

Oppose Imperialist-Provoked Russia-Ukraine War – For Revolutionary Struggle Against the Capitalist Rulers in Moscow and Kiev!

Behind the War: U.S./NATO War Drive Against Russia, China

FEBRUARY 28 – On February 24, Russian president Vladimir Putin launched a military operation in Ukraine. The first day consisted of dispatching troops to bolster the breakaway “people’s republics” of Donetsk and Lugansk, accompanied by air strikes against military targets in many parts of Ukraine. This quickly turned into an invasion by Russian ground forces surrounding and launching attacks on several Ukrainian cities. After previously talking of defending the embattled regions of the Donbass, upon launching his military attack Putin declared its purpose to be to “to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine.” This is now a war between the Russian capitalist state, with its nationalist ruler in Moscow, and that of Ukraine, whose nationalist regime in Kiev has acted as a cat’s paw of Western imperialists and uses fascist forces to besiege the Russian-speaking population of southeastern Ukraine. We Trotskyists call for revolutionary defeatism on both sides in this reactionary nationalist war, for internationalist proletarian struggle against both capitalist regimes and, above all, against the U.S. and European rulers who set off this conflagration.

Having provoked this war, the U.S. government of Democrat Joe Biden and its European allies, accompanied by a chorus of liberal and “left” camp followers, spread the lie that they and their flunky president in Kiev are supposedly defending “democracy.” In reality, the main enemies of the world’s workers and oppressed that have spurred this escalating conflict are the U.S. and West European imperialists, through their military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). After proclaiming a U.S.-dominated “New World Order” with the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union three decades ago, the NATO imperialists have sought for years to encircle post-Soviet,



As part of NATO military exercise Baltops, U.S. Marines practice landing on beach in Lithuania 25 miles from Russian territory (Kaliningrad region), 4 June 2018. The op was held simultaneously with two other exercises in the Baltics involving 25,000 troops from at least 22 NATO countries. The NATO imperialists hold huge war games every year practicing war on Russia.

now-capitalist Russia, incorporating the nationalist capitalist regimes of former Soviet bloc countries as their instruments.

The masters of Wall Street and Wash-

ington are desperately seeking to shore up decaying U.S. world hegemony following their humiliating defeat and flight from Afghanistan last year following two decades of imperialist occupation. Since the 1990s they have ramped up their drive to the east, adding more and more East European client states to NATO and provocatively pushing to move its front line to Ukraine, on Russia’s western border. After goading Putin into taking action, rejecting out of hand any security guarantees for Russia and sharply increasing shelling of the Donbass region, they have now ordered economic sanctions against Moscow. These measures and NATO’s arms deliveries to Ukraine are part of gearing up for an imperialist World War III, against Russia and particularly China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state.

We reiterate the League for the Fourth International’s call to “Defeat U.S./NATO War Drive and Sanctions Against Russia!” (*The Internationalist*, 23 February). In that statement, issued before Putin launched the attack on Ukraine, we called (and continue to do so today) to “defend self-rule in the breakaway regions of southern and eastern Ukraine and to defeat the war drive against Russia and China.” We also declared that “If clashes lead to a full-blown war between Russia and Ukraine, Trotskyists would be for a policy of revolutionary defeatism in both of these regional powers, calling for workers to actively oppose the war effort of ‘their’ bourgeoisies and to wage intransigent class

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**Ukrainian Fascists and Nationalists Hands Off Donbass!
Defend Self-Rule in Southeast Ukraine!**

Defeat U.S./NATO War Drive and Sanctions Against Russia!

Statement of the League for the Fourth International

The following statement was issued by the Executive Committee, League for the Fourth International on February 23.

On February 21, after weeks of increasingly hysterical imperialist war propaganda and daily escalating attacks by Ukrainian government and fascist/nationalist forces against the breakaway Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine, Russian president Vladimir Putin formally recognized the independence of these embattled self-styled people’s republics and sent in troops. The United States, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the European Union immediately condemned Russia for its defensive action and announced they would impose severe economic sanctions. **Class-conscious workers and all opponents of**

imperialism should denounce the U.S./NATO imperialist war drive, which raises the spectre of world war. The imperialists seek to isolate, provoke and demonize Russia, which despite Putin’s imperial ambitions is an intermediate, regional capitalist power.¹ **Yet the imperialists’ ultimate aim is to spark counterrevolution in China, Cuba and North Korea.**²

The next day, U.S. president Joe Biden seized upon Russia’s action to declare it “the beginning of a Russian invasion of Ukraine,” in order to declare eco-

¹ See “The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism’” (May 2014), *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015.

² “Oppose G7/NATO Imperialist War Drive Against China, Russia,” *The Internationalist* No. 63, April-June 2021.

omic sanctions against Russia, as was foreseen. (See “Spike U.S./NATO Anti-Russia War Threats and Provocations!” *The Internationalist*, 20 February 2022). Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, however, is still having difficulty following the imperialist line and declared, “There will be no war” with Russia. The announced U.S. sanctions, which Biden called the “first tranche,” with more to follow, would block Russian investors from raising loans from the West, something that Putin has been trying to cut down on for several years anyway. The German government declared it would pause certification of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, bringing Russian natural gas to Europe, for a new security review.

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Spike Biden/NATO Anti-Russia War Threats and Provocations!



Internationalist Group at February 19 protest in New York City's Grand Central Terminal.

As the U.S. and NATO imperialists were daily escalating their warmongering propaganda, the League for the Fourth International participated in protests in New York and Berlin on February 18-19. Our slogans highlighted the revolutionary program for international class struggle against the imperialist war drive, which has brought the threat of World War III to a level unseen for decades.

In reality, there were very few protests by the left, much of which is itself imbued with the anti-Russia phobia promoting by its liberal big brothers. A number of these fake-left groups embraced the Ukrainian nationalist/fascist Kiev coup in 2014, engineered by U.S. Democratic president Barack Obama and his secretary of state Hillary Clinton, that overthrew the elected pro-Russian president and launched a war against the population of the Russian-speaking regions of eastern and southern Ukraine. Today the breakaway "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk in the coal mining Donbass region are under fire from the same fascist and fascistic Ukrainian nationalist forces that led the 2014 "Euromaidan" coup.

