing units will be a protest statement against these parasites. It will also serve to test Article 15 of the Constitution, which allows for "socializing," or transferring to public ownership of "land, natural resources, and means of production." Remarkably, this is first such attempt in the history of the Federal Republic. But the referendum is not on a specific law, so even if it passes, it would depend on the bourgeois Greens and/or the reformist Social Democrats (SPD) and Left Party to implement it (or, more likely, water it down). And, of course, there is absolutely no guarantee that the capitalist courts won't arbitrarily reshuffle federalist "principles" to invalidate the results of the referendum.

The decision of the Federal Constitutional Court in April cancelling the Berlin rent cap law was already an attack on all working people and tenants in Berlin. As a result, tenants have been hit with increased monthly rents of hundreds of euros, and in some cases now owe back rent amounting to thousands of euros. According to the high court, the 2020 Berlin rent cap

democratic parties everywhere. But SOL<sup>6</sup> has a "clever" plan to retain a few voters who might otherwise migrate to the SPD or Greens: the Left Party could give parliamentary support to an SPD-Green government without formally participating in it.

From outside the party, a September 8 ArbeiterInnenmacht<sup>7</sup> leaflet warns of attacks on social programs from the CDU, SPD and Greens. As for the Left Party, it says that this party is being "held hostage" in the Berlin Senate. With this alibi, ArbeiterInnenmacht praises the Left Party's "progressive" demands and lists all the nice things the party could do in parliament. The very next day, an article on the Left's "Immediate Program" admits that the party has become an append-

<sup>6</sup> SOL is affiliated with the Committee for a Workers International led by Peter Taaffe.

<sup>7</sup> ArbeiterInnenmacht is affiliated with the League for the Fifth International of the British Workers Power group.



Tens of thousands have marched in support of referendum proposal to expropriate Deutsche Wohnen and other real estate corporations, in April 2021.

was rendered null and void by the national "rent control" law of 2015. This law permits individuals in selected urban areas to challenge rent increases of 10% above the average increases in rent there. This feeble law looks very much like a preemptive strike to block any more effective rent control measures – which is no doubt why the Christian Democrat (CDU) and SPD government parties supported it.

This is not the first such attack by the Constitutional Court on Berliners. In October 2006, it ruled that the city could not receive federal subsidies until it had further slashed educational and cultural spending and sold off public housing. The city government of the SPD and PDS (forerunner to the Left Party) hastened to comply. Soon after its creation in 1951, the court outlawed the KPD (Communist Party of Germany) and reaffirmed repressive laws against homosexuals. It later overturned the 1992 abortion rights law, upholding the ban on abortion of §218 of the criminal code (while accepting that it is in the discretion of parliament not to punish abortion in the first trimester). And it has given a green light to German imperialism's military adventures abroad

age of the SPD/Greens, concluding by demanding that members fight to return to the party's original pale pink program. But this is just window dressing for its policy of "critical support to the Left Party in the elections (*ArbeiterInnenmacht*, 20 September).

The Revolutionäre Internationalistische Organisation (R.I.O.)<sup>8</sup>, in turn, is positioning itself slightly to the left, calling to cast an invalid vote in the election. R.I.O.'s chameleon-like character is expressed on the one hand in its call for opposition groups in the Left Party to fight against government participation, and on the other, its calls for a new broad electoral party a few steps to the left of the Lefts. Such a party already exists in France – the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (New Anti-Capitalist Party) – which as it sidles up to the

<sup>8</sup> R.I.O. is the German affiliate of the Trotskyist Faction, led by the Argentine Partido de Trabajadores Socialistas (Socialist Workers Party).

In short, the Constitutional Court is not a neutral arbiter of "justice" but the defender of capital and enforcer of capitalist rule. Hence to raise the slogan "No confidence in the Federal Constitutional Court," as the Revolutionäre Internationalistische Organisation (R.I.O.) does in a call for an April 21 public meeting is to claim that this central organ of the German bourgeois state is merely unreliable, rather than a direct representative of the class enemy.

Rent control has existed in various forms, at different times and places in Germany and elsewhere as an aspect of the capitalist welfare state. It is a minimal reform that can benefit the working class analogous to the minimum wage. Nothing more and nothing less. It is perfectly legitimate to fight for rent control, to defend and extend it, but without pretending it is any kind of solution to the housing crisis – which it isn't. The SPD/Green/Left government had no plan B for after the Constitutional Court decision knocking down the rent cap, and did not contest its verdict.

This exposed the Left Party's role in prettifying the red-red-green coalition, as the rent cap was its justification for par-

"left" populist Mélenchon<sup>9</sup> has now driven out R.I.O.'s French comrades.

In its election coverage, R.I.O. writes "We Need Revolutionary Deputies in Parliament – Like in Argentina" (22 September) and "Why We Need a Left That Is Financially Independent of the State" (12 September). Yet its Argentine mother party, the PTS, has campaigned for years as part of the Workers and Left Front (FIT, now FIT-Unidad), an electoral coalition with a thoroughly reformist program, and is very financially dependent on, in fact lives off of the financial subsidies and parliamentary deputies' salaries it receives from the Argentine capitalist state. For details, see our article "Argentina's Left Front: A Reformist

<sup>9</sup> Jean-Luc Mélenchon is head of the left-populist party La France Insoumise (France Unbowed). See "The Opportunist Left Hitched to the Yellow Vests," *The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019.

ticipating in this racist, repressive capitalist government. To call for a national campaign for a new rent cap law, and to denounce solely the CDU as the party of the real estate corporations, as the Left Party is now doing, is to cover up the dirty role of the SPD and the Left Party itself in previously privatizing municipal housing, and in carrying out tenant evictions and evictions of squatters now as part of the city-state government.

So what is to be done now in the face of the rent increases and demands for payment of back rent? The government has promised financial assistance to those unable to pay the increased rents. There is however, no information as to how this assistance is to be provided. Sozialistische Alternative (SAV) conjures up the fantasy world of a "left government" that would encourage tenants to "refuse to pay the back rent they underpaid" and that would "pledge to finance back payments and legal costs from public funds" ([www.sozialismus.info](http://www.sozialismus.info), 21 April). Similar sentiments from the Sozialistische Organisation Solidarität (SOL), which envisions a truly "left government" that would guarantee that it would "assume the risk for legal penalties or back payments" (*Solidarität*, 18 April). Don't bet on it. Of course, the SAV and SOL both call for voting for the Left Party, as always.

Of the so-called "far left" groups, only ArbeiterInnenmacht actually calls for a rent strike. But while envisioning a mass tenants movement "based on the mass organizations of the workers movement," it underscores that this would be to "pressure the incoming state government." Thus it calls to "demand that the Left Party make socialization a condition for negotiating a new coalition," along with pressuring the "left" wings of the SPD and the bourgeois Greens (*Neue Internationale*, September 2021). So instead of opposing this class-collaborationist coalition on principle, ArbeiterInnenmacht wants a tenant-friendly popular front. And while saying "Expropriation? Sure! Compensation? No Thanks!" in the fine print it calls to "keep compensation as low as possible."

*continued on page 30*

Electoral Cartel" (*The Internationalist* No. 55, Winter 2019).

All of these "socialist" groups are intertwined with the Left Party in various ways, and their differing tactical recipes are all oriented to this reformist party, either in a vain attempt to push it to the left or to rip off a chunk of it. When they even mention "socialism," what they mean is a social-democratic government of the capitalist state. The Internationalistische Gruppe, in contrast, insists that a *socialist revolution* that establishes proletarian power will not come from endless electioneering for the bourgeois parliament, but by fighting for a revolutionary program through our own working-class organizations – unions, factory committees, defense guards and ultimately workers councils. The starting point is to cohere the nucleus of a Bolshevik-internationalist party, as part of the struggle to reforge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International. ■



# Afghanistan...

continued from page 1

wages of “ghost soldiers.” Troops were fighting for the pay – which was low and often did not arrive – facing fighters prepared to die for Islam. A mercenary army is at a strategic disadvantage against a motivated force fighting for a cause – a disadvantage that could only be overcome by vastly superior fire power. With the U.S. withdrawal, that was now gone. And, of course, the Taliban were sponsored by Pakistan, about which little is being said these days.

The U.S. invasion and occupation of Afghanistan was billed as a war against terrorism, and reprisal for the 11 September 2001 (9/11) attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon. In reality, it and the subsequent invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 were part of a war for U.S. imperialist global domination. They were an attempt to lock in the “New World Order” that George Bush I had proclaimed at the time of the 1991-92 counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union. Even before the first U.S. bombs began falling as George Bush II invaded Afghanistan, *amid the intense hyper-patriotic frenzy whipped up in the media, we called immediately to defeat U.S. imperialism and to defend Afghanistan and Iraq.* In an article published three days after the 9/11 attack, we declared:

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

*“The Afghan hell was made in U.S.A. We demand: U.S. get out.”* [emphasis in original]

–“U.S. Whips Up Imperialist War Frenzy, Drives Toward Police State” (14 September 2001), reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001.

## Afghans Slaughtered for U.S. Imperialist Hegemony

The imperialist occupiers unleashed a slaughter that between 2001 and 2021 took a quarter million lives in Afghanistan and over the border in Pakistan. This includes an estimated 47,000 civilians in Afghanistan and 24,000 in Pakistan, as well as 66,000 members of the Afghan army and police and 51,000 “opposition fighters.” In addition, 3,600 U.S. and allied troops died, as well as some 3,800-plus contractors (mercenaries). If the signature methods of U.S. mass murder in Vietnam were napalming villages and B-52 carpet bombing, in Afghanistan it was the “pinpoint” drone strikes, which regularly hit wedding parties, funerals, farmers in the fields, passengers on buses, shopkeepers and children in bazaars. And from 2009 to 2017 all strikes were personally approved by Barack Obama.

Over the years, U.S. rulers’ purported objectives in the occupation of Afghanistan shifted repeatedly. At the outset, it was supposedly all about Osama bin Laden, the Saudi Arabian founder of Al Qaeda who was declared to be the mastermind behind the 9/11 attack. Bin Laden was assassinated by a kill squad dispatched by Democratic president Barack Obama in May 2011,<sup>2</sup> so the emphasis shifted to “humanitarian”<sup>2</sup> “U.S./NATO Murder, Inc.,” *The Internationalist* No. 33, Summer 2011.

Stefani Reynolds for The New York Times



On July 8, U.S. president Joe Biden declared, “There’s going to be no circumstance where you see people being lifted off the roof of an embassy of the United States in Afghanistan.”

imperialism, democratic “nation-building” with an emphasis on “empowering women.” When the “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria” proclaimed a caliphate in 2014, the U.S. extended the imperialist terror war to Syria, and stepped up bombing against the Taliban in Afghanistan. But as the Afghan puppet army was unable to defeat the Islamists, the U.S., first under Obama and then under Trump, began talks with the Taliban seeking a negotiated settlement.

What kept the U.S. in Afghanistan for 20 years was not “mission creep,” unclear objectives or outright lies, although there was plenty of all of that, laid out in detail in *The Afghanistan Papers* project of the *Washington Post*.<sup>3</sup> There were endless facile projections, from Bush II’s assertion that “The days of the Taliban are over” (August 2006) to Biden’s “the Afghan government and leadership . . . clearly have the capacity to sustain the government in place” and “the likelihood that there’s going to be the Taliban overrunning everything and owning the whole country is highly unlikely” (8 July 2021).<sup>4</sup> But the underlying reason for the occupation of Afghanistan was U.S. imperialism’s pursuit of global military domination, to make up for its declining economic clout. The Middle East was and is a key link in that geopolitical strategy.

Even though under Obama, Trump and Biden, the White House and Pentagon have sought to “pivot to Asia” – i.e., target China – the strategic importance of the Middle East has not changed. There are currently 45,000 U.S. troops stationed in bases and on aircraft carriers around the Middle East. In addition, the U.S. employed large numbers of mercenaries in Afghanistan, some 22,500 last year (compared to 4,000 U.S. troops), two-thirds of them non-U.S. citizens. In the nine years from 2011 to 2019, almost \$97 billion were paid to “contractors” in Afghanistan,<sup>5</sup> even more than to the Afghan National Army. We demand: **all U.S. troops, military/security forces, agencies (CIA, DEA, USAID, etc.) and mercenaries out of the Middle East, now!**

<sup>3</sup> “The Afghanistan Papers: A secret history of the war,” *Washington Post*, 9 December 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Glenn Greenwald, “The U.S. Government Lied for Two Decades About Afghanistan” (16 August).

<sup>5</sup> Congressional Research Service, “Department of Defense Contractor and Troop Levels in Afghanistan and Iraq: 2007-2020 (updated 22 February 2021).”

*The flight of the Afghan puppet government and the exit of U.S. and NATO forces is a major defeat for the imperialist overlords who imagine themselves masters of the world. This should be greeted by opponents of imperialism everywhere.* The fact that this defeat has been spectacularly chaotic is all to the good. Republican spokesmen in the U.S. Congress have lamented that this will embolden China, the bureaucratically deformed workers state that

is the main target of the bipartisan imperialist war drive. Even better. The *Washington Post* (16 August) opined that the collapse of Afghan military forces “will go down as perhaps the worst debacle in the history of proxy warfare.” And the fact that this disaster for imperialism was brought about by Democrat Biden and not the Republican pyromaniac Trump is another plus. The cultivated image of imperialist invincibility has taken a huge hit.

## Taliban in Power: Reactionary Threat to the Oppressed

But the victory of the reactionary Islamist Taliban is no win for the oppressed. Images of helicopters lifting off from U.S. embassy grounds during the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the fall of Kabul in 2021 have made a superficial parallel between these two defeats for imperialism. However, on Vietnam revolutionary Trotskyists hailed the victory of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front. As we wrote then:

“It means the overthrow of capitalist rule in South Vietnam. a historic conquest for the working people of the entire world and one which must be unconditionally defended by class-conscious workers against imperialist attack.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Workers Vanguard* (9 May 1975), newspaper of the Spartacist League, then the voice of authentic Trotskyism, which is continued today by the League for the Fourth International (LFI).



Taliban fighters enter Kabul on August 15 on Humvee captured from government forces. The collapse of the puppet army before the Taliban offensive caught U.S. by surprise.

Jim Huylebroek for The New York Times



the growth of a layer of middle-class professional women promoting the feminist goal of “diversity,” this was a long way from achieving any semblance of equality. Under the imperialist puppet government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as under the Taliban’s Islamic Emirate, women face a deeply patriarchal society in which they are denied the most basic rights.<sup>7</sup> While the degree may vary, this is true of any Islamist regime where sharia law prevails.<sup>8</sup> In bourgeois-democratic countries, too, women’s oppression is inherent under capitalism. All the more in societies where equal rights are outright denied, a socialist revolution is needed to liberate women.

### Imperialists Sponsored Women-Hating Mujahedin

The Western media are full of references to the 20-year invasion and occupation of Afghanistan as “America’s longest war.” But the Afghan peoples have faced more than 40 years of uninterrupted war instigated by U.S. imperialism. The wars were begun with the launching of “Operation Cyclone” in 1979, the CIA covert campaign that financed, armed, trained and advised Islamist *mujahedin* (soldiers of god) to combat the leftist government of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Although hardly “communist,” as they were labeled in the Western press, the petty-bourgeois modernizers of the PDPA were allied with the Soviet Union. Their program of a modest land reform and secular education infuriated the khans (tribal leaders), mullahs and *zamindari* (landowners), particularly in the Pushtun areas of the South.

Soon after the PDPA-led Democratic Republic of Afghanistan began these reforms,

<sup>7</sup> In 2012, Afghan puppet president Hamid Karzai endorsed a “Code of Conduct” of the Ulema Council, the top clerical body in Afghanistan, which explicitly rejected the equality of women and men, declaring women “secondary,” while decreeing that Muslim women had to wear burqas, couldn’t leave the home without a male escort or mingle with men in schools, markets or offices. See: “Hamid Karzai backs clerics’ move to limit Afghan women’s rights,” *Guardian*, 6 March 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Contrary to Muslim-hating bigots like Donald Trump, the Islamic religion is not incompatible with bourgeois-democratic rights for society as a whole. *Islamism*, or political Islam, however, is a doctrine holding that Islamic law (sharia) should govern society. Thus 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 regime in which religious doctrine and authority are supreme, and thus are inherently anti-democratic.

in mid-1979 U.S. president Jimmy Carter issued a covert “finding” to finance the reactionary religious gangs. After a brief period of “détente” after the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, this was the start of Cold War II. Carter’s national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski later said this “knowingly increased the probability” that the Soviet leaders would be forced to intervene to prop up the endangered Afghan government. During the ensuing war that lasted from 1980 until Soviet forces withdrew in 1989, U.S.-backed Islamic fundamentalists repeatedly shot “communist teachers” in the countryside for the “crime” of educating young girls. It was the largest, longest and most expensive (\$6 billion) CIA covert op in history, during which it hooked up (via the Pakistani intelligence agency) with Osama bin Laden, to build camps for the anti-communist *mujahedin*.

Under the PDPA, there was a considerable expansion of women’s rights. A cap was placed on bride price,<sup>9</sup> forced marriage and marriage of girls under age 16 were banned. Faced with 99% female illiteracy, a mass literacy campaign was launched and education was declared compulsory for boys and girls. The 1987 constitution of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan declared “men and women have equal rights and duties before the law.” Unveiled women worked in factories, attended universities and technical institutes, became teachers, led Revolutionary Defense Group militias. By 1989, according to the Afghan Women’s Council, there were over 7,000 women in higher education, 233,000 girls in school and 22,000 female teachers.<sup>10</sup> When the PDPA regime was overthrown in 1992 by the U.S.-backed Islamic fundamentalists, all this was wiped out. Of course, there wasn’t a peep of protest about this in the Western media, *nor from the opportunist left*.

### The Fall of Kabul, 2021: “Left” Tails of the Imperialist Occupation

Fast forward to 2021 and what do we hear from the left on the fall of Kabul to the Taliban? It is universally recognized that the outcome represents a stinging defeat for the U.S. and its allies. The imperialists themselves admit this. But much of the left blamed the debacle on U.S. *policies*, not the imperialist occupation itself. The International Socialist Alternative (ISA) declared in an 18 August statement: “If instead imperialism had assist-

<sup>9</sup> The Islamic *mahr*, which is the amount paid to the bride by the groom at the time of marriage.

<sup>10</sup> Valentine Moghadam, “Fundamentalism and the Woman Question in Afghanistan,” in Lawrence Kaplan, ed., *Fundamentalism in Comparative Perspective* (University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).



**Men carry coffin of one of 30 farmers killed by U.S. drone strike in Khogyani district, Nangarhar province, Afghanistan in September 2019. Another 40 were wounded. They were resting around a bonfire after work.**

ed in developing a proper economy, many of those engaged in the drugs trade or smuggling (Afghanistan’s main sources of foreign trade) or who support the Taliban for economic reasons could now be engaged in socially useful work, and fundamentalism could have been deprived of a base.” Plus, as in everything the ISA writes these days, it adds whole paragraphs denouncing Chinese “imperialism” – again in line with Washington.

The International Marxist Tendency (IMT) headlines, “Afghanistan: the cynical betrayal of US imperialism” (*In Defence of Marxism*, 16 August). *Betrayal?* U.S. imperialism is the *enemy* – who did they betray? The IMT is appealing to the many tens of thousands who bought into the imperialist claim that, as the IMT put it, the purpose of the occupation was “to root out Islamic fundamentalism, and build a modern, democratic nation.” It also slams the puppet politicians’ “treacherous failure to put up any resistance” to the Taliban. Of the 6,000 U.S. troops dispatched to the Afghan capital, it laments: “But the sole intention of sending troops to Kabul is not to fight the Taliban, but to facilitate the evacuation of up to 20,000 US citizens and personnel trapped in Kabul.” So U.S. troops should be fighting the Taliban?! What social-imperialist claptrap!

Like the ISA, the IMT is in reality not opposing imperialism, much less fighting to defeat it, but tailing after and stoking the illusions of the Afghan urban petty-bourgeoisie in the imperialist occupiers and their flunkies. No surprise there: both groups come out of the British Labourite Militant tendency. Today they express concern about the fate of “the workers, the poor, women, and all others who stand to suffer at the hands of the Taliban.” But in the 1980s, when the Soviet Union intervened to stop the CIA-sponsored Islamist gangs on the warpath against the PDPA’s land reform and women’s rights laws, Militant denounced the Soviets. It argued that “Any gains achieved through defending measures to abolish landlordism and capitalism in Afghanistan ... would be completely outweighed by the adverse effects on the consciousness of the working class internationally.”<sup>11</sup> Meaning that supporting Soviet intervention would clash with their social-democratic Labour left milieu.

Now with tens of thousands of Af-  
<sup>11</sup> “Afghanistan and the Russians,” *Militant*, 10 February 1989.

ghans seeking to escape from Taliban rule, the question of Afghan refugees is front and center. Refugee agencies estimate “at least 300,000 Afghans are in imminent danger of being targeted by the Taliban for associating with Americans and U.S. efforts to stabilize Afghanistan” (*New York Times*, 25 August). The internet media outlet Left Voice in a Facebook posting (18 August) called to “open the borders and give a dignified welcome to anyone who wishes to take refuge.” Anyone? The photo with the posting is a now-famous shot of the inside of a C-17 Globemaster cargo aircraft with some “640 Afghans” on board, plus children. But all of those “Afghan civilians” were *pre-approved* by the U.S., meaning they were collaborators who worked with the U.S. occupiers. And one can see from the photo that they are overwhelmingly men.

There are, to be sure, tens of thousands of Afghans who had some connection with the puppet government, U.S. or other international agencies. Just about every woman who worked with an NGO (non-governmental organization) was at least indirectly on the U.S. payroll, whether she was aware of it or not. Clearly most were not oppressors of the Afghan peoples. On the other hand, there are the thousands of “translators.” Who did they translate for? For the search teams that smashed into Afghan homes at night and interrogated the terrified occupants about the whereabouts of suspected Taliban, who if caught would be murdered? How about translators at the infamous Bagram prison where inmates were tortured? Or the 20,000+ mercenaries working for the Pentagon in Afghanistan? They are imperialist collaborators with blood on their hands.