Supporters of the League for the Fourth

International attended a protest at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate on February 18 and at New York City's Grand Central Terminal on February 19. The comrades carried signs with slogans including "Spike Biden/NATO War Threats and Provocations Against Russia"; "Defeat U.S./NATO War Drive – Defend China Against Imperialism and Counterrevolution"; "Ukraine Nationalists and Fascists, Hands Off Donbass – Defend Self-Rule in South and East Ukraine"; "Economic Sanctions Against Russia = Push for World War, Smash U.S./NATO Imperialism!"; and "U.S./NATO Out of East Europe, Near East and Elsewhere – For International Socialist Revolution."

The national sections of the LFI underscored the need to oppose the warmongering of the imperialist rulers at home. Thus in Germany, the Internationalistische Gruppe carried a sign denouncing the social-democratic and eco-imperialist coalition government, "SPD/Green Butchers of Yugoslavia, German Imperialism Out of Ukraine and the Baltics – For a Revolutionary Workers Party!" In the U.S., the Internationalist Group proclaimed, "Dem-



Photos: Permanent Revolution



Internationalistische Gruppe at February 18 protest in Berlin.

ocrats: Butchers of Yugoslavia (1994-98), Instigators of Kiev Coup (2014) – For a Revolutionary Workers Party!"

The frenzied incitement and saber-rattling of Biden & Co. are avidly pumped up by the media, with liberal outlets in the lead. This serves among other things to further demonize U.S. imperialism's enemies

list, with now-capitalist Russia and China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, topping the list. The seek to condition and prepare the population for war by the imperialists. We say: "Washington, Wall Street – The Enemy Is at Home!" Only world socialist revolution can banish forever the threat of new world wars. ■

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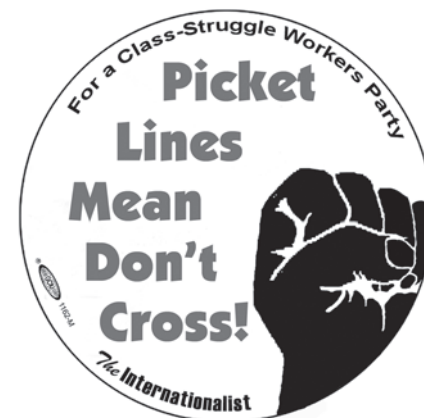
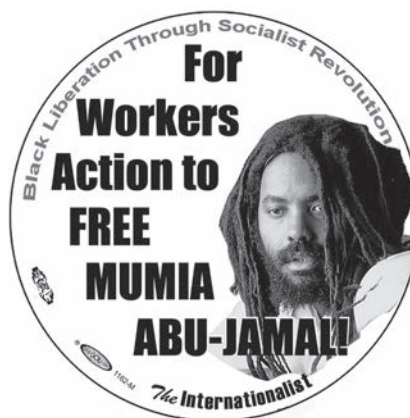
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Imperialist Bourgeois Press Fawns Over Ukrainian Ultra-Nationalist Militias Smash U.S./NATO-Backed Fascist Death Squads!

THE TRUTH ABOUT UKRAINE'S FASCIST INFESTATION

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24 was announced by Russian president Vladimir Putin in a speech declaring a "special military operation" to "de-nazify" and "demilitarize" Ukraine. The bourgeois press in the United States and in the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) imperialist countries immediately mocked the notion. As the Russia-Ukraine war has ground on, the imperialist "opinion makers" have insistently ridiculed the idea that the Ukrainian government is riddled with fascists and Nazis. Thus in one week, the house organ of U.S. imperialism wrote:

—that Putin has referred to Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, "who's actually Jewish," and "the people around him as, quote, 'drug-addled Nazis,' on Russian TV, even though this is just a completely outlandish, intentional distortion of the truth" ("The Daily," *New York Times*, 14 March); —that in a televised videoconference with top officials, "he once again falsely described the government in Kyiv, led by a Jewish president and prime minister, as being 'pro-Nazi' and on its way to acquiring nuclear weapons." And then "he went deeper into unreality," saying "that there is a real humanitarian catastrophe in cities held by neo-Nazis and armed criminals" (*New York Times*, 17 March); and —that the "language of Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been dominated by the word 'Nazi' — a puzzling assertion about a country whose president, Volodymyr Zelensky, is Jewish," while having "long referred to Ukraine's pro-Western revolution of 2014 as a fascist coup.... The 'Nazi' slur's sudden emergence shows how Mr. Putin is trying to use stereotypes, distorted reality and his country's lingering World War II trauma to justify his invasion of Ukraine" ("In Conjuring 'Nazis' in Ukraine, Putin Stokes Russian Memories," *New York Times*, 18 March) And in his March 26 tirade in Warsaw demanding Putin's ouster, U.S. president



March of the Azov Battalion, Svoboda, Pravy Sektor, National Corps and other fascist groups, 14 October 2017, to mark 75th anniversary of founding of anti-Soviet Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) which was part of German Nazis World War II invasion of the Soviet Union.

Joe Biden declared that the Russian leader's war aim of de-nazifying Ukraine was "cynical" and "a lie" because the Ukrainian president is of Jewish origin.

The reference to "drug-addled" is a bit off, but the Ukrainian state apparatus, particularly its repressive forces, is in fact riddled with fascistic nationalists, outright fascists and Nazis, would-be ethnic cleansers, some of whom are openly anti-Semitic and admirers of Hitler. Fascist militias are a large component of the military forces that have relentlessly besieged the Russian-speaking population of the Donetsk and Lugansk self-proclaimed "people's republics" that broke away from Ukraine eight years ago. Moreover, many of these fascist and pro-Nazi squads have been financed, armed and trained by the U.S. and NATO, even over objections from the U.S. House of Representatives (in a unanimous 2015 joint resolution authored by liberal Democrats and

right-wing Republicans) and from the Pentagon itself. The U.S.' willful "blindness" to Ukrainian fascism is in part a cover-up for its own role in creating this monster.

Having called for years — and continuing to call — to "defend self-rule in the breakaway regions of southern and eastern Ukraine," upon the outbreak of war we wrote:

"This is now a war between the Russian capitalist state, with its nationalist ruler in Moscow, and that of Ukraine, whose nationalist regime in Kiev has acted as a cat's paw of Western imperialists and uses fascist forces to besiege the Russian-speaking population of southeastern Ukraine. We Trotskyists call for revolutionary defeatism on both sides in this reactionary nationalist war, for internationalist proletarian struggle against both capitalist regimes and, above all, against the U.S. and European rulers who set off this conflagration."

—"Behind the War: U.S./NATO War

Drive Against Russia, China," *The Internationalist*, 28 February

We added that "even if the fascist and ultra-nationalist Ukrainian militias besieging the embattled Donbass regional republics can be militarily neutralized, the war will increase the weight of fascistic forces within the Ukrainian state."