The slogan of “open borders” is utopian liberal nonsense: there will be borders even after a socialist revolution, under a workers state. The class question is key. After the fall of the South Vietnamese regime in 1975, when Washington brought 125,000 of its flunkies to the U.S., far from calling to let in all refugees, we declared: “No Asylum for Indochinese Reactionaries!” Instead, we called for asylum for Chilean refugees from the bloody Pinochet dictatorship.<sup>12</sup> Revolutionary Marxists do not propose a general immigration policy for imperialist countries, which will always be racist and exclusionary. In particular crises, we have called for refuge to those fleeing the depredations  
<sup>12</sup> *Workers Vanguard*, 9 May 1975.

CNN



**Rogues’ gallery of mass murderers: George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, Joe Biden. Republican and Democratic U.S. presidents commanded bipartisan imperialist wars killing 240,000 in Afghanistan, 600,000 in Iraq.**



# Trotskyists Said Hail Red Army in Afghanistan in 1980 – Defend Afghanistan, Defeat U.S. Imperialism in 2001

# Afghanistan and the Left

At the time of the Soviet intervention in 1980, the then-Trotskyist Spartacist tendency called to “*Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!*” While “in no way plac[ing] political confidence in the Kremlin or the left-nationalists in Kabul,” we called to “Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!”<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the vast majority of the left *joined the imperialist denunciation of a supposed “Soviet invasion.”* Pseudo-Trotskyist Tariq Ali called for “Soviet Troops Out of Afghanistan!” Meanwhile, Afghan Islamists and Turkish Maoists launched a near-fatal knife attack on a forum of our German comrades. While we stood for the Trotskyist program of military defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state, *the chorus of “left” anti-Sovietism howled with the imperialist wolves.*

When Soviet troops pulled out in 1989, anti-Soviet “socialists” like Tony Cliff’s Socialist Workers Party in Britain cheered that “The Mojahedin victory will encourage the opponents of Russian rule everywhere in the USSR and Eastern Europe” (*Socialist Worker*, 4 February 1989). That it did, fueling counterrevolution throughout the Soviet bloc that led to the rollback of women’s rights and the ravages of restored capitalist rule. Others took equivocal positions. The response of genuine Trotskyists was counterposed: we denounced the Kremlin’s withdrawal as a “cold-blooded betrayal of the Afghan and Soviet peoples,” warned that the “right of women to read, freedom from the veil, freedom from the tyranny of the mullahs and the landlords” was in danger and made an “urgent offer” to the Afghan government that we were prepared to “organize an international brigade to fight to the death in defense of these rights in Afghanistan.”<sup>2</sup>

There followed the 1992 overthrow of the PDPA regime by the U.S.-sponsored *mujahedin*; the imposition of sharia law and rollback of women’s rights, land reform and other democratic gains amid a bloody civil war between the different Islamist factions; the 1996 victory of the Taliban promising to put an end to the chaos and corruption; and in 2001 the U.S.-led imperialist invasion in reprisal for the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International declared, that while

<sup>1</sup> “Hail Red Army!” *Workers Vanguard* No. 247, 11 January 1980.

<sup>2</sup> See “Battle for Afghanistan” and “PDC: For Internationalist Military Support to Afghan Government!” *Workers Vanguard* No. 471, 17 February 1989. The Afghan government, fearful of angering Washington, refused our offer.

“Proletarian revolutionaries categorically oppose the indiscriminate terror used by the hijackers ... in grotesquely taking the lives of several thousand ordinary working people,” we immediately called, in a 14 September 2001 statement, to “Defeat Imperialism!” and “Defend Afghanistan and Iraq!”

The response of the opportunist left was instead overwhelmingly to join the outcry against terrorism,” and to avoid a forthright denunciation of the imperialist war. The Committee for a Workers International (CWI) wrote in a 14 September 2001 statement that “the US ‘security’ agencies were facing the wrong way, still fighting a version of the ‘cold war’”; it complained of “inept leadership” by the Bush II administration and harped not on imperialist terror but on “the futility of terrorism.” Socialist Alternative (SAIt), the CWI’s U.S. affiliate, headlined its statement (18 September 2001) “End the Cycle of Terrorism,” and declared: “Americans are rightfully and understandably angry and are demanding some sort of justice. But what will military retaliation and an invasion of another country actually accomplish?”

These and other opportunist left tendencies were calling on the imperialists to adopt different policies, rather than opposing imperialism outright. For its part, the by-now ex-Trotskyist Spartacist League and its International Communist League (SL/ICL) in its 14 September 2001 statement on the 9/11 attacks, likewise highlighted its opposition to “terrorism” while pointedly *not* calling for defense of Iraq or the defeat of imperialism. When it did get around to calling to defend Afghanistan a month later, the centrist (and today seemingly moribund and increasingly deranged) SL/ICL rabidly attacked the Internationalist Group, which was founded by long-time leading Spartacist cadres, for upholding the Leninist call to defeat imperialism.

In a monstrous lie, the SL’s *Workers Vanguard* (26 October 2001) accused the IG of “Playing the Counterfeit Card of Anti-Americanism,” and appealing to “‘Third World’ nationalists for whom the ‘only good

American is a dead American”” (see our article, “ICL Refuses to Call for Defeat of U.S. Imperialism, ‘Anti-American’ Baites the Internationalist Group,” in *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001). Particularly amid the war hysteria at the time, this grotesque smear amounted to a set-up for violent attacks and/or government repression against us. It was also a foretaste of the SL/ICL’s betrayal when it supported the U.S. invasion of Haiti following the 2010 earthquake, claiming the occupying troops were just providing disaster relief. After months of lambasting the IG/LFI, it admitted that its line was social-patriotic.

As we wrote in September 2001 at the outset of the U.S. war on Afghanistan, “Amid the hysteria, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International call to stand on the side of the victims of imperialism” (*The Internationalist* No. 12). And as we underlined when Democrat Barack Obama extended the U.S. terror war from Afghanistan and Iraq to Syria, after it had spawned the Islamic State:

“As Leninists and Trotskyists, we stand with the oppressed fighting to free their lands from colonial and imperial domina-



tion. This includes siding with the struggles even of reactionary-led forces fighting against imperialism such as Marx and Engels did in the 1857 Sepoy Revolt against British rule in India (see our article “Marx on the Sepoy Revolt,” *The Internationalist* No. 21, Summer 2005); as Marx’s follower William Morris did with the 1880s Mahdi revolt against the British in Sudan; and Lenin did with the 1900 Boxer Rebellion in China (see “Lenin on the ‘Boxer Rebellion’,” *The Internationalist* No. 21). ”

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

We also noted Leon Trotsky’s call in 1936 to defend feudal Ethiopia, even under the slave-owning emperor Haile Selassie, against Italian imperialism.

At the same time, we emphasized that our struggle against imperialism must be waged with proletarian means, calling for “working-class action against the war drive and its consequences for labor,” as we wrote in 2001. The next year we called on U.S. West Coast dock workers in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) to “hot cargo” (refuse to handle) war material being shipped to the Middle East. With the invasion of Iraq, we called for workers strikes against the war. As the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan dragged on, we called for this, year after year, until in 2008 the ILWU called a May Day strike to “Stop the War in Iraq and Afghanistan” that shut down every port on the Pacific Coast, which the IG played an important role in building.<sup>3</sup> ■

<sup>3</sup> See “May Day Strike Against the War Shuts Down All U.S. West Coast Ports,” *The Internationalist* No. 27, May-June 2008.



Followers of pseudo-Trotskyist Ernest Mandel (above) and renegade from Trotskyism Tony Cliff agreed with the imperialists in 1980: “Soviet Troops Out!”

of imperialism, as in the case of Syrian, Haitian and Central American refugees. Here, where one oppressor regime is replaced by another, *Marxists do not call for refuge to operatives of the imperialist occupation which we called to defeat.*

## Afghanistan and the Struggle for International Socialist Revolution

Afghanistan has been rent by conflict almost since the country was founded in the 1700s. This is partly because it lies astride the border between Central and

South Asia, and has been fought over by the dominant powers in each region. It is also because it is an artificial state: there is no historically consolidated Afghan nation, or even a single Afghan people. A Pushtun majority in the south (about 50% of the total population) has historically viewed itself as the rightful rulers of the country, a view not shared by the Central Asian Tajik and Uzbek peoples to the north or by Shiite Hazaras in the center and west. The Pushtuns (earlier called Pathans) are the largest tribally organized people in the

world, numbering 63 million, with three-quarters living in Pakistan. The Taliban are almost exclusively Pushtun, and their staying power reflects this regional base.

What will happen next in Afghanistan is unknowable at this point. Ahmed Rashid, author of *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (2001), has noted that the evident contradiction between the talk of moderation and inclusion from historic Taliban leaders and the actions of the fighters reflects an internal social division. The elders have been living in Pakistan, have become

more educated, have families and businesses there, while the younger commanders in the field who Rashid describes as “much more fiercely Islamic and radical. Many of these commanders have been in Guantanamo or they’ve spent years in American jails.”<sup>13</sup> However, unlike in the late 1990s when there was barely a Taliban government, they will now rule over a country with a greatly expanded urban population with education and modern communications.

Having lost the war, U.S. imperialism

<sup>13</sup> National Public Radio, 15 August.





Taliban occupy the presidential palace in Kabul, August 15.

will almost certainly try to reach an accommodation with the new Afghan rulers, if only to limit the influence of Russia and China. The generals who run Pakistan will continue to back the Taliban, to capitalize on their influence with their clients, and to ward off any impulse to form a “Pushtunistan” that could split their country. There could be local rebellions, but they will have a hard time finding powerful sponsors or secure supply lines. Protests could break out in urban areas, as has already sporadically occurred in Kabul and Jalalabad. But Afghanistan is still an overwhelmingly rural country, with three-quarters or more of the population living in abject poverty. Now with the cutoff of the billions of dollars a year the U.S. pumped into Afghanistan, a huge economic crisis is virtually inevitable.

As we wrote at the time of the U.S. invasion in 2001:

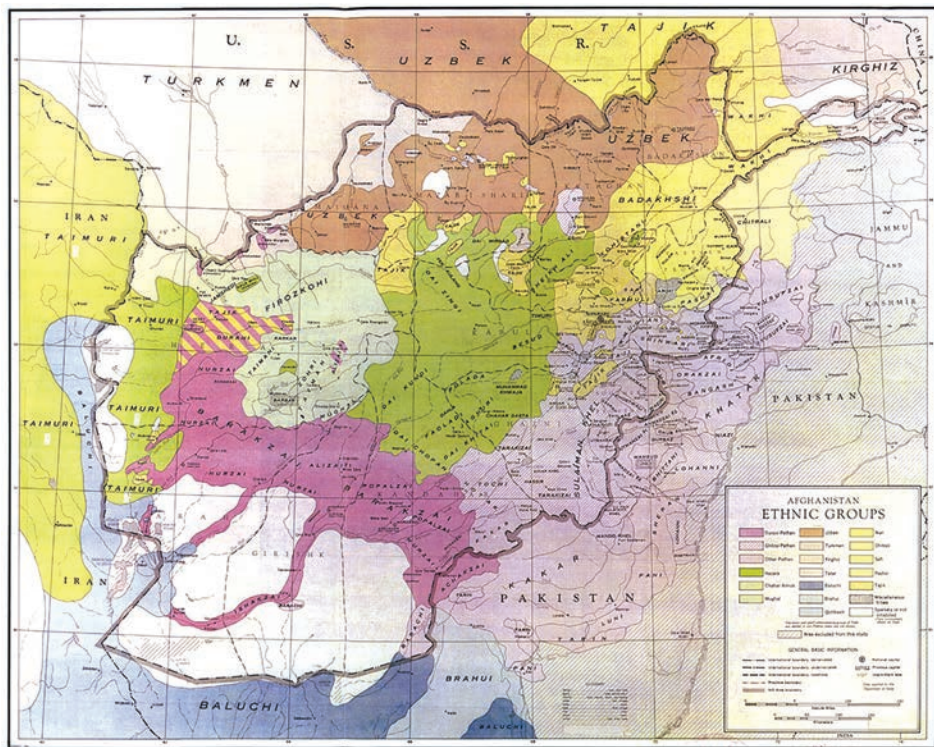
“The Taliban regime that has controlled most of Afghanistan since 1996 has made the country a chamber of horrors, particularly for women. But so did the feuding warlords who preceded it, the leaders of the Islamic *jihād* (holy war) who were financed, trained and armed by the United States to wage a proxy war in the 1980s against the Soviet Union and the Soviet-allied reform government in Kabul....

“Afghanistan is an impoverished backwater, with feudal and even pre-feudal conditions in much of the country.... Because of its extreme economic backwardness, the social forces within Afghanistan are too weak for a workers

revolution to be carried out from within. That is a key reason why Soviet intervention to stave off the victory of Islamic reaction was necessary in the 1980s and why Trotskyists strongly supported it. But Afghanistan cannot be viewed in isolation from the surrounding region.” —“Defeat U.S. Imperialism! Defend Afghanistan and Iraq!” *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001.

Little has changed in this overall situation since then. The future of women’s rights, and of democratic rights generally in Afghanistan, will depend greatly on what happens elsewhere in the region. The imperialist partition of the subcontinent after World War II produced four hostile bourgeois states, all dominated by right-wing, military and religious/communist parties. In Pakistan, the populist government barely masks domination by the army and Inter-Services Intelligence agency, which are closely allied with Islamist groups and the Wahabi Islamic madrasas (religious schools sponsored by Saudi Arabia) that were the seedbed of the Taliban (whose name means “students”) and which have been the real power in the state since independence in 1947.

India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka all have sizeable working classes and a history of leftist political agitation. Yet the organized workers movement is on the defensive and each of these countries is riven by communal conflict (Sinhalese vs. Tamils in Sri Lanka, Hindus vs. Muslims in India) and/or with ethnic groups divided by the artificial borders (Bengalis divided



CIA map of ethnic groups in Afghanistan, 2005.



Many in the fascist groups and fascistic militias that spearheaded the January 6 assault on the U.S. Congress were Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans.

between India and Bangladesh, Kashmir partitioned between India and Pakistan). In India, Pakistan’s nemesis, the Hindu-chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi allied with the fascistic RSS has increasingly escalated anti-Muslim provocations and outright pogroms. Trotskyists have called ever since partition in 1947 for a voluntary socialist federation of workers republics of South Asia.

Globally the stunning collapse of the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan marks the end of a unipolar “new world order” under U.S. hegemony. The “war without end” proclaimed by former vice president Dick Cheney just ended in a spectacular defeat for the U.S. Contrary to President Biden’s claim that “America is back,” Washington no longer has the wherewithal to act alone as the world gendarme. But the U.S. remains the preeminent imperialist power, with the most powerful military in history. Smarting from this blow it may now be looking to show some muscle, perhaps by means of some new provocation against China. While most of the left has joined in the China-bashing, the League for the Fourth International calls for defense of China, and the other deformed workers states – Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam – against imperialism and counterrevolution.

The U.S. defeat in Afghanistan will also have repercussions inside the United States. There are more than 750,000 veterans of the Afghan war and occupation, and many of those ex-soldiers are asking if they went through hell for nothing. Some are saying that “The Afghanistan I Fought in for the U.S. Was a Lie,” “I Was a Marine in Afghanistan. We Sacrificed Lives for a Lie,”<sup>14</sup> and the like. Military suicides have reached a record high, with over 1,500 active-duty soldiers taking their lives from 2016 to 2018.<sup>15</sup> One study showed that the number of active-duty military personnel and veterans of post-9/11 wars who died by suicide (30,177) dwarfs the number of those who died in combat (7,057).<sup>16</sup> Overall, a whopping 86,100 military veterans committed suicide from 2005 to 2018, at a rate 50% higher than civilians.<sup>17</sup>

But some other Afghanistan and Iraq war vets have gone in a different direction, joining fascist groups and fascistic militias,

such as those that spearheaded the January 6 attack on Congress. Soon we will be hearing that the troops were “stabbed in the back” by politicians in Washington, particularly Democrats. This evokes the *Dolchstoß-Legende*, that Jews and Communists were supposedly responsible for German defeat in World War I, that fueled the rise of Hitler’s Nazis. Meanwhile, veterans are a huge component of U.S. police forces, comprising almost 20% of the total,<sup>18</sup> while studies have shown that cops who are former soldiers were three times as likely to use their firearms.<sup>19</sup> Some vets who have “brought the war home” are a major factor in the plague of killings by trigger-happy police – more than 29,000 civilians killed by cops since 9/11.<sup>20</sup>

As we stressed from the outset, *imperialist war abroad means racist repression “at home.”* The toll of U.S. rulers’ “Global War on Terror” has been staggering, from Afghanistan, to Iraq and Syria, and also on the “home front.” It is a continuation of the imperialist slaughter of the Korean War (2 million dead) and the Vietnam War (3 million dead), on top of the carnage of the imperialist World War I (over 21 million dead) and World War II (more than 73 million). Today the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic and the chaos it has caused throughout the capitalist world throw a sharp light on the inability of this putrefying imperialist system preserve lives and meet the most basic needs of the population.

The choice in this imperialist epoch, as the German-Polish communist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg wrote of the carnage of World War I, is *socialism or barbarism*. From the killing fields of the U.S.’ “forever wars” in the Middle East and Central Asia to the trailers filled with bodies outside U.S. hospitals and the mass graves in Brazil, we can see the ugly face of barbarism before our eyes. The answer must be to build revolutionary workers parties fighting to reforge a genuinely Trotskyist Fourth International. Located at the crossroads of Asia, Afghanistan has for the last 40 years been a key test for revolutionary Marxism vs. social-democratic pro-imperialist politics. At every juncture, we have fought to uphold the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky in building a world party of socialist revolution that is the hope of humankind. ■

<sup>14</sup> *Daily Beast*, 17 August; *New York Times*, 16 August.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Defense Annual Suicide Report, Calendar Year 2018.

<sup>16</sup> Brown University Cost of War Project, 21 June 2021.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report 2020.

<sup>18</sup> “When Warriors Put on the Badge,” The Marshall Project (30 March 2017).

<sup>19</sup> “Police With Military Experience More Likely to Shoot,” The Marshall Project (15 October 2018).

<sup>20</sup> See fatalencounters.org. From 11 September 2001 to 4 August 2021, 29,262 publicly reported police-involved killings.



Counterrevolutionary Instigators Exploit Frustration Over Economic Crisis

# The Truth About Cuba Protests

Defend the Revolution Against  
U.S. Imperialism and Its Frontmen

*Fight for International Socialist Revolution*

**Break the Blockade –  
Down with Pandemic Extortion!  
U.S., Gusano Mafia in Miami:  
Hands Off Cuba and Haiti!  
Mobilize Workers Councils to  
Defend the Gains of the  
Cuban Revolution!**

23 JULY 2021 – The protests that took place in several dozen cities and towns of Cuba and locations in and around the capital on July 11 were the biggest anti-government mobilizations since the dawn of the Revolution. While fueled by desperation over food shortages, lack of medicine and blackouts that have beset the island in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the marches were instigated, manipulated and exploited by forces seeking to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. With its exemplary public health system, Cuba has been able to contain the virus far better than almost anywhere else on the planet outside of China. Yet U.S. rulers are seeking to capitalize on the economic toll of the pandemic, and weariness from 60 years of imperialist blockade. In this difficult situation, *the first duty of revolutionary communists, in Cuba and worldwide, is to actively combat the forces of capitalist counterrevolution.*

The imperialist media marveled at the “the apparently spontaneous eruption,” in what it called a “police state,” against the Cuban government’s “failure to protect the population from a failing economy, energy shortages and the ravages of the coronavirus.”<sup>1</sup> The virulent exile milieu in Florida, however, took to social media to rant that

<sup>1</sup> “Cubans, broken by pandemic and fueled by social media, confront their police state,” *Washington Post*, 13 July.



**Havana, July 11: Anti-government protests were fueled by economic hardship due to the coronavirus pandemic and the 60-year-old economic blockade, but were instigated, propagated and exploited by counterrevolutionaries (as can be seen in slogans carried by protester).**

the protests were not about a virus or shortages but an uprising against “communist rule.” For these *gusanos* (counterrevolutionary worms), as Florida Senator Marco Rubio tweeted, “People in #Cuba are protesting 62 years of socialism, lies, tyranny & misery not ‘expressing concern about rising COVID cases/deaths’.” It’s absurd to pretend that the people of Cuba yearn for the “freedom” of the 1950s dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, overthrown by the rebel army led by Fidel Castro on 1 January 1959. But such ravings show what the *gusano* instigators of the protests are aiming at.

Cuba today is in the deepest economic crisis since the 1990s Special Period after imperialist-led counterrevolution in the USSR cut off its lifeline of Soviet aid. The current shortages, while not as severe as then, have

made daily life on the island harrowing, and now the population has internet and smart phones so that interested parties can turbocharge “news,” real or fake. In addition, the counterrevolutionary exile milieu in nearby Florida is itching to provoke disorder in the region in the wake of the defeat of “their” president, Donald Trump, last November. (Miami-based Cuban and Venezuelan *gusanos* also appear to be intimately involved in the assassination of Haitian president Jovenel Moïse on July 7.) Things could escalate as rightist Cuban Americans in Florida are now talking of dispatching a provocative “freedom flotilla” to lay siege to Havana.

The numbers in the July 11 protests were relatively limited, 3,000-5,000 in Havana, a few hundred or a few score each in smaller cities and towns in four of Cuba’s

eight provinces. Hardly an uprising. But the fact that they took place in a number of places simultaneously is ominous – while the fact that they occurred in those locations and not elsewhere points to a basic fact. This was not spontaneous. For many participants, it was no doubt a cry of fatigue over shortages, over endless standing in line and all the other hardships Cubans have had to endure for years due to vicious economic blockade. But the protests were a political act, and judging from online videos they were headed up by groups of provocateurs who set the tone; they were spread by a sophisticated internet operation of thousands of automated tweets, and were trumpeted by U.S. imperialist spokesmen, from Republican Rubio to Democrat Joe Biden.