Nazi-Fascist Shock Troops for Nationalist War

The imperialists' bald-faced attempt to deny the reality of fascists' and even outright Nazis' role in Ukraine today is deeply cynical. The fact that Ukrainian president Zelensky is fronting for these ultra-nationalists is not negated by his Jewish origin. The media equate fascism exclusively with Hitler's genocide against the Jewish people. Yet Mussolini's fascist movement, which originated the term, was not initially particularly anti-Semitic, and the first ones to be thrown into Nazi concentration camps in Germany were not the Jews but the Communists. Moreover, Zelensky is far from the first nationalist of Jewish origin to work with outright fascists. As we have pointed out, "Zionists going back to Ze'ev Jabotinsky (and David Ben Gurion) have a history of collaboration with Nazis and other anti-Semites to promote Jewish immigration to Palestine."¹ Rather, *the fascists are shock troops of nationalist capitalist reaction*, to be unleashed when "the 'normal' police and military resources of the bourgeois dictatorship ... no longer suffice" to keep the lid on. As Russian Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky analyzed the beast:

"Through the fascist agency, capitalism sets in motion the masses of the crazed petty bourgeoisie and the bands of declassed and demoralized lumpenproletariat — all the countless human beings whom finance capital itself has brought to desperation and frenzy."

¹ See "Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!" *The Internationalist* No. 37, May-June 2014.



At March 5 "No War with Russia" demo in New York City's Times Square, Internationalist Group calls to defend Russian-speaking Donbass against murderous siege by fascists and Ukrainian nationalists. Instead of a nationalist Russia-Ukraine war, for internationalist class war against U.S./NATO imperialism.



Azov Regiment of Ukraine's National Guard marches in May 2016 to denounce elections in the breakaway region of Donbass. Fascist stormtroopers have spearheaded the Ukrainian government siege that has killed 14,000.



Thousands march in Kiev on 1 January 2015 in annual march to honor WWII Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera, carrying the red-and-black banner of his Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and UPA with portrait of Bandera,

—What Next? *Vital Questions for the German Proletariat* [1932]

In addition to being the advance guard of anti-communism and serving as goon squads for the bosses, fascists are ultra-nationalists, spearheading revanchism and irredentism (to recover “lost territories,” as in Italy), expansionism (the Nazi drive for *Lebensraum*, or vital space for national greatness), or attacking sections of the population considered “foreign” bodies that “pollute” national purity. The Ukrainian fascists are definitely of the latter ilk. Fascism is a movement to mobilize masses for violent suppression of the exploited and oppressed in support of the capitalist state. ***The danger of fascist squads today resides above all in their ties with the official repressive forces, and in Ukraine, the fascists have been directly integrated into and lead key military and police forces.***

More sophisticated deniers of Ukrainian fascism argue that the Verkhovna Rada (Ukraine’s parliament) has hardly any far-right or fascist members these days, being comprised mostly of Zelensky’s populist “Servant of the People” party, which was voted into office in 2019 on the hopes of a peace settlement with the Donetsk and Lugansk separatists. True, on both counts. Yet as we have noted, almost immediately after Democrat Joe Biden took office as U.S. president early in 2021, Zelensky switched gears and began staging one anti-Russian

provocation after another. The Democrats blamed Moscow for Hillary Clinton’s loss of the 2016 presidential election to Russia-friendly Republican Donald Trump, and are deeply involved with Ukrainian nationalism, having orchestrated anti-Russian coups d’état in Kiev in 2004 and 2014. Ukraine’s rulers figured Biden’s victory was a green light to escalate their nationalist war plans.

While the fascists have little parliamentary strength, they have a hammerlock on Ukraine’s policy towards Russia and Russians. Fascists are not *anti*-parliamentary per se, contrary to the illusions of various reformist leftists who want to deny the existence of mass fascist parties today, such as the French National Front (now rebranded as National Rally) and the Freedom Party of Austria, dismissing them as mere right-wing populists. In Italy in the 1920s and Germany in the 1930s, the fascists actually came to power by parliamentary means. But their strength depended on the power of fascist squads like Mussolini’s Black Shirts and Hitler’s Brown Shirts to intimidate and terrorize through *extra*-parliamentary violence, aided by the state. Ukraine today is crawling with paramilitary fascist militias, which have political veto power far exceeding the number of votes their parliamentary fronts may win. Their program: to “cleanse” Ukrainian lands of Russians.

One need only ask, what would hap-

pen if Ukrainian president Zelensky agreed to Ukrainian neutrality, independence for Donetsk and Lugansk and the unification of Crimea with Russia? Speaking to the *New York Times* (10 February), a far-right “activist and militia member” of the “Democratic Ax” party vowed that “if anybody from the Ukrainian government tries to sign such a document,” there would be blowback in the streets “and that government will cease being the government.” This is no idle threat. In 2015, after the signing of the Minsk accords for a ceasefire and constitutional reforms for autonomy in Donetsk/Lugansk, Dmytro Yarosh, head of the fascist Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), refused to implement them, declaring that his Ukrainian Volunteer Corps would fight “until complete liberation of Ukrainian lands from Russian occupants” who live there (*Euromaidan Press*, 14 February 2015). The blocking of those accords was key to Putin’s February 22 recognition of the independence of the two breakaway republics, as he concluded that the Minsk accords were a dead letter.

The fascists and Nazis who hold this veto power are literal mass murderers. In 2014, after anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalists seized power in the “Euromaidan” coup,² the multi-ethnic, Russian-speaking population of the coalmining Donbass region in eastern Ukraine rose up in arms in April, forming the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk “people’s republics.” A May referendum was announced to vote on self-rule and seceding from Ukraine. But on 2 May 2014, over 1,000 fascists, led by Pravy Sektor, stormed through the streets of the Russian-speaking city of Odessa, burning down the House of Trade Unions and incinerating some 50 anti-Maidan activists trapped inside as police stood by.³ On May 9, the neo-Nazi Azov Battalion attacked the Russian-speaking city of Mariupol, where previously thousands had marched in anti-Maidan rallies called by the Communist Party. The Nazis trapped 30 supporters of the Donetsk people’s republic in the police headquarters, 20 of whom were killed as it was burned to the ground.

Subsequently, more than two dozen ultra-nationalist and Nazi-fascist paramilitary groups were integrated into the Ukrainian military, with the Azov Battalion concentrated in the National Guard while the Pravy Sektor controlling much of the Territorial Defense Force. In the following eight years of siege of the breakaway Russian-speaking republics, some 14,000 people have been killed, over 80% of them by Ukrainian government and nationalist forces. Today, the bourgeois press is filled with stories of average Ukrainians – dog walkers, hair stylists, doctors, etc. – signing up to join Ukraine’s Territorial Defense Force to

² The pro-Europe, anti-Russia mobilization in Kiev’s Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) in 2013-14, is often referred to as Maidan (square) in short.

³ See “Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!” *The Internationalist* No. 37, May-June 2014.



Imperialist media highlighted 79-year-old woman being trained to fight Russians, seldom mentioning that the training was done by the fascist Azov Battalion (now regiment in Ukraine’s National Guard).

fight the invading Russian military. Video of a 79-year-old woman being trained to shoot a Kalashnikov rifle went viral. Yet the “Azov granny” was being trained by fascist/Nazi paramilitaries, as even the U.S.’ Radio Free Europe admitted:

“The training was run by a Ukrainian National Guard unit connected to the far-right Azov Battalion, which the FBI linked in 2018 with neo-Nazi ideology and white supremacist organizations.”

–“Ukrainian Children and Pensioners Get Training on Weapons of War from a Far-Right Military Unit,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 31 January

Now, at the invitation of Ukrainian president Zelensky, an International Legion for the Territorial Defense of Ukraine has been formed to bring adventurers, soldiers of fortune and ultra-rightists from all over the world, under the control of the same fascist ethnic-cleansers, who have now been transmogrified in the Western press into heroic freedom fighters.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have emphasized that the threat of fascist movements today lies particularly in their role as an auxiliary of state repressive forces. In the U.S., fascist and fascistic groups often provide support to and work closely with the police in menacing anti-racist protesters. But in Ukraine, the fascists are not mere auxiliaries – they are a power unto themselves and can very easily counter any decisions made by the Ukrainian government that is deemed to be conciliatory to Russia. All the reference to Zelensky being Jewish as proof against Ukraine being infested by fascists is a smokescreen – he continues to rule because he has been carrying out the program of anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalism, and he has used the U.S./NATO imperialist war drive to bolster the fascists’ ranks.

Genealogy of Ukrainian Fascist Nationalist Militias

The various Ukrainian fascistic ultra-nationalist parties and Nazi/fascist militias date from the explosion of anti-communist nationalism in the counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Politically, they “promote Ukrainian ethnic nationalism, social conservatism, anti-communist and anti-immigrant sentiments.”⁴ They are virulently anti-Russian and many are explicitly anti-Semitic, tracing their lineage back to the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) led by Stepan Bandera, who collaborated with the Nazi occupiers of Ukraine in World War II. Bandera was a murderous anti-Semite, calling Jews the prime supporters of

⁴ Anton Shekhovtsov, “From Para-Militarism to Radical Right-Wing Populism: The Rise of the Ukrainian Far-Right Party Svoboda” in *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse* (2013).



Dmytro Yarosh, leader of the neo-Nazi Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) storm troops, speaking at the Maidan, 21 February 2014. This fascist coup leader was made deputy defense minister of Ukraine, formed the Ukrainian Volunteer Corps and later Ukrainian Volunteer Army, and is now an advisor to the commander of Ukraine’s military.

Madeline Albright: Death of a Cold War Criminal

Since the March 23 death of Madeleine Albright, former Secretary of State and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations under the administration of Democratic president Bill Clinton, praise celebrating her life has inundated the media. The imperialist press lauds Albright as an idol and teacher to young students (CNN) with “guiding insight” (*Washington Post*) and a willingness to “push the envelope” (*New York Times*). Yet for opponents of imperialism, Albright was a certified war criminal, worthy of vilification rather than celebration.

Amid the adulatory media verbiage, at least some are digging up bones that refuse to stay buried. Notably, there were Albright’s vile comments during a *60 Minutes* interview with Lesley Stahl about the sanctions imposed on Iraq, banning Iraqi oil exports, after the 1991 Gulf War:

“We have heard that half a million [Iraqi] children have died. I mean, that is more children than died in Hiroshima,” Stahl said. “And, you know, is the price worth it?”

“I think that is a very hard choice,” Albright answered, “but the price, we think, the price is worth it.”

—“Watch: Madeleine Albright Saying Iraqi Kids’ Deaths ‘Worth It’ Resurfaces,” *Newsweek*, 23 March 2022

The price is worth 500,000 dead Iraqi children? This is the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. — whose Security Council imposed and enforced the criminal sanctions, which remained in force for a dozen years, until the U.S.’ 2003 invasion of Iraq — justifying a crime against humanity. Those sanctions, and the imperialist occupation that came after, made life for the Iraqi people one of endless misery. But for U.S. imperialism and the Democratic Party, which dropped atom bombs on Japan, slaughtered over 2 million in the Korean war, and 3 million in Indochina, the lives of Iraqi children hardly count.

Albright was also known for first uttering the description of the United States

as “the indispensable nation” in the “New World Order,” in which Washington would lord it over the rest of the planet following the counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Justifying the U.S.’ “coercive diplomacy,” such as the sanctions against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq in the 1990s, she said in an interview: “If we have to use force, it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation.” We use force because we are America, we are indispensable — this is the boundless arrogance of the would-be masters of the world in Washington and Wall Street. Democratic president Barack Obama likewise called the U.S. “the indispensable nation” in addressing cadets at the U.S.’ West Point academy for imperialist militarism in 2014.

Feminists praise Madeleine Albright for “shattering the glass ceiling” by becoming the first female U.S. secretary of state, paving the way for another warmonger, Hillary Clinton. In nostalgic reminiscences in 2012, Albright remarked: “What I’m really proud of is what we did in Kosovo.” So what did the U.S. do in Kosovo? We have noted how Albright “whipped up feminist fervor for two imperialist wars on Yugoslavia (1994-95 and 1998-99).”¹ Amid the all-sided nationalist bloodletting that accompanied the destruction of the former multinational, bureaucratically deformed Yugoslav workers state, the U.S./NATO rained bombs on Belgrade, using a Kosovar mercenary army to hammer in the final coffin nails for the by then capitalist rump of Yugoslavia.²

Madeleine Albright was a hardline cold warrior long after the anti-Soviet Cold War ended. Hillary Clinton writes of her, “Madeleine rejected the criticism, renewed recently, that NATO’s expansion needlessly provoked Russia and is to blame for its

¹ “Imperialist Feminism and the Democrats,” *The Internationalist* No. 55, Winter 2019.