When the reputed “leader of the Free World” – free for capitalist exploitation, that is – vows to “stand with the Cuban people in their clarion call for freedom,” this is a threat of imperialist action. The Miami-based #SOSCuba campaign has been calling for a “humanitarian corridor” to bring aid to the island. What they have in mind is something like the (failed) February 2019 siege of Venezuela, orchestrated by the administration of Donald Trump, that tried to invade that country by sea and land under the guise of bringing emergency aid supplies. The July 11 protests were part of the #SOSCuba operation, yet rather than denouncing this cynical ploy, much of the reformist left in the United States (and some in Latin America) fell into line behind Biden, hailing the manipulated protests. Various social-democratic tendencies which sometimes pose as Trotskyists – which they absolutely are not – were among the worst of these imperialist toadies. (We will soon be publishing an analysis of the positions of several of these cur-



**Havana, July 11: Western media didn’t report that hundreds of government supporters (above) took to the streets to oppose counterrevolutionary protests, or mislabeled photos as supposedly showing anti-government protesters.**



**Pro-government demonstrators at monument to Máximo Gómez in downtown Havana, July 11. Photolying: Western media used this photo to purportedly show size of anti-government protests.**

Yamil Lage / AFP

Eliana Aponte / AP



rents regarding the recent events in Cuba.)

In contrast, in the face of the counter-revolutionary mobilization, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International (LFI) call to **defend the Cuban revolution against U.S. imperialism and its frontmen**, which highlights the urgency of fighting for **international socialist revolution**. Against the poisonous talk of a “hu-

manitarian corridor” as a smokescreen for imperialist intervention, we call to **break the blockade – down with pandemic extortion**. And with Cuba’s socialized economy under siege by anti-communists and endangered by the privatizing policies of the ruling bureaucracy, the Trotskyist LFI calls to **mobilize workers councils to defend the gains of the Cuban Revolution!**

## I. Protests “Made in Miami”

There is no doubt that what fueled the marches were the incredible privations the population has faced in recent months. The food shortages are very real, and a direct result of Cuba’s inability to earn hard (convertible) currency through exports due to the economic blockade, as well as the collapse of tourism in the wake of the pandemic. Likewise, the blackouts were due to electricity generating plants shutting down units for repairs after being unable to import parts. The first protest was in San Antonio de los Baños, just to the west of Havana, sparked by a power outage in the summer heat. The government’s Radio Artemisa put out a detailed schedule for when electrical power would be out for six hours a day in each barrio over the weekend, but then the blackouts extended to 12 hours. On TV on Monday, July 12, the energy minister explained that the units would soon be back on line (which they were by Wednesday), while warning that it could happen again.

In the protest that brought out several hundred in San Antonio, videos show marchers calling for vaccines, as well as chanting anti-communist slogans like “*libertad*” (freedom), “*abajo la dictadura*” (down with the dictatorship) and “*patria y vida*” (fatherland and life) – a counterpoint to the slogan *patria o muerte*, (fatherland or death), closely associated with the Cuban Revolution. Yet Cuba has done remarkably well in fighting the coronavirus pandemic, sending infected persons to hospitals, isolating contacts and using Cuban-developed Interferon Alpha 2B to treat COVID-19 patients. While numbers of cases and deaths are rising with the appearance of the Delta strain, Cuba’s COVID mortality rate (160 per million people) is less than one-tenth that of the United States and one-sixteenth that of Brazil. Cuba has developed several vaccines and is already administering two with over 90% efficacy against COVID-19, Soberana 2 and Abdala, which began mass distribution on July 9.

Videos of the anti-communist protest in San Antonio have been shown over and over on the internet. What they don’t show is that a couple of hours later there was a second march in San Antonio by several hundred government supporters, including workers from the local tobacco plant. Cuban president and Communist Party (PCC) secretary-general Miguel Díaz-Canel spoke with residents in their homes and addressed the press in the town plaza. He then went on TV, radio and Internet speaking of the shortages of food and medicines, the power outages and the media campaign to discredit Cuba, ending with a call on “all revolutionaries to go into the streets to defend the Revolution everywhere.”<sup>2</sup> While denouncing “counterrevolutionaries” who led the protest, the Cuban leader said that the marchers included “people in severe conditions” and even “confused revolutionaries” who were “expressing their dissatisfaction.”

The fact that these demonstrations were part of an international operation is attested to by the time line of events. At 12:37 p.m. on July 11, a tweet from Yoani Sánchez, the internet anti-communist celebrity, announces that people are marching in San Antonio. At 12:45, a video shows a speaker in San Antonio calling “down with the dictatorship” and denouncing CP leader Díaz-Canel as a “*singao*” (roughly, fucker). At 12:56, an alert from the Movimiento San Isidro (MSI)<sup>3</sup> to stay tuned “in view of the events in San Antonio de los Baños.” At 1:11, the MSI declares “the people of Cuba are in the streets.” At 1:20, a call from #SOSCuba in Miami to rally at 2 p.m. At 1:22 another anti-communist video from San Antonio. At 1:37, the MSI “call[s] on the organizations of civil society to go into the streets.” At 1:41, MSI founder Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara calls

<sup>2</sup> “La orden de combate está dada, a la calle los revolucionarios,” CubaDebate, 11 July.

<sup>3</sup> See below for a dissection of this pro-capitalist, pro-imperialist artists group.

As we go to press, an article has appeared in the *gusano* digital magazine *El Estornudo* (22 July), “July 11 in San Antonio de los Baños: What You See/What You Don’t See” (in Spanish), which gives an extremely detailed account, complete with screenshots, about how the first protest was organized. It turns out that this was the work of a Facebook group, “La Villa del Humor,” which has been active in the city – the site of Cuba’s most important military airport –

since 2017. The main organizer, who uses the pseudonym Danilo Roque, declared later that “I and my team decided it was time to land the blow, since the government was concentrating on COVID.” On July 10, they put out a call on the Facebook group for a protest the next day, using the pretext of the blackouts: “Are you tired of not having electricity? ... Time to go out and demand.” This “spontaneous protest” was the work of counterrevolutionary provocateurs.

for people in Havana to go to the Malecón seaside avenue. At 1:57, a video of a protest in the city of Palma Soriano. At 1:59 a video from the city of Matanzas of a crowd marching.

No, this was hardly a “spontaneous eruption,” as the media portray it. U.S. agencies have spent heavily for years to use the internet to incite and instigate counterrevolution in Cuba. In 2010, the infamous U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) set up the botched messaging app ZunZuneo, hoping that as it reached a critical mass, operators would insert “political content aimed at inspiring Cubans to organize ‘smart mobs’ – mass gatherings called at a moment’s notice that might trigger a Cuban Spring.”<sup>4</sup> What occurred on July 11 was the realization of this project, using Facebook and Twitter. But that still requires “assets” on the ground. Whatever the origin of the original event in San Antonio de los Baños, the second outbreak, in Palma Soriano in eastern Cuba, was clearly the work of counterrevolutionary groups. This city has long been a center of Catholic reaction surrounding the cult of the Virgin del Rosario. It is the stomping ground of José Daniel Ferrer, the public face of the counterrevolutionary Patriotic Union of Cuba (UNPACU) and a paid agent of the U.S. This outfit in 2016 received \$99,431 from the rightist Miami-based Cuban American National Foundation (CANF).<sup>5</sup>

On July 11, as videos and tweets came online they were pumped out on social media in thousands of messages, which “made intensive use of robots, algorithms and accounts that were recently created for the occasion.”<sup>6</sup> The Cuban site CubaDebate (12 July) reported how a Spanish internet analyst, Julián Macías Tovar, documented that the first Twitter account using the hashtag #SOSCuba, by a Spanish user, blasted out 1,291 tweets on July 11 alone and over 1,000 the day before. These were then reposted by other accounts, so that on July 11 there were “hundreds of thousands of tweets, many of them from accounts of artists” about protests in Cuba. A posting

<sup>4</sup> “US secretly created ‘Cuban Twitter’ to stir unrest,” AP, 3 April 2014.

<sup>5</sup> “Dissident’s arrest triggers debate over funding,” Cuba Money Project, 7 December 2019.

<sup>6</sup> “Investigación confirma la perversa operación de redes sociales contra Cuba,” CubaDebate, 12 July.



#SOSCuba tweet calling for “humanitarian intervention” in Cuba. Petition with 430,000 signatures called for U.S. invasion. Miami mayor called for air war.

by a television reporter in Florida about San Antonio de los Baños was retweeted thousands of times. Moreover, “more than 1,500 accounts that participated in the operation with the hashtag #SOSCuba were created on July 10/11.”

A second analysis, by Mint Press (16 July), cited “NBC’s Director of Latin America, Mary Murray, [who] noted that it was only when live streams of the events were picked up and signal-boostered by the expat community in Miami that it ‘started to catch fire.’” It pointed to “hundreds of accounts tweeting the exact same phrases in Spanish, replete with the same small typos.” One read (in Spanish), “We Cubans don’t want the end of the embargo if that means the regime and dictatorship stays, we want them gone, no more communism.” The article also noted the frequent use of photos of large *gusano* demonstrations in the U.S. in articles about the (much smaller) protests in Cuba, and of several photos labeled as protesters in Havana but actually showing hundreds of government supporters, such as at the monument to Cuban independence fighter Máximo Gómez where demonstrators held the flag of Fidel Castro’s July 26 movement.

The Mint Press article by Alan MacLeod was titled, “The Bay of Tweets: Documents Point to US Hand in Cuba Protests,” a reference to Democratic president John F. Kennedy’s disastrous April 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, when Fidel Castro led workers militias and Revolutionary Armed Forces troops in smashing 1,500 U.S.-armed mercenaries. Castro’s response to the invasion was to proclaim that “we have carried out a socialist revolution right under the nose of the United States.” The

Alexandre Meneghini / AP



Pro-government march in San Antonio de los Baños on July 11 included workers from the Lázaro Peña tobacco plant, named after historic Cuban union leader.



article also pointed to the 1898 explosion that sunk the USS *Maine* in the Havana harbor, which the yellow press turned into the pretext for the U.S. war to prevent the victory of Cuban independence forces and wrest the colony from Spain. This time around, a petition on change.org calling for U.S. “humanitarian” military intervention in Cuba has over 430,000 signatures.

Today the imperialist Big Lie propaganda machine is going into high gear to portray the July 11 protests as a popular revolt against communism. The ultra-rightist Cuban exile milieu would like to use them as a pretext for a U.S. invasion, and the mayor of Miami has called for “air war” against Cuba. As Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodríguez noted in a July 13 press conference, “To call for humanitarian intervention in Cuba is to call for a U.S. military intervention.... A ‘humanitarian intervention’ is what took

place in Yugoslavia in 1999,” under Democratic president Bill Clinton.<sup>7</sup> That’s what some have in mind for Cuba today. But unlike capitalist Yugoslavia in 1999, Cuba is a (bureaucratically deformed) workers state. When CP leader Díaz-Canel vows that “if they want to overthrow the Revolution, they will have to pass over our dead bodies,” this is hardly abstract. Every Communist Party member is well aware that counterrevolution in Cuba and return of the *gusano* cutthroats would result in a bloodbath.

<sup>7</sup> See “Defend Yugoslavia – Defeat the Imperialist Attack!” *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999. The U.S./NATO “humanitarian intervention” led to the forced expulsion of close to 200,000 Serbs and Roma from their homes in Kosovo, the dismembering of Yugoslavia and ultimately the toppling of the Serbian nationalist government of Slobodan Milošević in the first of the U.S.-orchestrated “color revolutions.”

## II. Cuban "Dissidents" on U.S. Payroll

The Cuban American National Foundation lobby referred to above is a main conduit for U.S. funding of Cuban “democrats.” In 2011, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) gave the Foundation for Human Rights in Cuba, a creation of the CANF, \$2 million to foster “empowerment” in Cuba. This was supplemented in 2013 with another \$1.44 million to “advocate for community needs, thereby increasing expectations and accountability for improved governance” in Cuba. “Tax records show the organization channeled at least \$3,324,741 to Cuban dissidents from 2014 to 2018,” according to the Cuba Money Project, led by Tracey Eaton, the former Cuba correspondent of the *Dallas Morning News*. In actuality, the CIA, NSA, USAID, N.E.D. (National Endowment for Democracy), State Department and other U.S. agencies spend vast sums every year financing anti-communist subversion in Cuba.

As for the Movimiento San Isidro, journalist Ed Augustin, reporting in the London *Guardian* (6 December 2020), interviewed an MSI member, Esteban Rodríguez, who described himself as a “social media influencer.” The article noted that “State media has cast the San Isidro movement as US mercenaries.” In fact, it continued: “There is clear evidence that some in the San Isidro Movement have ties with the US government. Esteban Rodríguez works for ADN Cuba, a Florida-based online news outlet that was awarded a \$410,710 grant in September from USAID, a US government agency. The US spends \$20m annually on anti-government media and ‘democracy promotion’ programmes (which critics say are better described as ‘regime change’

programmes).” Augustin goes on to quote Rodríguez as approving Trump’s tightened sanctions, including blocking family remittances, and saying, “If I was in the US, I’d have voted Trump.”

He isn’t the only Trumper in the MSI. When a Cuban police officer came to the home of Denis Solís González last November 7 to serve a summons to appear in court, the Afro-Cuban rapper filmed the encounter in which, along with homophobic insults, he shouts, “Donald Trump 2020. He is my president.” Solís then posted his video to Facebook. When he was jailed for contempt of court, a protest sit-in was staged at outside the Cuban Culture Ministry on November 27. There were no arrests, and instead the deputy minister held a four-hour dialogue with the protesters, ending with an agreement to meet again. But then a new “November 27 Movement” (N27) sent an email demanding that participants in said meeting include notorious counterrevolutionaries. The ministry replied it would “not meet with individuals who have direct contact with and receive financing, logistical support and propaganda backing from the government of the United States and its officials.”

The main leader of the MSI is Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, described in the media as a “performance artist.” In April, as he was preparing an “art show” aimed at children consisting of paintings of candy wrappers,<sup>8</sup> Cuban television (Canal <sup>8</sup> Otero said the aim of his show was to accuse the government of artificially creating shortages so that Cuban children couldn’t have sweets. But the wrappers he depicts are for Nesquik, M&Ms, Chiclets, Nutella, etc., in other words, for products of huge foreign firms that can only be bought for hard currency.



**MSI leader Denis Solís shouts “Donald Trump 2020” when Cuban police officer delivers summons on 7 November 2020, right after U.S. elections that Trump lost.**

Caribe) broadcast a program showing a contract between the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Otero Alcántara for a stipend of “up to \$1,000 USD” per month, in exchange for a “monthly report on the use of these funds.” The Cuba Money Project (4 April) reported: “The NDI received at least \$6,615,674 for Cuba programs from 2002 to 2021, records show.” The NDI is an affiliate of the N.E.D., which since the mid-1970s replaced the CIA in funding anti-communist “dissidents,” and describes its work in Cuba as “capacity building of independent Cuban civil society actors.”

Another Afro-Cuban rapper speaking for the San Isidro Movement is Maykel Osorbo. In a social media posting that was played on Cuban TV on December 11, Osorbo urged Trump to invade Cuba. He starts by calling to intensify the blockade against Cuba, saying there should be “a real embargo, blocking the coasts, so that nothing comes in, nothing goes out.” Finally, he declares: “I would even support an invasion.... Come on, we’re waiting.” Osorbo and another MSI member co-produced the song “Patria y Vida” – which has become the anti-communist anthem – together with the millionaire hip-hop artist Yotuel Romero and some black *reggaetoneros* (reggaetón music performers) in Miami. The lyrics, reportedly written by Romero, are a recitation of *gusano* slogans (“no more lies,” “62 years, your time is over”). The song was then popularized via internet by Yankee imperialism’s powerful media machine, what the CIA called its “Mighty Wurlitzer” (jukebox).<sup>9</sup>

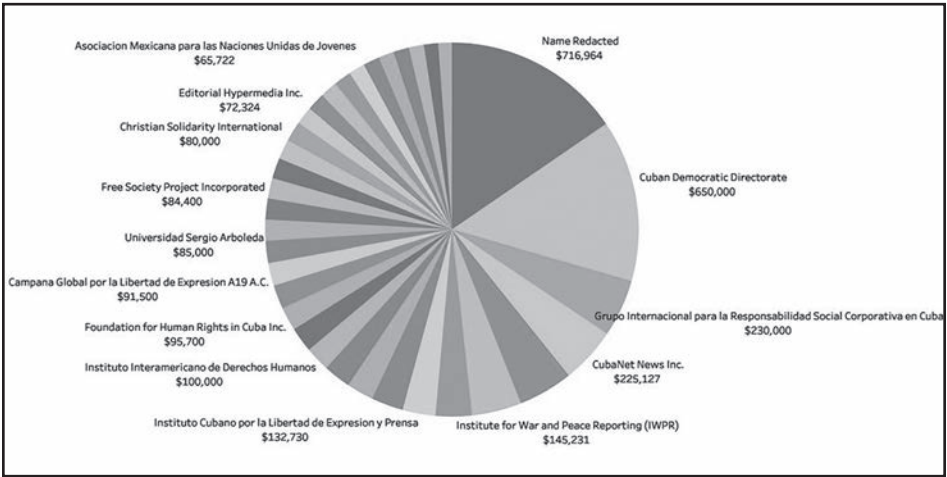
As Cuba Money Project’s Tracey Eaton told the Mint Press about U.S. funding for artists in Cuba, “It’s impossible to say how many U.S. tax dollars have gone toward these programs over the years because details of many projects are kept secret.” He noted that the State Department, USAID and the U.S. Agency for

Global Media all run such programs. For its part, the N.E.D. lists recent projects including “Empowering Cuban Hip-Hop Artists as Leaders in Society” (to “raise awareness about the role hip-hop artists have in strengthening democracy in the region”) and “Promoting Freedom of Expression in Cuba through the Arts.” Since 2017, the USAID has doled out grants of \$16,569,889 to “promote democracy” in Cuba, including \$4.7 million to the Bacardí Family Foundation just in the last two years, and \$20 million to the Grupo de Apoyo a la Democracia, a Miami *gusano* umbrella group, which then funnels the dollars to subrecipients.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, financing counterrevolution in Cuba is a big business. The San Isidro Movement is the current “dissident” darlings for liberals and conservatives alike in the U.S., especially for sparking the July 11 protests. A few years ago, it was the Damas en Blanco (Ladies in White), bankrolled by the CANF. The MSI is a mainly Afro-Cuban group of artists based in the rundown neighborhood of Old Havana for which it is named. It was founded in 2018 to oppose implementation of the Cuban government’s Decree 349 regulating artistic and cultural activities. But the MSI and its supporters in the mainly white November 27 movement are a political movement whose aims go far beyond calls for artistic freedom. The N27 manifesto spells that out:

“2. Economic Freedoms. We affirm the right of every citizen to engage in different forms of economic activity, ownership and management. We value the role

<sup>10</sup> Tracey Eaton, “The democracy business in Cuba is bustling,” Cuba Money Project, 9 December 2021. Eaton also noted that simultaneous with the appearance of the San Isidro Movement, the State Department offered grants of up to \$1 million for projects to promote “civil, political, religious, and labor rights [*sic*] in Cuba.” And now that #SOSCuba has appeared, USAID is offering \$2 million for projects to “advance the effectiveness of independent civil society groups” in Cuba (“\$2 million up for grabs for democracy projects in Cuba,” Cuba Money Project, 3 July). See also “Democracy, Inc.,” Cuba Money Project, 4 June, for a rundown of some of the main “democracy” money mills.



**National Endowment for Democracy Cuba grants in 2018. N.E.D. = CIA.**



of private enterprise and the exercise of economic freedoms that enable the promotion of productive capacities and generate goods and services essential for the development of the nation.”

Not a word about Cuba’s socialized economy, the basis for its great achievements in education, health and medicine, including developing COVID vaccines. The MSI/N27 defense of private enterprise and private ownership of the means of production is a call for capitalist counterrevolution.

One more thing about the San Isidro Movement: Cuban American academic, Javier Corrales, wrote in the N.E.D.’s *Democracy Digest* (15 December 2020) that the movement was “mounting an attack on the system by placing the issue of racial justice front and center.” Actually, the MSI has said very little about racial equality or discrimi-

nation, and this is no accident. The AfroCubaWeb site notes that to do so, it would have to deal with the virulent white supremacy of its backers in Miami. The site also notes that pro-Trump, pro-embargo rapper Solís is also very “pro-Proud Boys, whose leader is an Afro-Cuban.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed, Enrique Tarrio, the chairman of the fascist outfit (and a former FBI informant), is a product of the Miami Cuban milieu who spoke to the crowd at the July 11 *gusano* protest there while holding a banner reading: “Proud Boys, San Isidro Chapter, Down with Díaz-Canel and the Communists.” These sinister facts highlight yet again that promotion of imperialist-backed counterrevolution against the Cuban Revolution goes hand in hand with racist and anti-communist terror here, in Cuba and internationally.

<sup>11</sup> “Movimiento San Isidro – N27,” AfroCubaWeb

### III. Protesters Unleash Violence, Defenders of the Revolution Mobilize

As July 11 wore on, in some places the anti-communist protests in Cuba turned to violence. In Cárdenas, a police cruiser was overturned and an MLC (convertible currency) store looted. Cárdenas, a largely black city in Matanzas province, has been particularly hard hit by the latest COVID-19 outbreak, as many of its residents work in the tourist industry at the Varadero beach resort. In the capital, at two places (both in the 10 de Octubre section of Havana), police cars were overturned and in one case an MLC store was attacked. These were not the same crowds who marched downtown nor did the violence seem to be organized; instead, judging from videos, those involved appeared to be “marginalized” youth from poor barrios lashing out at symbols of authority. Police only arrived in numbers after the fact. Imperialist spokesmen hailed these actions as a sign of anti-regime fervor, whereas they would of course condemn them in the U.S.

Subsequently there has been a hue and cry in the Western media over police repression of the July 11 protests. Among those echoing this cynical imperialist propaganda were “progressive” Democrats Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (“we solidarize with [the protests] and condemn the anti-democratic actions led by President Díaz-Canel”) and Bernie Sanders. For the most part, the police let marches proceed, until they grew violent. The Associated Press reported that in Havana: “About 2-1/2 hours into the march, some protesters pulled up cobblestones and threw them at police, at which point officers began arresting people and the marchers dispersed.” It was at that point, as well, that the Communist Party called upon its membership and supporters to “take to the streets to defend the Revolution.” Which they did, many chanting “*patria o muerte*.” The AP reported: “About 300 people close to the government then arrived with a large Cuban flag shouting slogans in favor of the late President Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution.”

At first, 100-plus pro-government demonstrators took over the Monument to Máximo Gómez, the Dominican general in the Cuban War of Independence who freed the slaves. Photos of this were widely used in Western media as proof of the scale of the anti-government protests when they actually showed the opposite. Photos then show several hundred demonstrators out-

side the nearby Museum of the Revolution. But as an anti-communist crowd of by now around 2,000 headed toward the Plaza de la Revolución, Communist Youth members and others rushed to head them off. Many quite sensibly carried sticks – good! Photos of this were cited as proof of “repression.” What those accounts don’t show is that defenders of the Revolution were violently attacked by anti-government protesters. Here is one account, from a woman who works at Cuban radio/TV:

“The [anti-government] demonstrators grabbed stones and threw them at two of my friends.... A car came upon us and tried to run us over, at another point one of them pulled out a knife and everyone started running.... A neighbor had to save us, literally. She opened the door to her home, they were throwing stones, bottles.”<sup>12</sup>

Another account, “from a comrade who was in one of the rallies in defense of the revolution” quoted by the International Marxist Tendency:

“I was attacked.... They almost lynched me, they threw water, rum and they threw two stones at me, though they didn’t hit me.”

While, again, many if not most of the anti-government protesters were no doubt expressing frustration and anger over shortages, blackouts and a pandemic that has made their lives miserable, the people in the forefront had an agenda. Those who formed the letter “L” (for Libertad) with their thumb and forefinger as they tried to run down supporters of the Revolution – as racists in the U.S. have done against anti-racist demonstrators – were calling for the capitalist “freedom” to exploit, to oppress and to recolonize the island. When they chanted “down with the dictatorship,” they were calling to replace the workers state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) with the dictatorship of capital. As the protests intensified, their counterrevolutionary thrust becoming clearer by the minute, this was a defining moment: where did you stand? Trotskyists would have joined the pro-government mobilization, appropriately equipped to stop those who would bring back the Yankee imperialists and *gusanos*.

Subsequently, a massive anti-commu-

<sup>12</sup> “Testimonies from July 11: When the Violence Was Unleashed” (in Spanish), CubaDebate, 15 July.



Yamil Lage / AFP

**Police cars overturned by anti-government protesters in Havana, July 11.**

nist media machine – those directly paid by Washington (Cubamet, ADN Cuba, Diario de Cuba, TV and Radio Martí) and those who claim to be privately financed (CiberCuba 147yMedio), plus liberal and right-wing media in the U.S. – unleashed a barrage of lies about brutal repression. Yoani Sánchez’ 14yMedio was filled with rumors of dead and “disappeared” everywhere. (The one person who died was not during the July 11 protests but the next day, during a provocative attempt to march on a police station in Arroyo Naranjo.) As one can see from photos, the police were not carrying firearms, unlike in the U.S. where thousands of heavily armed cops set upon Black Lives Matter demonstrators. In all, there were 200 or so arrests. In the case of the MSI’s Otero Alcántara, arrested on his way to the Malecón, this was certainly justified for his role instigating counterrevolutionary protests.

One of those arrested on July 11 was Frank García Hernández, who was the main organizer of the 2019 Trotsky Conference in Havana.<sup>13</sup> An article titled “On the July 11 Protests in Cuba” (in Spanish) on the *Comunistas* (17 July) blog that he founded explains that he arrived by chance at a place where there had been violent clashes near the Plaza de la Revolución. The article states that when a police official wrongly accused Maykel González, editor of the gay rights magazine *Tremenda Nota*, of throwing stones at the police, Frank

<sup>13</sup> See “The Havana Trotsky Conference: Notes of a Participant,” *The Internationalist* No. 57, September-October 2019.

García sought to intervene as a member of the Communist Party, whereupon both were arrested. After a little over 24 hours in detention, when the authorities clarified the events where neither had participated in violent actions, they were both released. “Frank states that he was NOT subject to any physical mistreatment or torture,” the article reports, adding that “Frank García is not presently under house arrest,” but under a restraining order limiting his movements, a normal procedure there until the initial charges are formally adjudicated.

For all the media coverage of the Monday, July 11 protests in Cuba, there has been hardly a mention of the Saturday, July 17 pro-government “Rally of Revolutionary Reaffirmation” that brought out tens of thousands in Havana, as photos clearly show, and thousands more around the country, far more than the much-publicized anti-government marches five days earlier. In the Saturday rally, Cuban president and PCC leader Díaz-Canel ended with a call, “Viva Cuba, sovereign, independent, socialist!” But while talking of “necessary self-criticism, pending rectification, deep revision of our methods,” of “bureaucracy” and “insensitivity,” and the need to “pay more attention to vulnerable sectors,” his main message was that the Cuban Revolution “wiped out forever the seeds of evil, of hate, of dishonor and crime.” Yet abstract appeals to love and civic virtues are far from the revolutionary communist program needed to defeat a cold-blooded enemy.

### IV. Bureaucracy Undermines Gains of Revolution

As we detail elsewhere (see “U.S. Blockade of Cuba: ‘Bring About Hunger, Desperation, Overthrow,’” on page 23), the fundamental and immediate causes of the acute economic and medical crisis facing Cuba today lie in the fact that it is a small island under relentless siege by imperialism and subject to the brutal dictates of the world capitalist market. It is grotesque to accuse Cuba’s government of failing to protect the population from the ravages of the coronavirus pandemic when it has in fact done far better than any capitalist country in the hemisphere. Cuba’s development of multiple COVID-19 vaccines is a stunning achievement, especially in the face of the economic extortion to which it has been and continues to be subjected. And such accusations are particu-

larly vile coming from imperialist governments which are literally hoarding vaccines, ensuring that none will be available in Africa, now in the deadliest stage of the pandemic.

By the end of August, the G7 countries will be sitting on 1.9 billion doses more than they need to vaccinate their populations, and “enough to vaccinate the entire adult population of Africa,” according to the ONE Campaign.<sup>14</sup> The World Health Organization (W.H.O.) Covax program promised vaccines for poor countries, but shipments simply stopped when India banned exports of the Astra-Zeneca vaccine following the resurgence

<sup>14</sup> “Africa’s Covid Crisis Deepens, but Vaccines Are Still Far Off,” New York Times, 16 July; and “Data dive: The astoundingly unequal vaccine rollout,” One.org, July 2021.





**While Cuba has developed two COVID vaccines (Soberana 2 and Abdala) proven to be over 90% effective, imperialists are hoarding vaccines, refusing to send them to Africa as pandemic enters its most deadly phase.**

of the pandemic with the Delta strain earlier this year. One reason Cuba did not join the Covax program (in addition to the fact that it was developing its own vaccines) was concern that in view of the blockade it could be cut off at any point, as all of Africa now has been. For all their cynical professions of concern for the Afro-Cuban population, which has suffered more than any other from the effects of the blockade, the supporters of the blockade now calling for U.S. “humanitarian intervention” should answer for the fact that the would-be imperialist “saviors” are *blocking vaccines to black Africa*.

Meanwhile, the hard reality is that the effects of the blockade have also been aggravated by the policies of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) leadership, which for the last decade has sought to open the socialized economy to a “private sector.” This began with the “Economic and Social Policy Guidelines” approved at the PCC’s Sixth Congress in 2011. These *Lineamientos* were pushed in particular by Raúl Castro, after taking over from Fidel Castro as Cuban president three years prior. This mixed bag of measures, some supportable, others clearly dangerous, included leasing state-owned agricultural land to private farmers, introducing private wholesale markets, promoting worker cooperatives, laying off workers from state enterprises, opening a real estate market, allowing mobile phones, easing rules for foreign direct investment, expansion of self-employment (such as taxis) and small businesses (such as family restaurants), and abolition of the dual monetary system of convertible and non-convertible pesos.<sup>15</sup>

The background to this policy goes back to the origins of the Cuban deformed

<sup>15</sup> See Vegard Bye, *Cuba, From Fidel to Raúl and Beyond* (Springer, 2020) for a detailed discussion.

workers state. Even as the peasant-based guerrillas of the victorious July 26th Movement sought in 1959-60 to carry out a far-reaching agrarian reform, Washington’s economic blackmail pushed them into nationalizing foreign-owned businesses that dominated the Cuban economy. When the Eisenhower administration banned petroleum sales to Cuba and Esso refused to refine Soviet-supplied crude oil, the petty-bourgeois Castro regime had no choice but to seize the refinery and other U.S.-owned assets. Having been pushed into the arms of the USSR, the Cuban leadership proceeded to build a (bureaucratically deformed) workers state on the model of the latter-day Soviet Union. For three decades the USSR subsidized Cuba, buying sugar valued above the world market price in exchange for oil at below world market prices.

Along with building up a bureaucracy from scratch (in the early years, the Cuban leadership consisted of whoever was sitting in Fidel Castro’s jeep), this also entailed embracing the nationalist program of the bureaucratic regime of Stalin and his heirs.<sup>16</sup> Usurping political power upon the death of V.I. Lenin, who together with Leon Trotsky led the 1917 Bolshevik October Revolution, Stalin junked the program of Red October of *international socialist revolution* on which the Communist International was founded. Instead, placing himself at the head of a privileged bureaucratic layer, he put forward the anti-Marxist dogma of “building *socialism in one country*.” The Castros embraced this, accentuating a Cuban nationalist outlook while increasingly toeing the conservative Soviet bureaucrats’ line and, after a period of encouraging pro-Cuban guerrillas in Latin

<sup>16</sup> See the Internationalist Group Class Readings, “CUBA: A Bureaucratically Deformed Workers State (August 2010)



**Former Cuban president Raúl Castro stepped down as Communist Party general secretary at PCC Eighth Congress in April 2021, handing reins to Miguel Díaz-Canel (right). Castro has pushed to open Cuban economy to “private sector.”**

America, abandoning them in the 1970s. But with imperialist-led counterrevolution in the USSR and the East European Soviet bloc in 1989-92, Cuba was left on its own.

Since – in the Stalinist framework – international socialist revolution was out, the alternative to bureaucratic mismanagement of the economy was privatizing measures, heightening the danger of capitalist restoration. This was the common thread of Stalinist “reformers” from Khrushchev to Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and Deng in China. So when Cuba was cut off from Soviet aid, after going through the dark days of the Special Period of 1990-93<sup>17</sup> when the economy plunged by a whopping 35%, the alternative to bureaucratic stagnation put forward was the policies of growing privatization advanced by Raúl Castro. But although enunciated in 2011, they were only implemented piecemeal, and after 2016 there was backtracking. So in 2018-19, Raúl Castro and Díaz-Canel pushed through a new Constitution, whose Article XXII formally recognizes, along with state property of “the fundamental means of production” (defined as the main form), also “private: which natural or legal persons, Cuban or foreign, exercise over certain means of production.”<sup>18</sup>

So since 2019 private property of some means of production has a constitutional basis in Cuba, although that has yet to be translated into laws. As the Cuban *gusanos* and Yankee imperialists certainly recognize, this is hardly the restoration of capitalist class rule – but it is an ominous step that will foster the growth of capitalist inroads and pro-capitalist forces in Cuba, and should be opposed by all revolutionary communists. Now, in the midst of the pandemic, PCC leader Díaz-Canel has been pushing to implement these pro-capitalist reforms. In August 2020, the opening of foreign currency accounts (in state-owned banks) was authorized. At the same time, 72 convertible currency (MLC) stores were opened, where those with an MLC debit card from their bank deposits in dollars or euros can buy goods not available to those who only have Cuban pesos. The government says this was needed to soak up hard currency, but it has made the MLC stores a widely hated symbol of privilege.

In October, a complex of measures supposedly to increase competitiveness was decreed, the so-called Ordering Task (*Tarea Ordenamiento*), which among other things would eliminate “excessive subsidies” and “inappropriately free goods” and “avoid egalitarianism” (!) instead of “subsidizing people.”<sup>19</sup> This is in fact a “neoliberal” reform, in which social policies benefitting all are replaced with welfare measures for the poor. In addition, prices for various products such as milk would be deregulated (except for special categories of the population, such as children). The key measure in the *Tarea Ordenamiento* was the elimination of the dual monetary system, so that now there would be a single Cuban peso which would be exchanged at the rate of 24 to the dollar. For those who previously had income in convertible Cuban pesos, which had a 1:1 exchange rate with the dollar, this amounted to a 96% devaluation. The

minimum wage for workers was quintupled, but the savings of the petty bourgeoisie were effectively wiped out.<sup>20</sup>

In short, the *Tarea Ordenamiento* which took effect on 1 January 2021 implemented many of the privatizing “reforms” that Raúl Castro’s *Lineamientos* had called for in 2011 but were never or only partially implemented. On top of this, in mid-January the government replaced the list of 127 economic sectors in which private enterprise was *allowed* with a new list of 124 economic sectors in which it was *excluded*, *everything else being open to private entrepreneurs*. This could potentially mean a sizeable expansion of the private sector. But by devaluing the currency and expanding the convertible currencies at a time of extreme shortages of goods, the result has not been a flourishing of small businesses but a huge increase in inflation, as those with dollars or euros on their *tarjeta MLC* debit card drive up prices for scarce products formerly distributed with the *libreta de canasta básica* (ration card).

And it continues: three days after the July 11 protests, Díaz-Canel announced that wages in the state sector would no longer have to be paid according to the official salary schedule. This would “give the management of state enterprises autonomy” so that “those who create more wealth, are more efficient and produce more for the state will earn more.” Hailing this “audacious transformation,” the PCC leader said “the non-state sector has a certain freedom to determine how much will be paid to workers, which we are now incorporating in the functioning and management of the socialist state enterprises.” Eliminating uniform pay scales is *an attack on the unity of the working class*, and should be opposed by all class-conscious workers as part of defending the socialized economy against the inroads of capitalism and capitalist methods.

In the past, Raúl Castro and some Cuban economists looked to the “Vietnamese model,” but as Díaz-Canel noted last year, Vietnam had not been “subjected to an embargo for six decades.”<sup>21</sup> Even though the U.S. lost the Vietnam war, and although there is a sizable Vietnamese anti-communist exile community in the U.S., Washington has allowed American companies to set up shop there while the political apparatus and state sector of the deformed workers state remains intact. It’s about geopolitics. U.S. rulers’ interest in Vietnam is driven by its effort to cordon off China, while Cuba is right in the middle of the U.S. sphere of influence, only 90 miles from Florida in the Caribbean Sea that U.S. rulers since the 19th century have considered an American lake.

With its supposedly “socialist” *shock therapy of dangerously pro-capitalist “reforms,” the bureaucratic leadership of the Cuban deformed workers state is promoting measures that foster the growth of counter-revolutionary forces*. To be sure, it claims to be upholding the primacy of what is known as the socialist sector (i.e., the state-owned enterprises) and defending the state monopoly of foreign trade, as Raúl Castro said at PCC’s Eighth Congress in April, where he

<sup>17</sup> See our article “Cuba in Peril,” published in *Workers Vanguard* No. 585, 8 October 1993, when it was the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism. It is reprinted in *Cuba: A Bureaucratically Deformed Workers State*.

<sup>18</sup> See *Nueva Constitución de la República de Cuba* (2019).

<sup>19</sup> “What Is New for Workers in the Tarea Ordenamiento?” (in Spanish), *Opciones* (13 December 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Díaz-Canel effectively took over the program of bourgeois economist Carmelo Mesa-Lago in his monograph, *The Cuban Economy: The Current Crisis, Its Causes, and Policies for the Future* (2020) whose recipe for economic reform began with “Carry out monetary and exchange-rate unification” and “Carry out a comprehensive price reform.”

<sup>21</sup> “Monetary Unification Will Help Stabilize the Economy,” *EFE*, 25 January.



stepped down as general secretary, handing over the reins to Díaz-Canel. But by seeking to assuage the petty bourgeoisie while cracking down on workers and the poor by eliminating “excessive” subsidies, “egalitarianism” and uniform wage scales, the

bureaucracy is pushing some of those who should be the solid base of support of the workers state into the arms of capitalist reaction. And the counterrevolutionary forces are every-ready to exploit this, as they showed on July 11.

## V. Defend the Gains of the Cuban Revolution – Smash Counterrevolution!

While opposing any and all measures that undercut or sabotage revolutionary gains, Cuban poor and working people must intransigently defend the Cuban Revolution against the imperialists, their frontmen, PR agencies and apologists who would drown them in poverty while spouting honeyed phrases about “freedom.” The magnificent achievements of Cuba’s school system that eliminated illiteracy and has educated generations of professionals, its unequaled system of medical care that is the envy of Latin America, its development of a biomedical and pharmaceutical industry capable of developing five COVID vaccines despite the imperialist blockade – none of this would be possible under capitalism. That system based on production for profit rather than human needs guarantees that those on the bottom stay on the bottom, where murderous police violence is unleashed to ensure the dictatorship of racist capitalism.

A program to combat the threat of capitalist restoration should begin with a call to **form workers councils to defend the gains of the Revolution**, not only against the Yankee imperialists and their Cuban collaborators but also against threats emanating from a bureaucracy which is sabotaging those gains. Rather than increasing the power of managers or carving up entities plant by plant, **management of state-owned enterprises** should be in the hands of **plant/workplace committees** joined together in a nationwide **assembly of workers in the socialized economy**. This could promote innovation and efficiency, not by bureaucratic dictate or market competition, but by energizing the creative capacities of the workers who know the problems better than anyone and can resolve them using their collective power. A start could be made in the electrical energy industry, where workers in the power plants of the Unión Eléctrica and distributed (local) generators could work with local workers

councils in dealing with power shortages and promote renewable energy.<sup>22</sup>

A program for workers defense of the Cuban Revolution should include **replacing the MLC stores**, which whatever limited use they may be in soaking up dollars and euros (in order to sell goods which themselves must be bought with dollars and euros), have enraged the poor, showcasing the consumer goods they cannot get. Unlike in the 1990s, when only those who received dollar remittances from Cuban exiles could shop there, today many (egged on by counterrevolutionaries) see them as symbols of bureaucratic prerogative. As some protesters yelled at PCC members on July 11, “You are the privileged ones, for sure you have MLC cards, you have food in your homes.” In East Germany, where the Trotskyists fought tooth and nail against capitalist reunification in 1989-90, hard-currency Inter-shops, along with high-priced Exquisit and Delikat stores, infuriated working people who couldn’t afford to buy there, a fury that was exploited by the counterrevolution.

Yes, there is a terrible **shortage of consumer goods**. The workers movement should **call on to China and Vietnam**, deformed workers states for which overthrow of the Cuban Revolution would be a direct threat to massively send high-quality sports shoes, consumer electronics and children’s toys (plus, given current shortages in Cuba, shiploads of rice from Vietnam). This would be a tangible example of international solidarity that could inspire besieged Cuban working people to continue resisting the imperialist onslaught. Calls by **Latin American workers demanding that their governments pay top dollar for Cuba’s COVID vaccines** could point to a source of badly needed convertible currency to pay for Cuba’s dire food shortages while saving hundreds of thousands of lives from the plague ravaging the continent. To stave off looming disaster in Africa, anti-

<sup>22</sup> Environmental Defense Fund, *The Cuban Electrical Grid* (2017).



Leticia Martínez Hernández

**Tens of thousands came out to show support for the Cuban Revolution at July 17 seaside rally in Havana. Column in the background is the remains of the former “Remember the Maine” monument erected when Cuba was a U.S. neo-colony. In 1959, Cuban revolutionaries toppled the monument, which was crowned by an eagle. The eagle must not return.**

imperialist protesters should demand that the W.H.O. send Cuba billions of dollars and euros to supply the vaccines that the imperialists refuse to provide.

Also: while the 1959 brought vast gains for Afro-Cubans together with the rest of the working people, the truth is that weaknesses of the Revolution with respect to the black population have been highlighted by the current crisis, and are being cynically exploited by the white-supremacist *gusanera*. The overthrow of capitalism was an enormous advance for Afro-Cubans, but the participation of impoverished black people in violent actions on July 11 is undeniable. Repression of leading instigators of counterrevolutionary actions is fully justified. At the same time, it is crucial to launch **workers brigades to repair the rundown neighborhoods of Havana, Cárdenas and elsewhere**. Unemployed local youth should be enrolled, providing decent wages while working with residents to reconstruct these long-neglected barrios. Building vibrant neighborhoods, providing opportunities for artists to colorfully adorn walls with murals, would inspire people and undercut the MSI mercenaries who want to entice children with visions of M&Ms and Chiclets and U.S.-style bling-laden video fantasies. At the same time, the state must aggressively **prosecute notorious discrimination against black Cubans in the tourist industry**.<sup>23</sup>

The fight to defeat the instigators, manipulators and exploiters of the July 11 protests must be waged politically, strategically and above all internationally. Defense of the Cuban Revolution is the task of the world working class, from Latin America to China and the imperialist heartlands in the U.S., Europe and Japan. Faced with the vast power of imperialism, this defense must be able to inspire the masses. The current bureaucratic leadership is incapable of doing so. Those who would write off Cuba, claiming that capitalism has already triumphed, and thus side with counterrevolution; and those who, following in the footsteps of anti-Soviet theorists of old, declare that the brittle, contradictory

<sup>23</sup> See “‘A powder keg about to explode’: Long marginalized Afro Cubans at forefront of island’s unrest,” *Washington Post*, 19 July. Also: “Blacks and the Cuban Revolution,” *Workers Vanguard* No. 585, 8 October 1993, reprinted in *Cuba: A Bureaucratically Deformed Workers State*.

bureaucracy is itself the “leading force of counterrevolution” and restoration – such pseudo-leftists turn their back on and betray the urgent struggle against the very real imperialist-orchestrated counterrevolutionary forces who exploited the suffering of the Cuban masses on July 11.