² See “Defend Yugoslavia — Defeat the Imperialist Attack!” (*The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999), where the League for the Fourth International called for “

invasion of Ukraine” (*New York Times*, 25 March). Thus these two former U.S. foreign policy chiefs applauded the eastward expansion of the Western imperialist military alliance, violating U.S. commitments made in 1990 at the time of the capitalist reunification of Germany and, precisely, provoking the Russia-Ukraine war. As we wrote during the 2016 presidential elections, “Clinton and her team of Cold Warrior advisors seem hell-bent on provoking Russia, and are far more likely to launch a military adventure that could explode in regional or world war, in Syria, Ukraine or elsewhere.”³ That team of Cold War hawks is now staffing the Biden administration.

In the 2016 elections, “Madeleine” declared that “there’s a special place in hell” for women who didn’t back “Hillary.” Albright was also a mentor to a new generation of warmongering Democratic women politicians and top-level operatives of U.S. imperialism. They even have their own lobby, the Leadership Council for Women in National Security (LCWINS), founded by Rosa Brooks, who led the Democrats’ Transition Integrity Project in 2020 that war-gamed how to deal with a Trump “coup.” Albright headed up its honorary advisory committee. An alumni list showed that “many have left LCWINS to join the Biden Administration.” The roster includes April

³ “The Election From Hell: Whoever Wins, We Lose,” *The Internationalist* No. 45, September-October 2016.



Madeline Albright

Haines, director of the Office of National Intelligence; the former general counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency; a half dozen top Pentagon officials, including the current secretary of the Army; several high-level State Department officials, and so on.

In addition, there are a slew of ex-military and former intelligence officials in the Class of 2018 Democratic Congresswomen, including Elissa Slotkin (Michigan, ex-CIA, Defense Department and National Security Council); Abigail Spannberger (Virginia, ex-CIA); Elaine Luria (Virginia, Navy) and Mikie Sherrill (New Jersey, Navy). But contrary to Democratic Party identity politics, the presence of women in the top echelons of U.S. imperialism’s “national security” apparatus is no gain for the liberation of women. On the contrary, every single one of this crew is an enemy of the poor, oppressed and working women of the world. As for Madeleine Albright, we are given to understand that a special place in hell was reserved for her long ago. ■

Bolshevism. His OUN-B⁵ carried out mass executions of as many as 100,000 Poles. It also led pogroms in which thousands of Jews were killed by Ukrainians in Lviv in July 1941, starting the day the OUN-B proclaimed Ukrainian independence⁶ as German troops moved into the city. And it rounded up Jews for the Nazis’ mass executions.

In 1990, the **Ukrainian National Assembly (UNA)** was formed in Lviv, the ⁵ In 1940, the OUN split in two, the OUN-B following Bandera and the OUN-M following Atanasovych Melnyk. The latter looked to Mussolini’s fascists (Melnyk was living in Italy at the time), while Bandera’s followers preferred the Nazis. Melnyk’s grandson is now Ukrainian ambassador to Germany. Both OUN-B and OUN-M worked with and were financed by German intelligence, and two battalions of OUN supporters under German command and in Wehrmacht uniform joined the attack on Soviet Ukraine.

⁶ The proclamation declared: “The newly formed Ukrainian state will work closely with the National-Socialist Greater Germany, under the leadership of its leader Adolf Hitler which is forming a new order in Europe and the world and is helping the Ukrainian People to free itself from Moscovite occupation.”

epicenter of Ukrainian nationalism. Its first leader was the son of Roman Shukhevych, a commander of a Nazi auxiliary police battalion in the World War II German occupation of Ukraine and a leader of Bandera’s UPA. In 1991, the **Social-National Party (SNPU)** was founded in Lviv. Its name was a direct reference to Hitler’s National Socialist Party (Nazis), and the SNPU adopted as its symbol the *Wolfsangel*, the swastika-like “wolf hook” that was used by the SS Division Das Reich in World War II, which fought in eastern Ukraine. In 1992 the **Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (KUN)** was founded by émigré veterans of the OUN-B. (After World War II, the CIA covertly supported remnants of Bandera’s outfit.) So when Canada’s deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland joined a pro-Ukraine rally holding a red-and-black banner (Bandera’s flag) with the slogan “Glory to Ukraine” (Bandera’s slogan), it is this *Nazi heritage* she is embracing.

The later-day *banderovtsy* (Banderaite) Ukrainian ultra-nationalists all formed Nazi-fascist action squads. Early on, the UNA spawned the **Ukrainian People’s Self-**

Defense (UNSO), while the KUN formed **Tryzub** (Trident), led after 2005 by Dmytro Yarosh. In 2004, the SNPU rebranded itself **Svoboda** (Freedom), seeking a more populist posture, but kept the Nazi *Wolfsangel* symbol. In 2005, Andriy Biletsky, one of the two founders of the SNPU, along with Andriy Parubiy founded **Patriot of Ukraine** as the paramilitary youth group of Svoboda, as anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim neo-Nazis who specialized in beating up Communists. Later, Svoboda separated from Patriot and founded a new youth group in 2010, **S14** or **Sich**, also pro-Nazi but more generally white racist.⁷ In the 2013-14 “Euromaidan” protests, Patriot of Ukraine, S14, the UNA-UNSO, White Hammer and Tzyub joined to form Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), which acted as “security” goons while the other founder of the fascist SNPU-Svoboda, Oleh Tyahn-

⁷ The Sich were military centers of Ukraine’s Cossack bands, while the “14” is said to refer to the “fourteen words” slogan (“We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children”) of the founder of the U.S. Nazi terror group, The Order.

ibok, was Maidan’s leading spokesman.⁸

The turning point in the Maidan events was a 20 February 2014 massacre in which 48 protesters were murdered, along with three police. The uproar that this caused led to the seizure of power in a coup d’état by rightist Ukrainian nationalists and the flight of Ukraine president Viktor Yanukovych a day later. The post-coup regime, the U.S. government (which shelled out \$5 million to support the Maidan protests) and the imperialist media in lockstep all blamed the Yanukovych government and its Berkut riot police for the massacre. This is a flat-out lie. Detailed investigation over several years by a Canadian academic of Ukrainian origin who was present in Kiev at the time, along with evidence from numerous TV reports and video footage as well as testimony from surviving victims, conclusively shows that

⁸ For a dissection of the role of fascist and fascistic ultranationalists in leading the Maidan protests, see the section on “Fascists and Ukrainian Nationalists Lead Kiev Mobilization,” in “Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!” *The Internationalist* No. 37.

most of the deadly fire came from buildings controlled by Maidan protesters.⁹ The head of the Maidan *sotnia* (hundreds) goon squads was Andriy Parubiy, founder of the pro-Nazi SNUP, Patriot of Ukraine and Pravy Sektor.