U.S. rulers have always had a special hatred of the Cuban Revolution. Under 13 Democratic and Republican presidents they have longed to “avenge” the overturn of their Mafia-infested colonial rule, their humiliating defeat at the Bay of Pigs, Cuba’s role in defending black Angola against imperialist attack, and the very survival of the defiant rebel island they long ago decreed must perish. While Trump added Cuba to the list of supposed state sponsors of terrorism, it is the CIA that sponsored the terrorist Luis Posada Carriles who organized the bombing of Cubana airlines Flight 455 in 1976, killing 73 people. The U.S.’ repeated assassination attempts vividly depicted in the British documentary, *638 Ways to Kill Castro*. In March 2003, terrorists sought to take advantage of the U.S. invasion of Iraq to spark an uprising in Cuba by hijacking two Cuban airliners and then a ferry boat.<sup>24</sup> The events of July 11 show that the anti-communist Cold Warriors in Washington will use every opportunity, including the difficulties caused by a plague that has killed hundreds of thousands in the U.S., in their unrelenting war to destroy the “first free territory of America.”

Cuba must not stand alone! The League for the Fourth International calls to **build a Leninist-Trotskyist revolutionary workers party** armed with a program to intransigently **defend the Cuban Revolution** against imperialism and internal counterrevolution; to **replace the stultifying bureaucracy** (whose pro-capitalist policies increasingly endanger the Revolution) with the **soviet democracy of workers councils** – that is, a proletarian political revolution to defend and extend the historic gains of the won in Cuba through international socialist revolution. July 11 was a wake-up call for those determined to defeat the imperialist onslaught. **Workers of the world unite to defend Cuba!** ■

<sup>24</sup> See our article, “For Revolutionary Internationalist Defense of Cuba!” *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003. Also, “Decades of U.S. Biowarfare Against Cuba,” in the same issue.



Internationalist photo

**Internationalist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth at July 15 Cuba solidarity rally in New York City.**



# U.S. Blockade of Cuba: “Bring About Hunger, Desperation, Overthrow”

It would be difficult to exaggerate the hardships caused by the U.S. “embargo” on trade with Cuba that has sought to strangle the island for over six decades. This measure of economic warfare was condemned by the United Nations General Assembly on June 23, as it has been every year since 1992 (and numerous times before then). This year the vote was 184 to 2, with only the U.S. and Israel voting against. Particularly since the counterrevolution of 1991-92 in the USSR put an end to Soviet aid, the blockade has meant that basic products like toothpaste have often been unavailable to working people. But since the U.S. further tightened the embargo in 2017, and from March 2020 on, the cutoff of tourism following the outbreak of the COVID pandemic slashed Cuba’s sources of hard currency needed to keep the economy and basic services functioning. That has meant endless hours standing in lines under broiling sun and drenching downpours to get groceries, medicines and bread.

From the outset, U.S. economic sanctions on Cuba were intended as punishment for having made a revolution. The aim was to bring down the regime by inflicting excruciating economic pain on the population. This was laid out in an internal memo by the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs on 6 April 1960 that called for “denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.”<sup>1</sup> This came only weeks after the Republican administration of Dwight Eisenhower began planning for the Bay of Pigs invasion. That mercenary *gusano* invasion was carried out by Democratic president John F. Kennedy and spectacularly defeated as Castro led workers militias into battle at Playa Girón. Having failed to crush the Revolution by force of arms, JFK ordered an embargo on trade with Cuba and turned to mounting terrorist attacks on the island.<sup>2</sup>

The blockade (it was more than just a trade embargo) continued under executive orders by successive U.S. presidents, until Democrat Bill Clinton turned it into law and intensified it in the 1992 Cuban Democracy Act and the 1996 Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Helms-Burton) Act. While some travel restrictions were eased when Democrat Obama reestablished diplomatic relations in 2015, in 2017 and 2019 Republican Trump imposed a slew of new sanctions (known in Cuba as the infamous “243 measures”) that intensified the blockade. This includes a cap on remittances from Cuban exiles to relatives, suits in U.S. courts over confiscated property in Cuba under Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, and targeting Venezuelan oil shipments to Cuba by imposing sanctions on shippers. Together with the U.S. assault on the Maduro government in Venezuela, this has sent Cuban imports of oil from there plummeting from 90,000 barrels a day in 2015 to 51,000 after 2017 to barely

<sup>1</sup> See Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958–1960, Cuba, Volume VI.

<sup>2</sup> See Salim Lamrani, *The Economic War Against Cuba* (Monthly Review, 2013).



**Effects of the blockade: bakery in Havana in May 2021. Today we have bread. Tomorrow?**

25,000 barrels a day in June, causing huge shortages in every field.<sup>3</sup>

U.S. imperialism has long used economic blackmail as part of its arsenal. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger went after Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular government in Chile, vowing to “make the economy scream” on the way to the bloody 1973 Pinochet coup. Jimmy Carter used the “food weapon” – a grain boycott against the USSR – in response to Soviet intervention in 1980 to defend a reform government in Afghanistan under attack by U.S.-backed *mujahedeen* (holy warriors). Trump sought to squeeze Cuba by using intensified sanctions and the economic toll of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the loss of tourist dollars, to provoke popular discontent. The Biden administration has not changed Trump’s policy one bit. Last year, as the Cuban economy shrank by 11%, Cuban imports plummeted by 34% in the first eight months, leading to severe shortages

<sup>3</sup> “¿Qué está causando la aguda escasez de combustible en Cuba?” Notimérica, 24 September 2019; “What the Protests in Cuba Have to Do With Venezuela,” Caracas Chronicles, 13 July; “How Venezuela’s Oil Crisis Triggered Mass Protests In Cuba,” OilPrice.com, 14 July.

of milk, butter, chicken, cooking oil, rice, corn and beans.<sup>4</sup>

Added to this is the functioning of the capitalist world market. Cuba normally imports about 70% of its food. Wheat to produce bread and pasta does not grow in Cuba’s tropical climate, the most productive milk cows require imported fodder, and output from Cuba’s underperforming agriculture has been declining since 2017. On top of the drastic fall of Cuba’s hard currency earnings and reserves, the cost of food internationally has risen more than 30% in the last year, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. Wheat was selling at \$280 a ton in April 2021, up from \$220 a year earlier; the price of chicken drumsticks doubled from January to April. Plus “the cost of international container shipping is up as much as 50% over the last year and bulk freight more.”<sup>5</sup> The result: “Cuba is facing its worst shortage of food since the 1990s” (*Economist*, 3 July).

In response to the July 11 protests,

<sup>4</sup> See “Cuba Is Running Out of Food,” Institute for War & Peace Reporting, 7 January.

<sup>5</sup> “Soaring International Prices Aggravate Cuban Food Crisis,” Reuters, 20 May.



**Workers militia members celebrate victory over the Bay of Pigs mercenary invaders, pinned down at their beachhead at Playa Girón, April 1961.**

Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador declared that “if one wanted to help Cuba, the first thing that should be done is to suspend the blockade of Cuba.” Today, many liberal Democrats and even some conservative Republicans have called to end the embargo. In March, 80 Democratic members of Congress called for lifting the “cruel” sanctions. But thanks to Democrat Clinton, the sanctions are law, and the chances of a repeal passing the U.S. Congress – where *gusano* Republicans (Marco Rubio, Ted Cruz, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Mario Diaz-Balart) and Democrats (Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair Robert Menendez) have a hammerlock on Cuba policy – are exactly zero. Campaigning against Trump, Joe Biden said he would reverse policies that “have inflicted harm on the Cuban people,” but following the recent protests the Democratic U.S. president refused to lift any of Trump’s measures.

As we warned even as many leftists were calling to put him in the White House, Biden is an inveterate anti-Communist war hawk.<sup>6</sup> Since taking office he has worked to step up tensions with Russia, and especially to escalate the war drive against China, the largest of the remaining deformed workers states. He is also worried about losing Florida to the Republicans in the 2022 midterm elections. It should be no surprise, then, that his response to the Cuba protests has been to double down on the economic blockade, denouncing Cuba as a “failed state” and Communism as a “failed system,” and now preparing new sanctions. Biden’s refusal even to lift limits on remittances to family members in Cuba (which mainly go to opponents of the government) is a clear sign that U.S. policy continues to be to strangle Cuba economically, hoping to “bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of government.”

The Cuban government has always sought “peaceful coexistence” with U.S. imperialism, a Stalinist pipe dream that will not happen. The League for the Fourth International calls to *break the blockade* and to oppose the U.S.’ “*pandemic extortion*” that seeks to further impoverish the Cuban population. But as skyrocketing costs of food, fuel and transportation underscore, the stranglehold of imperialism is not limited to a single measure or set of policies but is also the result of the dictates of the capitalist world market. Cuba cannot escape from this relentless siege by vainly seeking to conciliate the Yankee overlords, who with their Cuban henchmen would turn the island back into the neo-colony it was from the 1898 U.S. invasion until the 1959 Cuban Revolution. To break from the imperialist clutches requires the aid of the other workers states (Vietnam and particularly China), and above all *extending socialist revolution throughout the hemisphere.* ■

<sup>6</sup> See “Repression Elections 2020,” *The Internationalist* No. 61, September-October 2020; and “Democrat Biden’s Regime: Cold War and Racist Repression,” *The Internationalist* No. 62, January-March 2021.



## A Cuban Scientist Responds

# “Cuba Is Being Accused of Many Things – Let’s Fact Check Them”

*On July 22, the Cuban scientist Pedro Valdés-Sosa, whose work is closely linked with the health and medical fields in Cuba and internationally, shared some of his views and observations about recent events and the current situation. Below (reproduced from a friend’s Facebook page) is some of what he wrote.*

About the protests:

Protests are due to some people being angry about the economy. The situation is dire since it is strangled by increased Trump measures not moved a bit by Biden. Also, delays in some reforms haven’t helped. On top of that, anger due to COVID restrictions that are very necessary but painful. Understandable. Many protesters were pacific, but some turned violent and started looting and destroying cars. It seems like they are fighting for “democracy.” Even physical violence against the people supporting the government.

There have been protests of this sort in every country. As usual for Cuba, the information is being blown out of proportion by a veritable US media frenzy. This frenzy has even resuscitated the mythical “Havana Syndrome.”

The U.S. is pouring money into the anti-government people, paying for the in-

ternet and adverse social media reports.

There were countermarches (peaceful) with hundreds of times more people, not reported.... Nothing was reported in the U.S., though a bit in Europe.

Things are very calm now, but it is to be expected that there might be more problems. The whole thing is an apparent attempt by the Western powers at regime change.

Cuba is being accused of many things. Many of them by Biden, let’s take them one by one and fact check them by asking questions.

- “Cuba is a ‘failed state.’” Has it resisted the embargo for more decades than we can remember? Maybe <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/06/1094612> is communist propaganda?
- “It has mishandled the COVID crisis.” With better statistics than the U.S.?
- “It supports other dictatorial states like Venezuela.” The U.S., but not Cuba, can pick its allies? Some U.S. allies are democracies, maybe Saudi Arabia? Or the Israelis with regard to Palestinians? Did the U.S. impose an economic blockade against Chile when there were protests [in 2019]? Perhaps the definition of democracy is the defense of the gains of any country’s elite?

- He will give free internet to the people of Cuba without the consent of the Cuban government. Maybe Russia should do the same for the U.S.? Would it not be a “cyberattack”?
- He will deny the possibility of families sending funds to their relatives in Cuba since “the Cuban government will steal them.” Does it matter that he is continuing Trump’s policy to starve the Cuban people?
- He will give millions of vaccines to Cuba if he can bypass the Cuban government. This declaration requires several questions.
  - Who will distribute these vaccines since all medicine is public?
  - What of the thousands of Cuban scientists, medics, nurses that not only have bravely fought against the pandemic but also help 72 other countries?
  - What of the determined efforts of the US to embargo spare parts for ventilators and products for our pharmaceutical industry?
  - What of the 5 Cuban vaccines for COVID, two that are more than 90% effective and are distributed for free by the Cuban

government? In a country with better vaccination history and less hesitancy than the U.S.? Vaccines that could contribute to world health and diminish the vast reservoir of unvaccinated people that produces variants? But then harming the dollar input to the big U.S. pharmaceuticals is undoubtedly a crime against democracy?

*Dr. Valdés-Sosa went on to describe the effects of the intensified U.S. embargo on crucial efforts had and his colleagues have been carrying out in the midst of the pandemic:*

We were denied access to repair parts or to buy ventilators since the companies we approached were U.S.-owned.... [The institute] has reconverted its production facilities to produce hundreds of our own designed ventilators for the ICUs. Our young people are going to the epicenters of the epidemic to install these ventilators. This production is to respond to the increasing number of cases due to the new COVID variants.

At every step, we were blocked by the U.S. government. One example is a crowdfunding effort carried out in the UK that we were told it was against U.S. directives to give to the institute. ■

## Gramsci...

*continued from page 10*

that regarding the character of the October Revolution of 1917, Trotsky only “guessed more or less correctly.” He goes on to say that Trotsky could be seen as “the political theoretician of the frontal attack in a period in which such attack could only lead to defeat.”

The Trotskyoid-Gramscians explain away such polemical barrages as a result of confusion: how could Gramsci praise the united front policy, identifying it with Lenin and contrasting it with Trotsky, when this was the policy of both leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution against the policy of a generalized revolutionary offensive advocated by the so-called “left communists” at the Third Congress of the Third International? But Gramsci knew perfectly well that Trotsky favored the united front policy, since Gramsci participated in that congress. He also knew that Trotsky had written the fundamental document codifying this policy, “On the United Front”. This was not a confusion but a distortion, consistent with Gramsci’s categorical rejection of the permanent revolution.

Another example of attempts to falsely bring Gramsci closer to Trotsky has to do with the famous letter that the former wrote to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October 1926, weeks before his arrest. In it, speaking on behalf of the Political Bureau of the Italian Communist Party, Gramsci denounces the Opposition because the bourgeois press claims that “at present, according to the very

statements of the most well-known leaders of the opposition bloc of the Communist Party of the USSR, the state of the soviets, is now definitely being transformed into a pure capitalist state.” Likewise, Gramsci declares that “we consider the political line of the majority of the C.C. of the Communist Party of the USSR to be fundamentally correct,” and adds:

“the position of the opposition assails the whole political line of the C.C., going to the very heart of the Leninist doctrine and of the political activity of our Party of the [Soviet] Union. What is at issue is the principle and practice of the hegemony of the proletariat, it is the fundamental relations of alliance between workers and peasants that are put in question and in danger, that is to say, the pillars of the workers state and of the Revolution.”

The only thing he objects to is “the violent passion” with which the factional struggle was being waged in the CPSU.

To pretend that this constitutes a veiled or furtive support to the Opposition is only to delude oneself. There is a book by an American scholar, Emanuele Saccarelli, titled *Gramsci and Trotsky in the Shadow of Stalinism* (2008), that argues that “Gramsci’s complaints against Trotsky” were “used as a sort of convenient shorthand for the ultraleftism imposed by Stalin in the third period.” Gramsci was a great scholar of Machiavelli, and it may be that in part he used the figure of the leader of the Opposition leader as a target for a coded critique of Stalin (though he had no idea whether his notes would ever be published). But the Gramsci’s broad-ranging criticism and categorical rejection

of Trotsky’s policy are undoubtedly genuine and, above all, are consistent with the rest of his policy, which was rightist.

So, the question arises: if it is not out of confusion, ignorance, misunderstanding or a Machiavellian ploy, why is it that the pseudo-Trotskyists postulate the compatibility of Gramsci with Trotsky’s politics? Let us take the Trotskyist Fraction (FT, from its initials in Spanish), which let it be said in passing has written tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of words in its endeavor to combine Gramscism with Trotskyism. In a 2015 article in the FT journal, Emilio Albamonte and Matías Maiello admit the glaring contradictions between Gramsci’s and Trotsky’s approaches on a number of issues, calling them a “gap in the Italian revolutionary’s thought,” which they see as “the most important source of ambiguities in his strategic reflections” on the united front, the “war of position,” etc. But, if there are “gaps” and “ambiguities” on such important questions, why, then, do they lay claim to Gramsci?

It is because the champion of the struggle for “hegemony” under capitalism provides them with a theoretical justification for their electoralist and “democratist” politics in general. The same spokesmen elaborated the connection in more detail in a 2016 article, “Gramsci, Trotsky and Capitalist Democracy,” which lays out the guiding line of the FT’s politics. There they write that “a key point in Gramsci’s struggle against leftist tendencies in Italian communism was the development of the radical-democratic program” and that this “had many similarities” with Trotsky’s approach in Spain in

1931. They summarize the politics of the great revolutionary thus, “Trotsky: Radical Democracy, United Front, Soviets” and even claim that in the view of the founder of the Red Army, “revolutionaries are ready to raise a transitional program which includes the defense of bourgeois democracy against the attacks of the bourgeoisie in pursuit of the United Front.”

False. This is a complete misrepresentation of the politics of Trotsky, who never presented a “program of radical democracy” nor called to “defend bourgeois democracy.” Quite to the contrary, in his article, “The Tragedy of Spain” (January 1939), Trotsky states flatly that “The slogan of ‘defense of democracy’ has once again revealed its reactionary essence, and at the same time, its hollowness.” (Incidentally, for those who want to inquire further into this, they will look in vain for that article in the compilations of the CEIP [the Centro de Estudios, Investigaciones y Publicaciones León Trotsky, associated with the Trotskyist Fraction], but it will be found in the edition of Trotsky’s writings on Spain published by Fontanella.)

“Defense of democracy” was the treacherous slogan of the Stalinists and Socialists in Spain, not of Trotsky. What Trotsky *did* stand for in the imperialist – that is to say, advanced capitalist – countries, was to raise at particular moments some democratic slogans to which the bourgeoisie and the reformists were opposed. But this would be a subordinate and circumstantial element, far from a program. And, of course, in the Spanish Civil War Trotsky stood for the military



defeat of Franco's reactionary forces, while emphasizing that this required and was part of the fight for proletarian revolution against the Popular Front of class collaboration.

Then in the same text, Albamonte and Maiello develop the main aspects of the Trotskyist Fraction's politics: the priority given to electoral participation, the slogan of constituent assemblies that they raise just about everywhere, and the calls for "radical democracy" that accompany it. We heard it in this conference, too, in the presentation on August 2 by Brazilian FT leader Diana Assunção, when she counterposed, if I understood it correctly, "radical democracy" as a response to [Chilean president] Sebastián Piñera's Constituent Convention which was cooked up with the Socialist Party. But it is precisely in Chile where one can with see so clearly how the slogan of a constituent assembly served the politicians defending bourgeois rule as a "democratic" way out of the crisis in which they found themselves in October-November 2019.<sup>1</sup> The demands of the masses who rose up at that time could not be resolved under capitalism. Should the Trotskyists' alternative to the Constituent Convention be a "free and sovereign constituent assembly"? Not at all, we must fight for a workers government, based on workers councils. In Brazil, the alternative to the Bonapartist regime of Bolsonaro, Murão and the generals is neither a broad front, nor popular front, nor the PT [Workers Party], nor a bourgeois constituent assembly, no matter how radical it pretends to be, but the struggle for socialist revolution.

A side note: in Argentina, there are other sectors that criticize the fascination with Gramsci, such as the Partido Obrero and its periphery. But in reality, the practical differences are not all that great, and despite sometimes stormy disputes, they are together in the Left and Workers Front (FIT), in its latest version 2.0 of "Unity" (the FIT-U) or in previous versions of such propaganda blocs, as will be the case in future blocs as well. We have written about this in a 2018 article,<sup>2</sup> and also about the slogans calling for constituent assemblies everywhere, in 2007.<sup>3</sup>

This brings me to the second part of my presentation, namely, that the counterposition between Trotskyism and Gramscism is not limited to the theoretical field. In the first place, Gramsci not only bowed to the "general line" of the Stalinist leadership of the Comintern, but it was he

who led the purge of the left in the Italian Communist Party, in the name of "Bolshevization" which turned out to be a short step towards the complete Stalinization of the Third International. For that, he used the same bureaucratic methods that his peers employed in other Communist parties around the world, as demonstrated by the text of the Italian Trotskyist scholar, Paolo Casciola, titled "Gramsci Was Also Wrong...." Of course, the PCI left was then under the leadership of Amadeo Bordiga who, as is well known, rejected democratic slogans in general, opposed the united front policy of the Comintern advocated by Lenin and Trotsky, and ruled out participation in bourgeois elections and bourgeois parliaments. Gramsci's politics went to the other extreme, to the right.

I would also like to point out that, although there was obviously an evolution from the views of the young Gramsci to his reflections in middle age, under terrible prison conditions, many of the themes found in his *Notebooks* are present in earlier years. In particular, when he speaks of an "organic crisis," in which "the ruling class has lost consensus," depending solely on "pure coercive force" because the masses "have turned away from traditional ideologies," he describes it thus: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born." And he adds: "in this interregnum the most varied morbid phenomena take place." Evidently, he is speaking, among other things, of the irruption of fascism.

In fact, Gramsci used very similar expressions in 1920, in the months leading up to the famous occupation of factories in Turin in September of that year. Not only he, but the entire "maximalist" leadership of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI)<sup>4</sup> declared itself convinced that the situation was revolutionary, but that the masses were not yet mature enough to launch a struggle for power. A meeting of the PSI National Council was held in Milan in April 1920, at the same time as a general strike was taking place in Turin, the largest in the entire history of Italy up to that time. Serrati, the main centrist leader, opened the debate, insisting that "we are in a different situation from that of the Russian comrades, who have found themselves in an environment where the state had disintegrated and with it all the bourgeois institutions. We are confronted with the bourgeois state which is still standing with all its forces. Therefore, we need different tactics" (*Avanti!* 20 April 1920). So the centrist leader, who was the main obstacle to the proclamation of a communist party in Italy, presents the same argument made by Gramsci in his *Notebooks* to justify the superiority in the West of the "war of position."

<sup>4</sup> In 1912, the former reformist leaders of the PSI were replaced by a heterogeneous centrist "Maximalist" leadership, so-called because it emphasized the socialist Maximum Program. The Maximalists consolidated their hold in 1914 and during the war the PSI took a neutral line, in contrast to the German, French and other sections of the Second International that shamefully supported "their own" bourgeoisies in the war. However, this neutrality reflected in part the position of the Italian bourgeoisie, which initially sought to stay out of the war, and was counterposed to the policy of *revolutionary defeatism* of the Russian Bolsheviks under Lenin. By 1920, a left wing had formed inside the PSI sympathizing with the Bolshevik Revolution but hesitating to break with the centrist "Maximalists" led by Giacinto Menotti Serrati.

Serrati went on to insist that "the situation is in fact revolutionary," because "the whole bourgeois world is crumbling, creating for us the possibility of taking the leadership into our own hands." He ended by saying that this had been the case since the end of the world war, but in spite of the fact that "the proletariat had been nurturing ardent hopes, we saw that we still did not have what's needed to take power." And so he refused to extend the general strike to the rest of the country, leading to its defeat. Responding to that betrayal, Gramsci later wrote (*L'Ordine Nuovo*, 8 May 1920) blaming the "general state of Italian society," stating that "it is certain that the working class of Turin was defeated because in Italy, the necessary and sufficient conditions for an organic and disciplined movement of the whole of the working class and peasantry do not exist, they have not sufficiently matured." He resorted to the same arguments as Serrati, who used such justifications to stab the Turin workers in the back.

Then the same thing happened with the factory occupations in September of the same year. Everyone, including spokesmen of the bourgeoisie, expected that the metal workers, with Gramsci's *Ordine Nuovo* group at their head, would use the opportunity to strike the final blow. But no: although they had occupied the factories, they did not take to the streets to fight against the very weak police and military forces, they did not call on the railroad workers to go on general strike throughout Italy. In fact, they did not even stop production in those factories. Why not? Because in the Gramscian conception of factory councils, the point was to show the bosses, and the workers themselves, that they were capable of directing production. For Lenin and Trotsky and the young Communist International, in contrast, workers control was the prelude to insurrection. But neither in 1920 nor in his *Notebooks* did Gramsci concern himself with the preparation of workers insurrection. Instead, he fought to conquer hegemony in society.

The judgment of the leaders of the Communist International on the events of September 1920 and the preceding months in Italy was expressed by Lenin, at the Third Congress of the Third International, held the following year, when he said: "Was there a single Communist who showed his mettle when the workers took over the factories in Italy? No. At that time,

there was still no communism in Italy." And that included Gramsci. PCI historian Paolo Spriano summed up *Ordine Nuovo's* policy as reflecting that of the entire left wing of the PSI, "which fits perfectly into classical maximalism, with its ... scarlet language, combined with eternal waiting for the better moment, and its continuous postponement." The result in September 1920 was another defeat, and this time of a disastrous character, because it was the fascists who mobilized, seizing the streets and launching a white terror against the peasants who had risen up, and were abandoned by the Gramscians of Turin.

Gramsci's policy has been summarized by Italian historians as "molecular disruption" of the bourgeois administration and "capillary construction" of a supposed dual power. With leftist arguments, in fact he concurred with the paralysis of the other centrist sectors of the Italian Socialist Party. This policy was responsible for the defeat of the workers struggles of the Italian *Biennio Rosso* (Red Two Years) of 1919-1920 and the consequent isolation of the young Soviet republic, with its disastrous aftermath. In Italy, the triumph of fascism two years later with the March on Rome of Mussolini and his *squadristi* was the punishment of history for the proletariat not having seized power at the right moment. And the road that led to the disaster of 1922 was the result of the betrayal of September 1920, which in turn was the faithful reflection of the policy of eternal waiting of Gramsci and the other leaders of the socialist left in Italy.

At that time of that historic disaster, Gramsci again expressed his policy of passivity. In a newly rediscovered article he wrote for *Pravda*, dated 7 November 1922, that is, on the fifth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, speaking of the fascist march that occurred a few days earlier, Gramsci wrote that "The seizure of power by the fascists reduces the activity of the Italian Communist Party to that of a purely conspiratorial movement." But he states that "the contradictions of Italian society ... have clearly manifested themselves in the last two years" and "Thus, despite the gravity of the present situation, the future prospects for the proletariat and its party are not particularly negative." Well, this was not the case, unfortunately.

The struggle for revolutionary Trotskyism demands a severe historical judgment on the counterposed Gramscian heritage. ■



"Red Guards" outside occupied factory in Turin, September 1920.

<sup>1</sup> In October-November 2019, a social explosion of massive protests engulfed Chile. Starting out as opposition to fare hikes on urban transport, as the upheaval radicalized, its demands broadened into a protest against the rising cost of living, low wages, miserable pensions, the high price of medicines and health care, neoliberal economic policies and social inequality in general, as well as against the Chilean constitution of 1980 (issued during the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet). By mid-November the right-wing government of Sebastián Piñera managed to defuse the protests with the announcement of an agreement cooked up with the "moderate" opposition parties to hold a plebiscite on the constitution, ultimately leading to the Constituent Convention now (2021) underway.

<sup>2</sup> See "The Left Front in Argentina: A Reformist Electoral Cartel," *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018.

<sup>3</sup> See "Trotskyism vs. 'Constituent Assembly' Mania" (October 2007), *The Internationalist* No. 27, May-June 2008.



# “Tax the Rich”...

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taxes on family incomes above \$450,000 a year, a capital gains tax, an inheritance tax, a wealth tax, a financial transactions tax and “fair corporate taxes.” The same tax proposals are raised by the “Invest in Our New York” campaign, a coalition including New York Communities for Change, Make the Road, Alliance for Quality Education and other NGOs (non-governmental organizations), the Working Families Party (WFP) and NYC-DSA.

This is the Democratic Party-NGO complex,<sup>3</sup> plus the WFP, a long-time satellite which gives Democratic candidates another ballot line to run on, and the DSA, whose candidates run as Democrats and which is functionally part of this capitalist party. (There are currently six DSA Democrat NY state legislators.) The stated aim of the package of a dozen bills in the New York legislature, said the NYC-DSA, was to ensure “that rich New Yorkers are taxed their fair share.” Other proposals, including a fund to provide aid to workers, mainly immigrants, excluded from federal pandemic programs also called for financing by a “billionaires tax,” which DSA Democrat star Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (“AOC”) endorsed in a viral video last summer.

Now Democratic president Joe Biden weighed in with his \$6 trillion budget for fiscal year 2022, to be paid for with a “\$3.6 Trillion Tax Increase on the Rich and Companies” (*New York Times*, 29 May). The aim, says his budget document, is to “ensure that large corporations are paying their fair share” and that “high-income Americans pay the tax they owe.” Even Bill Gates and Warren Buffett have called for raising income taxes on the rich. It seems that everyone from Biden and the billionaires themselves to Democratic “progressives” like Bernie Sanders, the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America, and its opportunist left tails are agreed that the rich need to pay their “fair share.” But what exactly does that mean?

The idea that capitalism can be made “fair,” a staple of bourgeois ideology, was unmasked by Karl Marx a century and a half ago. For pseudo-socialists and labor reformists, the appeal to “tax the rich” is yet another means to subordinate the working class to the Democratic Party, calling

<sup>3</sup> Several are led by members of the Center for Popular Democracy, successor to the ACORN pro-Democratic Party voter registration group.



“Tax the Rich” protest outside Washington, D.C. mansion of Amazon owner Jeff Bezos, May 2021.

on people to pressure their “elected representatives.” It is similar in this way to the calls last summer to “defund the police,” which as we said then sought to divert mass protests in the streets against racist cop murder into lobbying city councils over budget allocations. In this case, the NYC-DSA “blanketed key lawmakers’ districts with door hangers” urging people to tell their legislator to “tax the rich.”<sup>4</sup> Revolutionary Marxists, in contrast, are not in the business of advising the capitalist state on how to “fairly” finance its apparatus of war and repression, but call to *expropriate* the capitalist exploiters.

For capitalist politicians, “tax the rich” rhetoric is a way to hoodwink working people into thinking that something is being done about the obscene capitalist inequality that has escalated for decades as workers’ wages stagnate. It then skyrocketed during the pandemic as the Internet moguls reaped superprofits. Biden, who had more backing from billionaires than Trump, ran his presidential campaign in part off disgruntlement with Trump’s tax cuts. Yet his budget proposal preserves much of Trump’s cuts. Under the Biden budget, only capitalists in the very top bracket will face a pre-Trump marginal rate, an increase of a mere 2.6%, while the corporate income rate will go up just 7%, still lower than before Trump took office. Still, AOC opined that Biden “definitely exceeded expectations that progressives had.”

As for the Biden administration’s plan to almost double the capital gains tax,<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> “New York Raises Taxes on the Rich as State Shifts Leftward,” *HuffPost*, 11 April.

<sup>5</sup> Capital gains are the profit from selling a capital asset (like stocks and bonds) for more than that its cost.

from 20% to 39.6%: “Wealthy Americans will avoid paying 90% of the estimated \$1 trillion increase in investment taxes that President Joe Biden is proposing this week, according to a new study from the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton Business School. The Wharton researchers concluded that tax avoidance, much of it legal, would cut nearly \$900 billion of what the proposed increase on capital gains taxes could raise for the government.”<sup>6</sup>

Calls to “tax the rich” are just tinkering, and won’t affect the fundamentals of a system that produces fabulous wealth for the owners of capital and grinding poverty for millions, while the working class lives paycheck to paycheck. In New York, a few tax hikes on the wealthy were actually passed in April. “Invest in Our New York” cheered, “We won!” But while their raft of tax bills was supposed to raise from \$48 billion to \$70 billion in new revenue, what they “won” was only \$4.5 billion in increased top-tier and corporation income taxes. The additional tax bite for a couple making \$2.5 million a year would be about \$21,000, “roughly equal to the cost of a used Chevy Malibu,” as columnist Ginia Bellafante noted in the *New York Times* (11 April).

These calls also blur over the obvious fact that the government already has at its disposal more than enough funds to meet dire human needs. Such demands are of a piece with reformist calls for “money for jobs/books/education, etc., not for war/bombs/occupation.” They are phrased in terms of budgetary priorities, when the issue is class interests. As liberals push the lie that the capitalist state just doesn’t have enough money, proposals to fill supposed budgetary shortfalls are painstakingly debated and scrutinized, even as enormous subsidies are handed over to the rich without batting an eye. Under the \$2 trillion CARES Act, \$500 billion in free money was earmarked specifically for large corporations, with no strings attached.<sup>7</sup>

The real question to pose is, who does the state power serve? And the answer is: tax hike or no, whether conservatives or “progressives” are in office, this state defends capitalism against the working people. The Democratic politicians who last year imposed racist curfews and dispatched militarized police forces to assault anti-racist protestors are hardline defenders of U.S. imperialism. Biden’s budget says that its aim is to “position the United States to

<sup>6</sup> “Wealthy would dodge 90% of Biden’s capital gains tax increase, study says,” *CBS News*, 29 April.

<sup>7</sup> “The U.S. plans to lend \$500 billion to large companies. It won’t require them to preserve jobs or limit executive pay,” *Washington Post*, 28 April 2020.

out-compete China,” to “counter the threat from China” and “the growing ambitions of China,” etc. – in other words, to rev up U.S. imperialism’s anti-China war drive. As for military outlays (\$753 billion, up from \$740 billion under Trump), the *Times* (29 May) summed it up: “The Pentagon pivots to a possible war with China.” *This is an anti-China war budget.*

Revolutionary Marxists’ critique of liberal tax gimmickry obviously does not mean *opposing* raising taxes on the capitalist class, or measures in the interest of working people, such as to increase funding for schools or to provide emergency aid to excluded workers, that are linked to increased taxes on the wealthy. But the “tax the rich” campaigns mean voting for budgets of the capitalist state, the enforcer of oppression. Together with talk of “our tax dollars,” they spread illusions that the capitalist state is somehow accountable to “the people.” The American ruling class never was and never will be beholden to working people. Our aim is not to exact a pittance from the wealthy, but to expropriate the capitalist class so that the exploited and oppressed can take their destiny into their own hands. In a word, revolution.

## How Much the Ruling Class Really Pays

Calls to “tax the rich” can in fact mean just about anything. Promises of higher taxes on the wealthy and increased social services are easy crowd pleasers on the campaign trail for Democrats. And they don’t have to worry about following through: whatever gets passed in the House, they can blame Republicans and “moderate” Democrats in the Senate for it not getting enacted. While many would-be leftists were skeptical about Biden, even after they called to put him in office, there is a lot of misplaced hope in “progressive” Democrats, from Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to Elizabeth Warren. AOC’s proposal to increase the top marginal tax rate sounds hefty, but even *Bloomberg News* (7 January 2019) pointed out, “Ocasio-Cortez’s 70% Tax Idea Isn’t Very Radical,” and that “it won’t do much to... raise revenue or lower inequality.”

A glimpse at history shows this. The U.S. maintained top marginal income tax rates of 70% or more for decades, from the Democratic Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) administration in the 1930s and ’40s up until Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, peaking at 94% in 1944-45. Under Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower in the early 1950s, the top rate was 91%. Far from serving to reduce inequality, the purpose of this tax policy was, first of all, to fund the imperialist World War II, from which the United States emerged as the dominant world power. Tax rates remained high through the Cold War as U.S. imperialism sought to spur counterrevolution in the bureaucratically degenerated or deformed workers states of the Soviet bloc and China, including waging hot wars in Vietnam and Korea, and building up an enormous (and enormously expensive) nuclear arsenal.

Although taxes then were higher than they are today, the ruling class never actually paid a rate anywhere near 70-90%. Accounting for all taxes on individual incomes, payroll, estates, corporate profits, properties and sales on the federal, state and local levels, the effective tax rate on the “top 1%” peaked during the 1940s and ’50s at



Photos: from left, Joshua Roberts /Reuters; Logan Cyrus / Agence France-Presse; Mike Blake / Reuters

**Modern-day capitalist robber barons Jeff Bezos, Michael Bloomberg and Elon Musk all managed to pay zero federal income taxes.**





**DSA supporters in New York City distribute door hangers calling to pressure Democratic state legislators to “tax the rich,” February 2021.**

between 40% and 45% of pre-tax income. By 2018, with the top income tax bracket at 39%, the effective tax rate on the richest 400 families was down to 23%, lower than the rate on the bottom half of U.S. families. For the bourgeoisie, tax avoidance has become a science, what with the much lower capital gains rate (now 20%); use of “stock options” (taxed as capital gains) for executive pay; tax-deductible “business expenses”; tax dodges like “carried interest,” and myriad other “loopholes.”

Add to that additional deductions for donations, including those that go to think tanks and bourgeois propaganda “foundations,” for owning private jets (as a business expense), yachts (chartered as a separate business), even pools (for proven “medical purposes,” of course). For the last several years Tesla CEO Elon Musk’s salary has been equivalent to the California minimum wage – and he boasts that he’s never even cashed the checks. “In 2018, Tesla founder Elon Musk, the second-richest person in the world, also paid no federal income taxes,” reported *ProPublica* (8 June). Yet in 2018 his company gave him \$2.3 billion in stock options, “one of the ten largest pay packages of all time” (*New York Times*, 13 June). And then there is Donald Trump, who got away with paying only \$750 in federal income tax in 2016 and 2017.

Meanwhile, the tax rate on the income of corporations is also deliberately much lower than that on individual income, and myriad deductions lower it even further. Take Amazon, which last year paid a federal corporate tax for the first time since 2016, shelling out a mere 1.2% of pre-tax earnings while the statutory rate was 21%. In 2018, after making \$79 billion in profits Amazon paid nothing, and received \$4.3 billion in rebates from the state. So, yes, wealthy individuals and giant corporations get away with paying very little in taxes, while working people are left hold-

ing the bag. But what the “tax the rich” Democrats are calling for would hardly change that.

Elizabeth Warren, now on the Senate Finance Committee, is pushing her “wealth tax.” This would consist of a paltry two cents on the dollar for fortunes greater than \$50 million. AOC’s 70% top marginal income tax rate would only be on incomes over \$10 million. The cut-offs on these tax plans would let plenty of very rich people off the hook. As we have pointed out about the Occupy Wall Street slogans of “the top 1%” against “the 99%,” often invoked by Bernie Sanders, these give vent to the frustrations of those facing economic hardship under decaying capitalism without challenging the *property relations* that breed this inequality. What, for example, about the members of the ruling class in the second percentile? And what about the racist cops doing their dirty work, whose incomes put them in the “99%” but who are enemies of the working class?

Fiddling with tax rates is not by any means radical. Increasing taxes on the rich is neither incompatible with the capitalist system in general, nor with the free-market “neoliberalism” that the reformist left lambasts. Some defenders of capitalism support raising taxes on certain sectors of the ruling class in order to promote productive investment rather than financial speculation. So while DSAers hailed Elizabeth

Warren as a “foe of Wall Street”<sup>8</sup> – even as this former Republican described herself as “capitalist to the bone” – during the Democratic presidential primaries, *The Economist* (22 June 2019), hailed Warren as the “saviour of capitalism.” This mouthpiece of London financiers quoted Fox News host Tucker Carlson’s remarks that Warren’s policies to revive industry are “like Donald Trump as his best.”<sup>9</sup>

### Expropriate the Capitalist Class with Workers Revolution

“Tax the rich” proponents argue that raising rates on the wealthy would generate revenue to fund social benefits and services for the working class. Again, the issue is not of insufficient funds. Enormous subsidies are handed over to capitalists, and vast expenditures are needed to fund U.S. imperialism’s war machine and domestic repression. The state, which is what taxes go to finance, isn’t some tool that can be taken hold of by anyone, it is the apparatus by which the ruling class defends and upholds its rule, keeping the machinery of exploitation running by squeezing profits out of the labor of the working class. The tax code expresses the budgetary needs of the state; any allocation of revenue towards social programs is part of and subordinate to that goal.

To the degree that they serve to defuse protest, such social measures may contribute to prolonging the life of the capitalist system. Neither they nor the tax system fundamentally change the position of the working class in respect to the ruling class. In an online appendix to their book *The Triumph of Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Their Taxes and How to Make Them Pay*, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman (who are advocates of Elizabeth Warren’s wealth tax) show that from 1962 to 2018 working-class incomes were consistently lower after factoring in both taxes and cash transfers from the government, concluding: “the working-class does not benefit on net from cash distribution.”<sup>10</sup> Using different metrics, Marxist economist Anwar Shaikh calculates the ratio of social benefits to taxes paid by U.S. workers from 1952 to 1993, finding that the working class as a whole received less than it paid for, in effect subsidizing the ruling class via taxes as well as through its labor.<sup>11</sup>

The 1950s, ’60s and early ’70s were marked by grotesque episodes of racist repression, while poverty was rampant in the South, Appalachia and the Northern ghettos, yet the working class received a significantly higher share of national income than it does today. The core reason is not taxes, but the strength of the labor movement. Private sector unionization peaked at 35% in the 1950s compared to 6.3% in 2020.<sup>12</sup> From the 1970s onward, seeking to offset capitalism’s falling rate of profit, the ruling class went on the offensive, outsourcing much of U.S. industry and bust-

ing unions. That offensive, and the lack of large-scale and militant working-class resistance due to the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy that chains the unions to the Democratic Party, are key to the growing inequality we have witnessed over the past several decades.

Calls to “tax the rich” perpetuate this pattern, by spreading illusions and helping divert the struggles of workers and the oppressed into pressuring the Democrats. Under both Bill Clinton (1993-2000) and Barack Obama (2009-2016), Democratic administrations continued the same anti-worker economic policies as Republicans Bush I and II. Meanwhile, they blocked workers’ struggles with anti-labor laws such as the Taft-Hartley Act, administered by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), set up by FDR under the 1935 Wagner Act to bring unions under the thumb of the capitalist state. Today, the response of the AFL-CIO tops to the defeat of the union organizing drive at Amazon in Bessemer, Alabama, has been to lobby for the Democrats’ PRO (Protecting the Right to Organize) Act bill – i.e., appealing to the capitalist state.

It’s not just the labor fakers sitting atop the unions who peddle this fool’s gold. In March, various union reform groups in New York City – including the Movement of Rank and File Educators (M.O.R.E.) in the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), Local 100 Fightback (TWU) and DC 37 Progressives – joined with the NYC-DSA in a “Tax the Rich Teach-In” to promote the bills in Albany put forward by the “progressive” Democrats’ Invest in Our New York campaign. At the same time, M.O.R.E. issued yet another statement against “being forced back into school” while lamenting that “the ultra-wealthy continue to fight as hard as they can against paying their fair share in taxes.” In the UFT Delegate Assembly, it put forward a “Resolution on Tax the Rich, Invest in Our NY.”

While the self-proclaimed “social justice unionists” of M.O.R.E. were phone-banking to get teachers “not to go in to work” and to support the Democrats’ “tax-the-rich” bills, Class Struggle Education Workers (CSEW) called instead to “Use Union Power to Reopen Schools Safely,” calling “For Union-Led Teacher-Student-Parent-Worker Control of the Schools” and denouncing the “bipartisan capitalist war on public education.”<sup>13</sup> (The CSEW is a union tendency which works fraternally with the Internationalist Group.) On Amazon, the IG calls to unionize the internet retail giant with hard class struggle, while warning against illusions in the Democrats and the PRO Act, which will continue the subordination of the unions to the NLRB.

At bottom, this is a question of class. Calls to “tax the rich” take responsibility for financing the machinery of the capitalist state, the instrument by which the bourgeois rulers regiment working people and the oppressed. We demand that undocumented immigrant workers get the desperately needed unemployment benefits they have been denied throughout the duration of the COVID pandemic, and billions of dollars go to safely reopening public schools. But we don’t act as advisors to the capitalists and their politicians saying where this money should come from. That’s their problem. And the only way

<sup>13</sup> See “Chaotic Reopening of NYC Schools: This Is What Mayoral Control Looks Like,” *The Internationalist* No. 62, January-March 2021.



**Democrat-WFP-DSA “tax the rich” campaign declares victory in New York state budget, April 2021.**

<sup>8</sup> Zaid Jilani, “Why the Differences Between Sanders and Warren Matter,” *Jacobin* website, 8 January 2019.

<sup>9</sup> “Warren, the saviour of capitalism,” *The Economist*, 22 June 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Slide 61, at <https://gabriel-zucman.eu/files/SZ2019Slides.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Anwar Shaikh, “Who Pays for the ‘Welfare’ in the Welfare State? A Multicountry Study,” *Social Research*, Vol. 70, No. 2 (Summer 2003).