Ukraine's Fascist-Infested Military/Repressive Apparatus

The same fascist Parubiy was then named secretary (head) of the post-coup National Security and Defense Council, which included the “power ministries” and commanders of all of Ukraine’s military and police forces. In that guise he oversaw the dispatching of the ultra-nationalist paramilitaries from Maidan in a so-called “Anti-Terrorist Operation” (ATO) to fight the uprising of the Russian-speaking *oblasts* (districts) in Eastern Ukraine in April-June 2014. This was done explicitly because the army was considered unreliable in suppressing the population. From the outset, these storm troopers sought to terrorize leftists and Russian-speakers generally in the areas they occupied. The various militias included the Donbas Battalion, the Dnipro Regiment, the Azov Battalion, Aidar and Sich Battalions and two dozen smaller outfits. These “volunteer forces” were soon given heavy weaponry and paid salaries triple those of regular (contract) soldiers. These Nazi-fascist mercenary forces initially numbered around 7,000.

Soon they were integrated into Ukraine’s repressive apparatus. The largest paramilitary squad was the Azov Battalion. Its first commander was Andriy Parubiy’s confederate from the SNUP, Patriot of Ukraine and Pravy Sektor, Andriy Biletsky. By September 2014, the battalion had been expanded into a regiment and made part of the National Guard, as was the Donbass Battalion. The Dnipro, Sich and other smaller squads became special police tactical units. Also, the head of Ukraine’s presidential administration in the post-coup regime was one Serhiy Pashynskyi, who in February 2014 together with Volodymyr Parasyuk, one of the Maidan paramilitary commanders, reportedly brought bags of sniper weapons from the square to the Hotel Ukraine where he instructed former Georgian army officers to shoot at protesters and police alike (and took part in the shooting himself).¹⁰ Parasyuk, who began as a member of the KUN, went on to become part of the Dnipro Battalion commanded by Yuri Bereza, also of the KUN, while *Pashynskyi is currently the head of the National Security and Defense Council.*

Although it is hushed up – and outright denied – *the fascist infestation of the Ukraine state apparatus is a fact* ... and has been widely reported on for years. A detailed and well-sourced guide is to be found in the article by Lev Golinkin, “Neo-Nazis and the Far Right Are on the March in Ukraine,” in *The Nation* (22 February 2019). Golinkin notes:

“What Ukraine’s far right lacks in polls numbers, it makes up for with things Marine Le Pen [leader of the fascist National Rally in France] could only dream of – paramilitary units and free rein on the streets.

“Post-Maidan Ukraine is the world’s only nation to have a neo-Nazi formation in its armed forces.”

Golinkin quotes Azov founder (and future

member of Ukraine’s parliament) Andriy Biletsky writing that Ukraine’s mission is to “lead the white races of the world in a final crusade ... against Semite-led *Untermenschen* [subhuman in German].” The full quote, from the program he wrote for Patriots of Ukraine, is even more damning:

“Healing our national body should begin with the Racial cleansing of the nation.... And then a Racially healthy body can translate into a healthy National Spirit, as well as the culture, language and everything else that comes with it. Apart from the question of purity, we must also pay attention to the full value of a Race. Ukrainians are a part (and, at that, one of the largest and most qualitative) of the European White Race. [Of] the Race-Creator of a great civilization [with] the highest human achievements. The historic mission of our Nation in this crucial century is to lead the White Peoples of the world in the last crusade for their existence. A crusade against the sub-humanity led by the Semites.”

–cited in Andreas Umland, “Irregular Militias and Radical Nationalism in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: The Prehistory and Emergence of the ‘Azov’ Battalion in 2014,” in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 31:1 (2019)

Biletsky relates this racist program directly to Russian-speakers in eastern Ukraine. In an article titled “Language and Race: the Prime Question,” the future Azov Brigade leader wrote that “Ukrainian social-nationalism considers the Ukrainian Nation a blood-racial community”:

“If we talk about the Russian-speaking east of Ukraine ... we must first of all awaken their racial consciousness, after which they will automatically become linguistic nationalists. The issue of total Ukrainization in the future social-nationalist state will be resolved within 3-6 months with the help of a tough and balanced state policy.”

–quoted by Vyacheslav Likhachev, head of Ukraine’s National Minority Rights Monitoring Group, in “What WE don’t like about THEM-I: Andrey Biletsky” (in Russian), *Этнографическое Обзорение* (Ethnographic Review), 5 November 2014

Shortly before Biletsky’s election to Ukraine’s parliament he was asked whether his views had changed. He replied: “Everything that Azov has in its soul comes from its right-wing ideology, from the heritage of the Patriot of Ukraine.”

This is the racist filth spewed by the

fascists that under the symbol of the Nazi “wolf hook” have for the last eight years fought against the Russian-speaking people of Donbass and have held the city of Mariupol hostage. Azov may be the most ideological of the ultra-nationalist militias, but they are all criminal enterprises. A 2014 Amnesty International Briefing reports: “Members of the Aidar territorial defence battalion, operating in the north Luhansk region, have been involved in widespread abuses, including abductions, unlawful detention, ill-treatment, theft, extortion, and possible executions.” That same year, Amnesty International reported that Aidar and the Dnipro-1 battalion were blocking food aid to the civilian populations of Donetsk and Lugansk. A 2016 Human Rights Watch report details how Azov and other paramilitaries detained and tortured civilians in the Donbass and together with the Ukrainian SBU (secret police) held them incommunicado to be used for prisoner exchanges.

Ukraine Bourgeoisie Sponsors the Fascists

While the Azov Regiment chose to integrate itself into the structure of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (AFU), in exchange for a certain autonomy in command, some smaller militias ran afoul of the defense and interior ministries. In early 2015, an “OUN” brigade in Lugansk oblast was disarmed by the AFU, while in 2016 the Donbas Battalion (which had joined in blocking food shipments to Donetsk) was demobilized. Also in 2015, Pravy Sektor’s Ukrainian Volunteer Corps (DUK) led by



Fascist Andriy Parubiy (right), founder of pro-Nazi SNUP, Patriot of Ukraine and Pravy Sektor, became head of Ukraine’s post-Maidan coup regime’s National Security and Defense Council. Shown here with Yuri Bereza, commander of the Dnipro Battalion in Ukraine’s parliament in 2015.