<sup>12</sup> Lawrence Mishel, Lynn Rhinehart and Lane Windham, “Explaining the erosion of private-sector unions,” *Economic Policy Institute*, 18 November, 2020.



## “Tax the Rich”?

# The Working Class Paid for the New Deal

The example cited by liberals and reformist pseudo-socialists who promote tax-the-rich schemes as a means to redistribute wealth and amply fund social services is Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal. This is the reference point for Ocasio-Cortez's "Green New Deal" in particular. They would have us believe that the New Deal was a huge wealth redistribution funded by robust progressive taxation on the wealthy. Right-wingers called it "socialism." Both are far from the truth. The aim of the New Deal was to save the ruling class from the threat of revolution during the worst economic crisis in the history of capitalism, and to rev up "national unity" leading into World War II. Symbolic concessions to labor were needed to co-opt a radical labor movement led by "reds," including the Stalinist Communist Party in the new mass unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and Trotskyist Teamsters in Minneapolis.

At the time, certain sectors of the U.S. bourgeoisie denounced Roosevelt as a "traitor to his class," but this was either cynicism or an inability to see the big picture. FDR legally recognized the right to organize unions and collectively bargain in order to exert state control over labor, which was exploding with general strikes, sit-down strikes and other militant tactics. Limited state-funded public employment benefitted consumer-goods manufacturers and retailers, and although the owners of heavy industry were not too happy, such measures ultimately served to prolong American capitalism's survival. The business journalist Ferdinand Lundberg described the meaning of Roosevelt's policies in his book profiling the U.S. capitalist elite, *America's 60 Families*, published during Roosevelt's second term:

"The 'New Deal' is not revolutionary

nor radical in any sense; on the contrary it is conservative.... Roosevelt, addicted as he is to verbal castigation of the wealthy, was supported in 1932 and again in 1936 by some of the richest families of the country.... The 'New Deal,' in short, has represented one side of a grave split in the camp of the big capitalists ... although questions relating to capitalism and its basic theory have not really been in dispute."

—Ferdinand Lundberg, *America's 60 Families* (1937)

FDR was up-front about the aims of his New Deal. As he introduced his Revenue Act of 1935, dubbed by some of its proponents the "Soak the Rich Tax," he explained: "I am fighting communism.... I want to save our system, the capitalistic system." The Act raised the statutory rate on the top tax bracket up to 75%, but in reality, in the words of a bourgeois historian, it "neither soaked the rich, penalized bigness, nor significantly helped balance the budget."<sup>1</sup> The New Deal was funded in the first place, not by taxes, but by government debt. The state handed out loans to sectors of big business through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and sold the debt as bonds to the banks.

A year later, the conservative London *Economist* applauded Roosevelt's efforts to shield the ruling class, calling the New Deal "a great success."<sup>2</sup> Although it helped the bourgeoisie stave off the threat of workers revolution, it failed to stimulate economic growth while continuing to balloon debt. It was not until World War II that U.S. imperialism began to reemerge from the Depression, through the direct intervention of the state in channeling investment and by the destruction of the productive power of competing capitalist powers, later to be rebuilt on U.S. credit. As far as taxation is concerned, *the New Deal was not progressive*,

<sup>1</sup> Paul Conkin, *The New Deal* (Crowell, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> "The New Deal," *The Economist*, 3 October 1936.

but deeply regressive. FDR's wealth taxes were purely cosmetic, openly flouted by the capitalists, and contributed little in revenue.

The New Deal was actually financed in large part by excise taxes, hidden taxes on particular manufactured goods that targeted working-class consumption, already suppressed as a result of the Depression. They even taxed matches, playing cards, movie tickets, candy, chewing gum, phone calls, radios and electricity. These excise taxes which hit working people hardest contributed far more revenue during the New Deal than did income taxes on the wealthy. In all:

"[S]ocial insurance and indirect taxes (tariffs; the excise taxes on liquor, tobacco, and selected manufactured items; and the agricultural processing taxes) became the largest share of revenue, jumping from 33 percent in the supposedly business oriented New Era [under the previous Hoover administration] to 47-65 percent in the Forgotten Man's New Deal."<sup>3</sup>

FDR's legacy with regards to taxation was not "taxing the rich," but taxing the poor ... and slapping federal income taxes on the working class. Roosevelt was responsible for the expansion of federal income tax from a "class tax," exclusively levied on the wealthy, to a "mass tax" imposed on the majority of the working class. Only then did income taxes finally exceed the contribution of excise taxes to government revenue.

During the '30s no more than 5% of the population paid federal income tax. To fund U.S. involvement in the Second World War, the Roosevelt administration aggressively pushed to expand the tax base, principally with the Revenue Act of 1942, which also charged an additional Victory Tax and reduced exemptions. Payroll tax withholding was introduced the follow-

<sup>3</sup> Mark H. Leff, *The Limits of Symbolic Reform: The New Deal and Taxation, 1933-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1984).

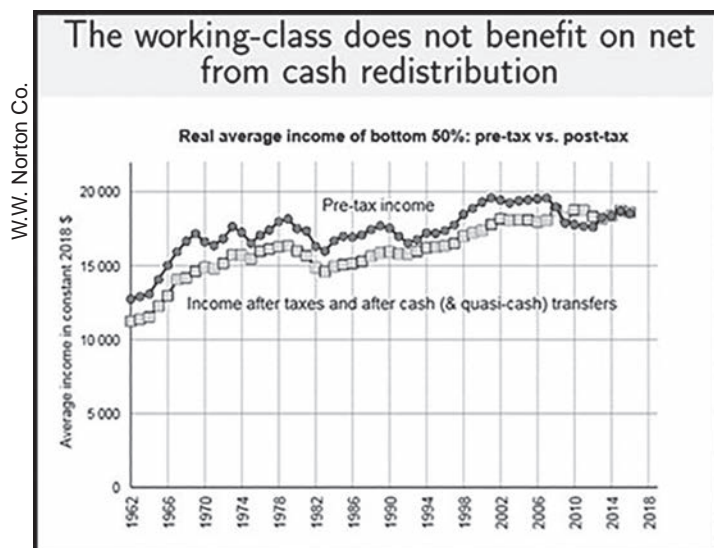
ing year, and excise taxes were further increased. At the same time as prices rose, wages were frozen by FDR and a "no-strike pledge" was forced on workers by the government through the union bureaucracy. Between 1940 and 1945 the number of federal taxpayers sextupled, with about 90% of U.S. workers filing income tax forms and 60% paying taxes on their incomes.<sup>4</sup>

As the U.S. was gearing up to join in the imperialist slaughter of World War II, from which it would emerge with the victor's spoils, George Novack of the Socialist Workers Party (at that time the voice of authentic Trotskyism) wrote an epitaph for the New Deal:

"Roosevelt rode into office thundering against 'the economic royalists' on the home front. In 1932 he threatened 'to drive the money-changers out of the temple.'... Now, in 1940 we hear equally martial music from the White House but on a different theme. The struggle against 'the malefactors of great wealth' at home has been set aside for the struggle against 'foreign aggressors.'... The New Deal has been replaced by the War Deal.... [It] was the price American capitalists had to pay for insurance against social revolution.... Roosevelt's war policy shows how, under the capitalist regime, the aims, and interests of Big Business force themselves through against all obstacles, until they become the official governmental program, even of erstwhile opponents."

— George Novack, "Autopsy of the New Deal," *Fourth International*, May 1940. ■

<sup>4</sup> Carolyn C. Jones, "Class Tax to Mass Tax: The Role of Propaganda In The Expansion of the Income Tax During World War II," *Buffalo Law Review* 37, No. 3 (1988); IRS, "The Wealth Tax of 1935 and the Victory Tax of 1942" ([https://apps.irs.gov/app/understandingTaxes/teacher/whys\\_thm02\\_les05.jsp](https://apps.irs.gov/app/understandingTaxes/teacher/whys_thm02_les05.jsp)).



In appendix to their book, *The Triumph of Injustice: How the Rich Dodge Their Taxes and How to Make them Pay*, Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman show that working class does not benefit from cash transfers through taxes.

to win these and other crucial demands is through hard class battles, not by leaving doorhangers or voicemails for your local congressperson and state senator.

Some disingenuous opportunist left-

ists try to justify the "tax the rich" slogan by citing the call of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) for "a heavy progressive or graduated income tax." That demand, raised on the eve of the 1848 revolution, corresponded to a historical period when in much of Europe, including Germany, a bourgeois revolution against feudalism and its remnants in the absolutist monarchies was posed. Marx

and Engels proposed a program of immediate tasks, "a first step in the revolution," to "win the battle of democracy," consisting of demands that were compatible with a bourgeois revolution but pointed in the

direction of attacking the rights of property. Their ten-point program also included "Free education for all children in public schools," a simple democratic demand, written into many bourgeois constitutions, but which is frequently under attack in capitalist countries.

Yet since the turn of the 20th century, we have been in the era of imperialism, of decaying capitalism. In the U.S., the income tax was graduated, with higher rates for the rich, from its introduction by Woodrow Wilson in 1913. This is almost everywhere the case, for the simple reason that even "soaking the poor" can only raise so much. That doesn't make a "progressive" income tax "anti-capitalist" – its purpose is to defend the interests of capital, particularly in war. Wilson introduced it to finance World War I and Roosevelt greatly expanded it in WWII. As for the rich paying "their fair share," there is no "fairness" under capitalism. The profit system *can't* satisfy human needs, as was shown by the horrendous death toll of the COVID pandemic, with the failure to stop the spread of the deadly virus, the underproduction of

medical supplies, etc.

Revolutionary Marxists – Trotskyists – insist that the capitalist ruling class can't be taxed into providing for social needs, it must be expropriated once and for all. To do that requires an unrelenting fight for working-class political independence from the capitalist rulers. As Karl Marx put it in 1871, "The workers' party must never be the *tagtail* of any bourgeois party; it must be independent and have its goals and its own policy." The Internationalist Group calls to break with the Democrats, Republicans, and all bourgeois parties to form a revolutionary workers party that can lead the struggle to expropriate capitalism through socialist revolution.

"Fairness"? As Marx wrote in response to the slogans of the reformists of his day:

"Instead of the conservative motto: 'A fair day's wage for a fair day's work!' they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword: 'Abolition of the wages system!'"

— Karl Marx, *Value, Price and Profit* (1865) ■



# Class Battle in Alabama: Victory to the UMWA Warrior Met Coal Strike!

JULY 31 – For four months, some 1,100 coal miners organized in four United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) locals have waged a bitter strike against the Warrior Met Coal company in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama. Miners are striking to reverse the vicious terms of a 2016 contract, which imposed a pay cut of \$6/hour, eliminated fully paid health and medical coverage – a key issue in this dangerous industry – and slashed benefits so that workers only receive three holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas) and two sick days per year. Now mine workers, black and white, are locked in a bitter struggle to reverse those cuts. The company is flat out refusing to do so, “offering” chicken feed while cynically saying it “will continue to work with the UMWA,” even as it uses scab labor to break their strike.

With contract negotiations stalled, on July 28, hundreds of miners rallied outside the Midtown Manhattan headquarters of Black Rock, the biggest shareholder in Warrior Met mines and by far the largest investment management company in the world. Wearing camouflage t-shirts with the slogan “We are one,” busloads of miners along with retirees from Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia filled both sides of the street, chanting, “No contract, no coal! Warrior Met Coal ain’t got no soul.” UMWA president Cecil Roberts, AFL-CIO bureaucrats, various union representatives, and actress/activist Susan Sarandon spoke. Members of IATSE (stage hands), RWDSU (retail/wholesale) and PSC (City University faculty and staff) came out. Passing trucks and taxis honked in solidarity. But much more is needed to win this strike.

The *Internationalist* was there as the strike began at 10 p.m. on April 1. On the picket lines the next day, strikers told us they are fed up with the brutal conditions. The half hour that miners get for lunch – underground – is deducted from their pay. Premium pay for working on Sundays and other overtime provisions were eliminated in the 2016 contract. The elimination of full health care coverage was a particularly heavy blow as mine workers suffer respiratory disease, injury and death at extremely high levels. Now there is a \$1,500 deductible after which miners have to pay 20% of bills which can run into thousands of dollars. After the sick days are used up, miners could be terminated if they miss four days of work due to illness or injury. Workers regularly pull 10-12-hour shifts, six days a week. One told us, “Our kids don’t even know us.”

On April 7, angry strikers walked out of a “contract explanation meeting” held after the UMWA announced a tentative agreement with Warrior Met. Miners told us that the tentative deal offered only a \$1 raise and another 50 cents after three years, adding up to \$1.50 in a five-year contract, plus two more holidays and a \$500 signing bonus. Not even a pretense of making up for the wages and benefits lost in 2016. Workers voted the deal down by an overwhelming vote of 1,006 to 45. One remarked that almost all members vote on contracts because they know that having a union contract can be the difference between life and death in the mines. They well remember that

at Mine No. 5 on 23 September 2001, a cave-in caused a release of methane gas that caused two explosions, killing 13 miners.

Warrior Met Coal was founded in 2016 as the successor company to Walter Energy, which declared bankruptcy the year before after coal prices plummeted and demand fell. The company assets were sold to its creditors while the courts allowed Walter Energy to rip up its contract with 1,500 unionized miners. In February 2016, the UMWA then signed the concessionary contract with the creditors, Coal Acquisition LLC, which became Warrior Met Coal, headed by the same CEO, Walter Scheller, who was CEO of Walter Energy. Soon after, coal prices rapidly rebounded and Warrior Met hired and rehired 1,000 miners in 18 months. Due to mine closures globally (and China’s restrictions on its coal production, in order to limit carbon emissions), Warrior Met soon began making fabulous profits.

From 2017 to 2019 Warrior Met Coal had a rate of profit of 58%, raking in profits of \$1.45 billion, while sustaining only a minor loss of \$35 million during the pandemic recession year of 2020. Walter Scheller and the other bosses and creditors became very wealthy while the workers slaved away in the deep underground mines. Last year the company announced a major investment of \$300 million to open new mines in northern Tuscaloosa County. Warrior Met produces high quality metallurgical (“met”) coal for the global steel industry, exporting to Asia, Europe and South America. It also sells natural gas, which is extracted as a byproduct of the coal production for the Blue Creek coal seam, which is expected to yield coal for another 50 years.

From the beginning, Alabama state troopers, Tuscaloosa county sheriff’s deputies and private security have patrolled entrances to the No. 4 and No. 7 mines, the No. 5 preparation plant and the central shop, in order to ensure that “contractors” and other scabs can enter freely. Initially, militant miners picketed the entrances but mostly just delayed the entry of the scabs, rather than stopping them. After a week, the courts issued an injunction limiting the number of pickets at an entrance and designated their location, well away from the entrances. The union tops immediately bowed to the anti-union injunctions, as UMWA president Roberts said “Our members respect the guidance of the court.” But the cops and the courts are bosses’ tools – their very purpose is to ensure “order” for and to serve the capitalist ruling class.

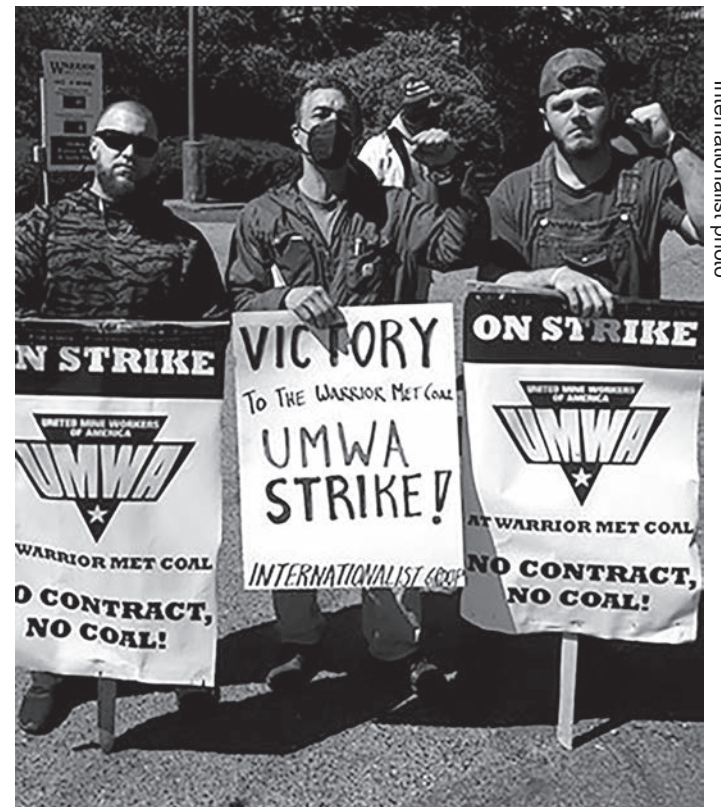
On several occasions scab vehicles have run into union picketers, resulting in injuries and hospitalization, while scab production has proceeded. In response to the refusal of Warrior Met bosses to negotiate and the frustration of the miners, subsisting on \$700 every two weeks in strike pay, the union has carried out occasional actions. On May 25, union president Roberts, UMWA District 20 vice president Larry Spencer and nine others were arrested for trespassing after sitting in at the No. 7 mine entrance. On June 15, entrances were blocked after miners and supporters parked their trucks end-to-end. The police had the trucks towed away. These ac-

tions point to what has been missing from the strike: sustained mass, militant labor action to *shut down the mines and the processing facilities.*

For example, union train operators refused to cross the picket lines to pick up coal, but they just climbed out of the cab at the company entrance. This allowed supervisors to move the train into and out of the yard, and then they would resume transport of the coal. Just as *picket lines mean don’t cross*, real labor solidarity means *no handling or transport of scab products, period.* The bosses bellyache that this violates the Taft-Hartley law? Tough. The UMWA and other industrial unions were built through hard class struggle that *defied* court injunctions, scabherding cops and anti-labor laws. What’s been desperately needed to win this strike is a mobilization of Alabama workers and supporters of labor and black rights to *build mass, militant picket lines that scabs can’t cross* and that keep the cops at bay. Contractors who the bosses have brought in the mines over the years to do specialized tasks should be enrolled in the union.

An example for miners to follow was the action by miners in Harlan County, Kentucky, two years ago, after 1,700 miners were left unemployed by a sudden bankruptcy of Blackjewel LLC, then the sixth-largest coal producer in the U.S. Miners blocked a CSX train loaded with coal, preventing it from leaving the mine. (See our article “Harlan Miners’ Fight: Inspiration for Workers Everywhere,” *The Internationalist*, August 2019) After blocking the train for two months and filing lawsuits against the company, the miners won a settlement of \$5.1 million for wages owed for 1,100 miners. This action recalled the long history of bloody class struggle in Harlan County, from the 1930s into the ’70s, where miners waged pitched battles against the bosses’ thugs, the cops and the National Guard.

One event early on in the strike was the appearance of an anti-labor group calling itself the World Socialist Web Site, or as we call it, the World Scab Web Site. This outfit goes around the country wherever there is a strike or an organizing campaign underway and puts out leaflets and articles *agitating against the unions.* In Bessemer, Alabama earlier this year, they called on Amazon workers to vote “no” in the union election! These phonies have no place on a picket line. Worse yet, by posing as “socialists” they confuse some strikers and give union bureaucrats an excuse to kick leftists off the picket lines. Don’t be misled. *Real socialists are the most dedicated defenders*



The strike begins, April 2. Key to winning the strike is shutting down scab production.

*of the trade unions and workers’ struggles against the bosses.*

At the July 28 rally outside Black Rock in New York, UMWA president Roberts declared that the union would win and never be defeated. He referred to the eleven-month strike against Pittston Coal in 1989-90, saying “Pittston is no more, but the UMWA is still here.” Pittston was a hard-fought strike by 1,900 miners in which miners suffered 3,000 arrests, shut down scab operations and for several days occupied a coal processing plant. But the union tops, including Roberts and Richard Trumka, then head of the UMWA and now president of the AFL-CIO, throttled every attempt to spread the strike, refusing to stop trains carrying scab coal and ordering steel workers to cross picket lines set up by miners at steel plants across the Midwest. The final contract was a betrayal of the miners, with concessions on health care and work rules and 500 miners laid off, replaced by scabs, and the union stuck with \$64 million in fines.

The Warrior Met strike began as the 5,800 mainly black workers at the Amazon warehouse in Bessemer were voting in an NLRB election to decide whether the Retail, Warehouse and Department Store Union (RWDSU) would represent the workers there. Many striking miners, about a third of whom are black, supported that struggle, which unfortunately was defeated. We in the *Internationalist Group* called for a *class-struggle fight to organize Amazon.* That means strikes and labor solidarity *action*, and not playing by the rules of the bosses’ government and its agencies. Rather than looking to phony “friends of labor” in the Democratic Party to enact labor law reform like the PRO Act (don’t hold your breath), we need to revive the traditions that built the unions in the first place and build a *class-struggle workers party.*

*Victory to the Warrior Met UMWA strike!*

Internationalist photo





Riot police commandos during eviction of Liebig 34 building, October 2020.

## Berlin...

*continued from page 12*

For its part, in the aftermath of the Federal Constitutional Court decision overturning Berlin's rent cap law, R.I.O. called for work stoppages against rent increases, but then in the next breath calls on the government to pay tenants who have had to pay back rent, and to "massively tax" companies that demand repayments (*Klasse gegen Klasse*, 16 April). But since there is no rent cap, this would be passed on in the form of new rent increases. On the referendum, R.I.O. focuses on the call for expropriating real estate companies without compensation. Revolutionaries, of course, oppose paying even one euro to these parasites. Yet the constitutional clause on which this referendum is based mandates compensation.

In its propaganda, R.I.O. calls on the DGB to "win the right to housing through strikes" (*Klasse gegen Klasse*, 2 September). As if it were so easy. In another piece it calls for "no profits from rent" and for a "massive program of public housing construction, paid for by property taxes and taxing the profits of the large real estate corporations" (*Klasse gegen Klasse*, 8 September). This is the usual "tax the rich" rhetoric common to all reformists and bourgeois "progressives." And since the referendum for a municipal takeover of about one-seventh of Berlin's housing would have to be implemented by the city/

state government, R.I.O.'s call, although with slightly more militant language, is like those of the SAV, SOL and ArbeiterIn-nentmacht, amounts to a pressure tactic on the popular front.

Municipalization would be a supportable minimum reform, but hardly a first step towards "socialism." It would simply return to state control various holdings sold off after 2006. It could perhaps put the brakes on runaway rent increases for some tenants. But it would not solve the need for new housing. Far from building public housing, the "red-red-green" Senate is now buying back, at inflated prices, run-down housing that it had previously sold to Deutsche Wohnen and Vonovia. Some in the referendum movement envisage a scheme in which representatives of the tenants and workers would be involved in administering municipalized housing. But when implemented by a capitalist government, these schemes would be at best tokenistic and, like trade-union bureaucrats sitting on company supervisory boards, would help chain the working class to the bosses.

With millions of people who have been hit by the coronavirus and the resulting lockdowns (e.g., small businesses, freelancers, workers on reduced work schemes) unable to pay rent, genuine revolutionaries defend rent strikes and resistance against evictions. Unoccupied apartments, which in Berlin are so plentiful that they could provide housing for all the homeless, should be occupied with the

backing of labor, so that no one should be thrown on the street during this pandemic. But instead, the red-red-green coalition government has taken the opportunity to liquidate various occupied buildings/centers (Liebig 34 last fall, Meuterei this year) as well as dispersing homeless encampments that are getting in the way of the real estate sharks. Mobilizing the workers movement against such attacks is essential.

In addition to the Berlin Tenants Union, a number of important unions are supporting the "Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen" referendum, including the GEW (education), Ver.di (services), IG Metall (auto) and IG Bau (construction). Their power must be harnessed to turn even minimal reforms into reality, particularly as the SPD and Greens, while not opposing the referendum outright, have no appetite for "socialization" of any kind. But the various ostensibly revolutionary groups in and around the Left Party are mainly engaged in pressure politics on the capitalist government, while blowing "pink soap bubbles" with their various schemes to resolve the housing crisis under capitalism. This is just municipal reformism, when what's required is revolutionary class struggle.

Written almost a century and a half ago, Friedrich Engels' pamphlet on *The Housing Question* (1873) was a polemic against the petty-bourgeois socialists of his day, notably Pierre-Joseph Proudhon with his push for home ownership by the workers. According to the Proudhonist, says Engels, "capital invested in houses shall produce no interest," just as today R.I.O. today calls for "no profits from rent." Engels goes on:

"But one thing is certain: there are already in existence sufficient buildings for dwellings in the big towns to remedy immediately any real 'housing shortage,' given rational utilization of them. This can naturally only take place by the expropriation of the present owners and by quartering in their houses the homeless or those workers excessively overcrowded in their former houses. Immediately upon the proletariat conquering political power such a measure dictated in the public interests will be just as easy to carry out as other expropriations and billeting are by the existing state."

Engels' conclusion: "As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labor by the working class itself."

In the propaganda of the opportunist left over the housing question in Berlin, you will look in vain for calls for *socialist revolution*. To achieve "affordable housing," at most they call for "socialization," "nationalization under democratic control," "socialist measures," "expropriation without compensation" or even an occasional mention of "socialism," but all without bringing down the capitalist state. Instead, they all seek to exert pressure on that state to resolve the crisis. Ultimately, resolution of the housing question can only come in the framework of a collectivized, planned economy. And as the influx of Swedish and U.S. capital into the Berlin housing market underlines, rooting out the parasites means *international socialist revolution*. ■

## Cuba...

*sigue de la página 32*

cubana bajo el asedio de anticomunistas y puesta en riesgo por la política privatizadora de la burocracia gobernante, la trotskista LIVI llama a **movilizar consejos obreros para defender las conquistas de la Revolución Cubana!**

### Protestas "Made in Miami"

No cabe duda de que lo que avivó las manifestaciones es el fardo de las increíbles privaciones que la población ha enfrentado en meses recientes. El desabastecimiento de alimentos es bien real y resulta directamente de la imposibilidad de Cuba de conseguir divisas fuertes (moneda convertible) mediante exportaciones debido al bloqueo económico, así como al colapso del turismo como resultado de la pandemia. Asimismo, los apagones se deben a que algunas plantas generadoras tuvieron que desconectar unidades para la realización de reparaciones demoradas como resultado de la imposibilidad de importar repuestos. La primera protesta ocurrió en San Antonio de los Baños, al poniente de La Habana, en respuesta a un apagón en medio del calor estival.

En la protesta que reunió a varios cientos de personas en San Antonio, los videos muestran a los manifestantes pidiendo vacunas, pero también coreando consignas anticomunistas como "libertad", "abajo la dictadura" y "patria y vida" —en contraposición con la consigna de "patria o muerte", estrechamente asociada con la Revolución Cubana. Con todo, Cuba ha combatido extraordinariamente bien la epidemia del coronavirus. Cuba ha desarrollado varias vacunas y ya está administrando dos de ellas con más del 90 por ciento de eficacia, la Soberana 2 y la Abdala, que comenzaron a ser distribuidas en masa el 9 de julio.

Videos de la protesta anticomunista en San Antonio de los Baños han sido transmitidos reiteradamente en Internet. Lo que no se muestra es que un par de horas más tarde hubo una segunda marcha en San Antonio compuesta por varios cientos de partidarios del gobierno, incluidos trabajadores de la planta local de tabaco. El presidente cubano y secretario general de Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) Miguel Díaz-Canel habló con residentes en sus casas y se dirigió a la prensa en la plaza central de la localidad. Más tarde apareció en televisión, radio e Internet para hablar sobre la escasez de alimentos y medicinas, los cortes de energía y la campaña mediática para desacreditar a Cuba, y concluyó con un llamado "a todos los revolucionarios a salir a las calles a defender la revolución en todos los lugares".<sup>1</sup>

No se trató de una "erupción espontánea", como los medios lo describen. Agencias estadounidenses han invertido grandes cantidades de dinero desde hace años para usar el Internet para incitar e instigar la contrarrevolución en Cuba. En 2010, la infame Agencia para el Desarrollo Internacional de EE.UU. (USAID) lanzó la tramposa aplicación de mensajería ZunZuneo con la esperanza de que cuando alcanzara una masa crítica, los operadores pudieran insertar "contenido político con el propósito de inspirar a los cubanos a organizar 'smart mobs' (turbas convocadas por internet) —muchedumbres masivas repentinas que puedan disparar una

<sup>1</sup> "La orden de combate está dada, a la calle los revolucionarios," CubaDebate, 11 de julio

## The Internationalist



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Primavera Cubana”.<sup>2</sup> Lo que ocurrió el 11 de julio fue la realización de este proyecto con el empleo de Facebook y Twitter. Pero hasta esto exige tener “activos” en el lugar.

El 11 de julio, mientras que los videos y tuits aparecían en línea, eran bombeados en las redes sociales mediante miles de mensajes, para lo que se “hizo un uso intensivo de robots, algoritmos y de cuentas recién creadas para la ocasión”.<sup>3</sup> El sitio cubano CubaDebate (12 de julio) informó que un analista de datos español, Julián Macías Tovar, documentó que la primera cuenta de Twitter en usar el hashtag #SOS-Cuba, perteneciente a un usuario español, envió 1,291 tuits el 11 de julio, y más de un millar un día antes. Éstos fueron reposteados por otras cuentas, de modo que el 11 de julio hubo “cientos de miles de tuits y la participación de muchas cuentas de artistas” acerca de las protestas en Cuba. Un segundo análisis, realizado por Mint Press (16 de julio), señala también el frecuente empleo de fotografías de grandes manifestaciones gusanas en Estados Unidos en artículos acerca de las (mucho menores) protestas en Cuba, así como varias fotos etiquetadas como protestas en La Habana cuando en realidad muestran a cientos de partidarios de gobierno.

“Disidentes” cubanos en la nómina de EE.UU.

La CIA, la NSA, USAID, la National Endowment for Democracy (NED), el Departamento de Estado y demás agencias del gobierno de Estados Unidos gastan vastas sumas de dinero cada año para financiar la subversión anticomunista en Cuba.

En lo tocante al Movimiento San Isidro, el periodista Ed Augustin, en un reportaje publicado en el *Guardian* de Londres (6 de diciembre de 2020), entrevistó a un miembro del MSI, Esteban Rodríguez, quien se describió a sí mismo como “*influencer* en redes sociales”. El artículo señala que “Los medios estatales han presentado a los miembros del Movimiento San Isidro como mercenarios norteamericanos”. De hecho: “Hay clara evidencia de que algunos elementos del Movimiento San Isidro tienen lazos con el gobierno de EE.UU. Esteban Rodríguez trabaja para ADN Cuba, un sitio de noticias en línea con sede en Florida”. Augustin cita la opinión aprobatoria de Rodríguez con respecto al fortalecimiento de las sanciones en contra de Cuba, además de su afirmación de que “Si hubiera estado en EE.UU., habría votado por Trump”.

Rodríguez no es el único partidario de Trump en el MSI. Cuando un policía cubano llegó a la casa de Denis Solís González el pasado 7 de noviembre para entregar un emplazamiento para que se presentara ante un tribunal, el rapero afrocubano filmó el encuentro en el que, junto con insultos homofóbicos, grita “¡Donald Trump 2020! Trump es mi presidente!” Solís posteó entonces su video en Facebook. El principal dirigente del MSI es Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, descrito en los medios como “artista de performance”. En abril, cuando preparaba una “muestra artística” dirigida a los niños que consistía en pinturas de envolturas de caramelos, la televisión cubana transmitió un programa que mostraba un contrato entre el National Democratic Institute (NDI) y Otero Alcántara con el que se otorgaba a éste

<sup>2</sup> “US secretly created ‘Cuban Twitter’ to stir unrest,” AP, 3 de abril de 2014.

<sup>3</sup> “Investigación confirma la perversa operación de redes sociales contra Cuba,” CubaDebate, 12 de julio.

un estipendio de “hasta mil dólares” al mes, a cambio de un “informe mensual sobre el uso de estos fondos”.

Otro rapero afrocubano que habla a nombre del Movimiento San Isidro es Maykel Osorbo. En un post en redes sociales que fue presentado en la TV Cubana el 11 de diciembre, Osorbo urgía a Trump a invadir a Cuba. Comienza llamando a intensificar el bloqueo contra Cuba, diciendo que debería imponer “un parón [bloqueo] de verdad” con “las costas bloqueadas”, de modo que “no entra nada para adentro, no sale nada para afuera”. Finalmente declara: “Yo apoyo ahora mismo una invasión... Vengan p’acá, los estamos esperando”. Osorbo y otro miembro del MSI coprodujeron la canción “Patria y Vida” —que se ha convertido en el himno anticomunista— junto con el millonario artista de hip-hop Yotuel Romero y algunos reguetoneros negros en Miami.

Por su parte, la NED lista proyectos recientes incluido el “Empoderamiento de artistas del Hip-Hop como líderes sociales” (para “crear conciencia acerca del rol que los artistas del Hip-Hop tienen en el fortalecimiento de la democracia en la región”) y “Promover la libertad de expresión en Cuba por medio de las artes”. Claramente, el financiamiento de la contrarrevolución en Cuba es un gran negocio.

La burocracia socava las conquistas de la Revolución

Las causas esenciales e inmediatas de la aguda crisis económica y médica que hoy enfrenta Cuba radican en el hecho de que esta pequeña isla se encuentra bajo implacable asedio del imperialismo y sujeta a los brutales dictados del mercado capitalista mundial. Entretanto, la dura realidad es que los efectos del bloqueo también se han visto agravados por la política de la dirección del Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC), que a lo largo de la última década ha buscado abrir la economía socializada al “sector privado”.

El trasfondo de esta política se retrotrae al origen del estado obrero deformado cubano. Mientras los guerrilleros del victorioso Movimiento 26 de Julio, basado en el campesinado, buscaban en 1959-1960 realizar una reforma agraria de amplio alcance, el chantaje económico de Washington los empujó a nacionalizar las empresas de propiedad extranjera que dominaban la economía cubana. Arrojada a los brazos de la URSS, la dirección cubana procedió a la construcción de un estado obrero (burocráticamente deformado) que tenía como modelo a la Unión Soviética de la época.

En consecuencia, dado que *en la perspectiva estalinista* la revolución socialista internacional está fuera del orden del día, la alternativa a la ineficiente gestión burocrática de la economía es la implementación de medidas privatizadoras que aumentan el peligro de una restauración capitalista. En 2018-2019, Raúl Castro y Díaz-Canel impulsaron una nueva constitución, cuyo Artículo 22 formalmente reconoce, junto con la propiedad estatal de “los medios fundamentales de producción” (definidos como la forma de propiedad principal), también la “privada: la que se ejerce sobre determinados medios de producción por personas naturales o jurídicas cubanas o extranjeras”.

Ahora, en medio de la pandemia, el dirigente del PCC Díaz-Canel ha promovido la implementación de estas reformas capitalistas. En octubre, se decretó un complejo de medidas supuestamente destinadas a incrementar la competitividad, la llamada

Tarea Ordenamiento, que entre otras cosas busca eliminar “subsidiarios excesivos” y “gratuidades indebidas”, así como “evitar el igualitarismo” (!) y, en cambio, “subsidiar a las personas”. La principal medida de la Tarea Ordenamiento es la eliminación del sistema monetario dual. Esto significó una devaluación del 96 por ciento. El salario mínimo de los trabajadores fue quintuplicado, pero los ahorros de la pequeña burguesía fueron borrados.

Con su terapia de choque supuestamente “socialista” y “reformas” peligrosamente procapitalistas, la dirección burocrática del estado obrero deformado cubano promueve medidas que alientan el crecimiento de fuerzas contrarrevolucionarias. Al intentar aplacar a la pequeña burguesía mientras aprieta las tuercas a la clase obrera y los pobres al eliminar los subsidios “excesivos”, el “igualitarismo” y la escala uniforme de salarios, la burocracia empuja a quienes deberían ser una sólida base de apoyo al estado obrero a los brazos de la reacción capitalista. Y las fuerzas contrarrevolucionarias están listas para explotar esta situación, tal como hicieron el 11 de julio.

¡Defender las conquistas de la Revolución Cubana! ¡Aplastar la contrarrevolución!

Un programa para combatir la amenaza de restauración capitalista debe comenzar con un llamado a *formar consejos obreros para defender las conquistas de la Revolución*, no sólo en contra de los imperialistas yanquis y sus colaboradores cubanos, sino también en contra de las amenazas que emanan de una burocracia que está saboteando dichas conquistas. En lugar de aumentar el poder de los directores de empresa o de desmantelar entidades planta por planta, la *gestión de empresas estatales* debe estar en manos de *comités de planta o de lugar de trabajo* reunidos en una *asamblea nacional de trabajadores de la economía socializada*. Esto podría promover la innovación y la eficiencia, no mediante el dictado burocrático o la competencia en el mercado, sino mediante la vigorización de las capacidades creativas de los trabajadores que son los que conocen mejor que nadie los problemas y que pueden resolverlos usando su poder colectivo.

Un programa para la defensa obrera de la Revolución Cubana debe incluir el *reemplazo de las tiendas MLC*. Sí, hay una terrible *escasez de bienes de consumo*. El movimiento obrero debe *llamar a China y Vietnam*, estados obreros para los que la caída de la Revolución Cubana representaría una amenaza directa, a que envíen masivamente zapatos deportivos de alta calidad, electrodomésticos y juguetes.

Y también: aunque la Revolución de 1959 implicó vastas mejoras para

los afrocubanos junto al resto de la clase obrera cubana, la verdad es que la debilidad de la Revolución con respecto a la población negra ha sido subrayada por la crisis actual, y está siendo cínicamente explotada por la supremacista blanca gusanera. Es crucial organizar *brigadas obreras para reparar los barrios decaídos de La Habana, Cárdenas y otras localidades*. Al mismo tiempo, el estado debe agresivamente *combatir la notoria discriminación en contra de los cubanos negros en la industria del turismo*.

Los gobernantes norteamericanos han tenido desde siempre un odio especial en contra de la Revolución Cubana. Los eventos del 11 de julio muestran que los anticomunistas guerreros de la Guerra Fría en Washington aprovecharán cualquier oportunidad, incluidas las dificultades ocasionadas por una peste que ha matado a cientos de miles en EE.UU., en su incansable guerra para destruir al “primer territorio libre de América”.

¡Cuba no debe estar sola! La Liga por la IV Internacional llama a *construir un partido obrero revolucionario leninista-trotskista* armado con el programa de la intrasigente *defensa de la Revolución Cubana* en contra del imperialismo y la contrarrevolución interna; a *reemplazar la esclerótica burocracia* (cuya política procapitalista pone cada vez más en peligro la Revolución) con la *democracia soviética de los consejos obreros* —es decir, una revolución política proletaria para defender y extender las conquistas históricas conseguidas en Cuba mediante la revolución socialista internacional. El 11 de julio fue un llamado de alerta para todos los que están determinados a derrotar la arremetida imperialista. *Proletarios de todos los países, ¡uníos en la defensa de Cuba!* ■

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Instigadores contrarrevolucionarios explotan frustración por crisis económica

## La verdad acerca de las protestas en Cuba

**¡Defender la Revolución en contra del imperialismo norteamericano y sus testaferros!**

**¡Luchar por la revolución socialista internacional!**

**¡Romper el bloqueo! ¡Abajo el chantaje pandémico!**

**EE.UU., Mafia gusana de Miami: ¡saquen las manos de Cuba y Haití!**

**¡Movilizar consejos obreros para defender las conquistas de la Revolución Cubana!**

Publicamos a continuación extractos del artículo que está disponible en versión completa en Internet a la URL: <http://www.internationalist.org/la-verdad-acerca-de-protestas-en-cuba-2106.html>.

23 de JULIO de 2021 – Las protestas que tuvieron lugar en varias decenas de ciudades y pueblos de Cuba, así como en diversos lugares en la capital y sus alrededores, el 11 de julio son las mayores movilizaciones antigubernamentales desde el inicio de la Revolución. Aunque fueron alimentadas por la desesperación provocada por la escasez de alimentos, la falta de medicinas y los apagones que han asolado la isla tras la pandemia del coronavirus, las manifestaciones fueron instigadas, manipuladas y explotadas por fuerzas que buscan derribar la Revolución Cubana. Cuba cuenta con un sistema ejemplar de salud pública que ha sido capaz de contener al virus de mucho mejor manera que prácticamente cualquier otro país del planeta aparte de China. Sin embargo, los gobernantes norteamericanos



**Carros de la policía volteados por manifestantes antigubernamentales en La Habana, 11 de julio.**

buscan aprovecharse de la crisis económica producida por la pandemia y de la fatiga resultante de 60 años de bloqueo imperialista. En esta difícil situación, **el primer deber de los comunistas revolucionarios, tanto en Cuba como a escala mundial, consiste en combatir activamente las fuerzas de la contrarrevolución capitalista.**

Los medios imperialistas se mostraron sorprendidos por la “erupción aparentemente espontánea” en lo que describe como un “estado policíaco”, en contra de la incapacidad del gobierno cubano de “proteger a

la población ante una economía en declive, cortes de energía y de los estragos del coronavirus” (*Washington Post*, 12 de julio). El virulento exilio en Florida empleó las redes sociales para vociferar que las protestas no tenían nada que ver con el virus ni los apagones, sino que representaban un levantamiento en contra del “gobierno comunista”. Para estos gusanos, como tuiteó el senador de Florida Marco Rubio, “El pueblo en #Cuba protesta en contra de 62 años de socialismo, mentiras, tiranía y miseria, no para expresar preocupación por el incremento en los contagios y muertes de COVID”.

Es absurda la idea de que el pueblo de Cuba añora la “libertad” de la dictadura de Fulgencio Batista en los años 1950, derribada por el ejército rebelde dirigido por Fidel Castro el 1º de enero de 1959. Sin embargo, estas declaraciones dejan bien claro qué es lo que se proponen los gusanos que instigaron las protestas.

Cuba está sumida en la más profunda crisis económica desde el “Periodo Especial” de los años 1990, cuando la contrarrevolución

dirigida por los imperialistas que destruyó a la URSS cortó el vital apoyo económico soviético a la isla. El desabasto actual, aunque no es tan severo como entonces, ha dificultado tormentosamente la vida cotidiana en la isla. Además, ahora la población cuenta con internet móvil de manera que las partes interesadas pueden diseminar ampliamente sus “noticias”, sean verdaderas o falsas. Por añadidura, el exilio contrarrevolucionario en la cercana Florida está ansioso de provocar caos en la región en la cauda de la derrota de “su” presidente, Donald Trump, en noviembre pasado.

El número de participantes en las protestas del 11 de julio parece relativamente limitado: entre 3 y 5 mil en La Habana, unos cuantos cientos o unas pocas decenas en ciudades y poblados más pequeños en cuatro de las ocho provincias de Cuba. Difícilmente puede llamarse a esto un levantamiento. Pero el hecho de que se realizaran simultáneamente en diversas localidades es un hecho ominoso – aunque el hecho de que ocurrieran en dichas localidades y no en otros puntos es un elemento fundamental. No se trató de nada espontáneo. Par muchos participantes se trató, sin duda, de un grito de desesperación ante los apagones, las interminables colas y todas las demás dificultades que los cubanos han tenido que aguantar durante años debido al espantoso bloqueo económico. Pero las protestas fueron un acto político y, a juzgar por los videos que fueron publicados en línea, estuvieron encabezadas por grupos de provocadores que establecieron la tónica; su diseminación fue resultado de una sofisticada operación de Internet mediante miles de tuits automatizados, y fueron pregonados por los portavoces del imperialismo norteamericano, desde el republicano Rubio, hasta el demócrata Joe Biden.

En contraste, frente a la movilización contrarrevolucionaria, el Grupo Internacionalista y la Liga por la IV Internacional (LIVI) llaman a **defender la Revolución Cubana en contra del imperialismo norteamericano y sus testaferros**, lo que subraya la urgencia de luchar por la **revolución socialista internacional**. En contra de la venenosa palabrería sobre un “corredor humanitario” que sirva de cortina de humo para la intervención imperialista, llamamos a **romper el bloqueo y a barrer con el chantaje pandémico**. Con la economía socializada *sigue en la página 30*



**Decenas de miles salieron a las calles para mostrar su apoyo a la Revolución Cubana en una concentración frente al mar en La Habana el 17 de julio.**