Dmitro Yarosh was ordered to submit to the military chain of command or leave the Mariupol area, which it refused; later in the year, the DUK was involved in a shootout with local police in western Ukraine. Following these clashes, Yarosh split from Pravy Sektor and formed a Ukrainian Volunteer Army (UDA) and his own personal political party. Late last year, Yarosh announced that he had been made an advisor to the commander in chief of the AFU, to ready the UDA for war with Russia. But Pravy Sektor is still active in Mariupol, where last month both it and Azov forces fired on residents seeking to evacuate from the besieged city.

The “Azov movement,” meanwhile, has expanded to be much broader than the Regiment, its military arm. It has a political wing in the National Corps Party, a paramilitary street patrol, the National Militia, and it leads a veterans association. Altogether, Azov supporters are estimated at around 20,000, and they are actively spreading fascist terror. In 2018, National Militia members in balaclavas stormed a city hall budget meeting in Cherkasy, holding it hostage until the budget was approved. Four months later, Azov’s National Militia burned down a Romani¹¹ camp in Kiev, with the tacit endorsement of the police. That same year another fascist group, Svoboda’s youth group S14, also attacked a Romani camp in Kiev and a demonstration commemorating the murder of an anti-fascist activist and a hu-

¹¹ The Romani or Roma are a traditionally nomadic people, widely referred to in English with the pejorative term gypsy, numbering over 6 million in East and West Europe. The Romani were subject to genocide in Nazi extermination camps during World War II and are today scapegoated almost everywhere on the continent, subject to vicious official repression and attacks by racist/fascist groups.



Andriy Biletsky (center), founder of Azov Battalion, with Wolfsangel Nazi symbol behind him giving fascist salute. Biletsky wrote that the mission of the Ukrainian nation was to lead the white peoples of the world in the last crusade.

⁹ See “Question Answered: Who Was Behind the 20 2014 Maidan Massacre?” on page 9.

¹⁰ “Shoot at Everyone on the Maidan” (in Russian), RIA-Novosti, 14 February 2018.



Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) neo-Nazis march in Kiev on “Ukraine Defender Day,” 15 October 2015, with the red-and-black flag of Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera’s World War II Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

man rights lawyer. The upshot? C14 was awarded funding by the Ministry of Youth and Sports to organize “national patriotic education” (NPE) projects at a children’s camp, and was allowed to form a municipal guard to patrol Kiev’s streets.

Azov also runs government-funded NPE programs at paramilitary youth camps where they wear t-shirts with the Nazi *Wolfsangel* symbol, practice fascist salutes and receive weapons training to prepare to fight Russians. Azov has from the outset worked closely with the capitalist state and bourgeois patrons. In particular, Azov leader Biletsky has been promoted by Arsen Avakov, dating back to pre-Maidan days when the latter was mayor of Kharkov and Patriot of Ukraine squads acted as mafia-like enforcers for local businesses; and then when Avakov was Ukraine’s interior minister from 2014 to 2021. Michael Colborne in his book, *From the Fires of War: Ukraine’s Azov Movement and the Global Far Right* (2022), details “allegations of shady and outright criminal behaviour – including alleged murders – that have, like a thick cloud of smoke, enveloped Azov from its very beginnings.”¹² Biletsky and future Azov Regiment commander Ihor Mykhailenko were arrested in 2011 on charges of attempted murder, and senior Azov figures have been linked to a number of murders, including of former confederates.

¹² Colborne is no leftist, and he works for the Bellingcat weapons investigation site, closely linked to the British and NATO militaries, that specializes in fraudulently “authenticating” bogus charges against Russian and Russia-linked forces from Syria to Ukraine.

Colborne notes that Azov spokesmen have posted Instagram photos of themselves throwing Hitler salutes at a neo-Nazi concert, declaring that having “Jews involved within our nationalist political sphere has damaged our reputation,” and similar anti-Semitic utterances. In addition to using the Nazi *Wolfsangel*, he points out that Azov also uses the “black sun,” a symbol specially designed for Nazi SS leader Heinrich Himmler. Azov also serves as an umbrella group offering a home to openly Nazi-fascist outfits such as the Wotan-Jugend and Nordstrom, whose members are active in the National Corps and Centuria, as the rebranded National Militia is now calling itself. Azov and Centuria have also been active in the international fascist scene, working closely with the III. Weg (Third Way) Nazis in Germany, while members of the Atomwaffen Division neo-Nazi terror group have trained with Azov in Ukraine. A semi-clandestine Nazi “Misanthropic Division” also operates under the Azov umbrella.

While Colborne confirms with extensive detail that Azov is indeed fascist, terrorist and criminal, debunking those who would make it seem harmless, his most notable point is how it *has been sponsored from the outset by powerful bourgeois forces*. This is true of all the ultra-nationalist militias. The Azov, Dnipro and Donbas battalions were initially bankrolled by the Israeli-Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoyskyi (founder of the Privat banking group), who in 2014-15 was governor of the Dnipropetrovsk oblast and reputedly spent some

\$10 million in financing the fascist squads. And while the Ukrainian ultra-nationalists began as small sects, their expansion was due to the embrace of the legacy of Nazi collaborator Bandera by the pro-Europe Ukrainian governments of Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko following the so-called “Orange Revolution” of 2004. (In 2010, Yushchenko officially proclaimed Bandera “Hero of Ukraine.”) As for the 2014 “Euromaidan” protests, Colborne noted in a recent interview: “The sad reality is that mainstream society and the far right needed each other on Maidan.”¹³

U.S./NATO Imperialists Sponsor Ukraine Fascists

It is not only the Ukrainian bourgeoisie that needs and finances the Azov movement and the rest of the ultra-nationalist Nazi squads and militias, the U.S. and NATO imperialists are deeply tied to these fascist killers as part of a relentless drive toward war with Russia and China. It was the United States (under Republican George Bush II) that pushed to oust the pro-Russian premier Yanukovich in 2004, and the U.S. (under Democrat Barack Obama) that a decade later pushed to oust Yanukovich again, in both cases using the services of the *banderovtsy* fascist nationalists to whip up anti-Russian fervor. In 2014, top State Department official Victoria Nuland handed out cakes and met with the Pravy Sektor Nazis in the Maidan, while Republican senator John McCain and Democratic Senator Chris Murphy spoke from the platform together with anti-Semite Oleh Tyahnibok, head of the fascist Svoboda party.

The U.S. and NATO imperialists have been neck-deep in funding and training Ukraine’s fascist cadre for years. The National Military Academy (NAA) in Lviv, which trains the AFU officer corps, has since 2018 been the headquarters of a not-so-secret society of officers called Centuria. According to a report by the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) at George Washington University, Centuria describes itself as being at the

¹³ “‘Azov owes its very existence to war,’” Bell Tower News, 23 February.



Members of Azov’s fascist National Militia attacked Romani camp in Kiev with sledgehammers and axes, 7 June 2018.

forefront of “reshaping the country’s military along right-wing ideological lines and defending the ‘cultural and ethnic identity’ of European peoples against ‘Brussels’ politicians and bureaucrats’.” More than just far-right Western chauvinists, Centuria is fervently racist and fascist, choosing for its banner the “Sun Wheel,” which the Nazis considered a Nordic symbol of the sun. It is the emblem of Norwegian and Danish Nazis as well as of Azov’s renamed National Militia, now also called Centuria. The report noted:

“The group, led by individuals with ties to Ukraine’s internationally active far-right Azov movement, has attracted multiple members, including current and former officer cadets of the NAA now serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Apparent members have appeared in photos giving Nazi salutes and made seemingly extremist statements online.”¹⁴

The report documents Centuria’s deep ties to the Azov movement: giving lectures to Azov soldiers in the National Guard, promoting Azov events and counting Azov members within its leading ranks. Many Centuria members have gone on to lead AFU units after graduating from the NAA. Moreover, as of 2021, the NAA hosted “permanent advisors from Germany, Canada, and Denmark, as well as experts of NATO’s Defense Education Enhancement Program.” The IERES report says that Centuria brags that “members have participated in joint military exercises with France, the UK, Canada, the US, Germany and Poland.” And it notes that a lieutenant-colonel of the German Bundeswehr “currently works as Military Advisor to the NAA.” So as Wehrmacht and SS officers trained OUN collaborators to fight against

¹⁴ IERES-GWU, *Far-Right Group Made Its Home in Ukraine’s Major Western Military Training Hub* (September 2021).



Azov Regiment receives government contracts for camps to indoctrinate Ukrainian youth with anti-Russian, white supremacist fascist politics, along with military training.



Republican senator John McCain (center) and Democratic senator Chris Murphy on stage at Kiev’s Maidan together with Oleh Tyahnibok, leader of the fascist Svoboda party, 15 December 2013. Anti-Semitic anti-communist Tyahnibok railed against “Muscovite-Jewish mafia” and then was embraced by U.S. imperialism.



Cadet supporters of Centuria at Ukraine's National Army Academy pose on the fifth anniversary of the Azov Battalion with their banner featuring the Nazi Wolfsangel and the Sonnenkreuz (sun wheel) symbol used by Nordic fascists.

the Soviet Union during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine, today the “democratic” German imperialists train fascist Azov officers for war against Russia.

The academy is linked to the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre, located near Lviv, where NATO officers have trained Ukrainian forces in recent years, and where in the last several months Ukrainian officers have trained international volunteers flocking to Ukraine. This is the military base that was struck by Russian missiles on March 13, successfully taking out close to 200 of these recruits who would have gone on to join the “Odin Unit” of the fascist-led Territorial Defense Force. (The Nordic god Odin is a favorite symbolic reference of Nordic fascists, including for example the “Soldiers of Odin,” an anti-immigrant neo-Nazi group founded in Finland during the 2015-16 wave of immigration from the Middle East. It is linked to the Nordic Resistance Movement, with which Azov has had relations.)

Today, mainstream news media report favorably on the likes of the Azov Regiment and the Odin Unit without any reference to their fascist nature and connections, portraying them as courageous Ukrainian patriots. The *New York Times* has been doing this for years to such an extent that it has to be a conscious cover-up, qualifying the paper as an actual fascist apologist. Yet while in 2018 liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans in Congress, worried about the optics of providing weapons to an openly fascist orga-

nization, formally banned the use of U.S. budget funds “to provide arms, training, or other assistance to the Azov Battalion,” this was hardly enforced. Now in 2022 the legislation introduced to send \$500 million for arms purchases to Ukraine contains no such prohibition. Just as the CIA enlisted the OUN during the anti-Soviet Cold War to promote war with Russia, the rehabilitation of Nazism is underway.

“Ukrainization” at Gunpoint

Many analysts have written that there are fascist groups similar to the Azov movement and Pravy Sektor elsewhere in East Europe. The counterrevolutionary destruction of the USSR and the former Soviet bloc workers states was accompanied by the rise of fascist groups everywhere. But there is a difference, as in Ukraine these Nazi forces are directly integrated into the state apparatus, with support at the highest levels. A main reason for this difference is that elsewhere the nations are largely consolidated. Conflicts have been particularly bloody, and the growth of fascist paramilitary groups most pronounced, in multinational countries being torn apart to restore capitalism along national lines, such as the former Yugoslavia. But Ukraine is far from consolidated as a nation, including large areas in the East and South that are ethnically and linguistically distinct, along with Crimea, which was historically part of Russia. **Thus the unique role of the fascist ultra-nationalists in Ukraine is as shock troops to enforce Ukrainization at**

gunpoint in regions where much of the population does not consider itself Ukrainian.

What this ultimately points to is genocide of the Russian population in the Donbass. This was openly advocated when the uprising broke out in the east in March 2014. A journalist from *Ukrainskyi Tyzhden* (Ukrainian Week), Bogdan Boutkevitch, declared in an internet TV interview (29 April 2014):

“Donbass, in general, is not simply a region in a

very depressed condition. It has a whole bunch of problems, the biggest of which is it is severely overpopulated with people nobody has any use for.... If we take, for example, just Donetsk oblast, there are approximately 4 million inhabitants, at least 1.5 million of them are superfluous. We don't need to ‘understand’ Donbass, we need to understand Ukrainian national interests. Donbass must be exploited as a resource, which it is.... The most important thing that must be done, no matter how cruel it may sound, there is a certain category of people that must be exterminated.”

The digital media outlet that aired this vile call for mass murder, *Hromadske.tv*, is an NGO (non-governmental organization) that started up in 2013 with funding by the Netherlands embassy, the U.S. embassy, George Soros' International Renaissance Foundation and later (2014) from the Canadian government. Historian Alexander Dyukov, who is coordinator of the Information Group on Crimes Against the Person, denounced this abomination, but said that such views were widely accepted, noting:

“I remember how during the Maidan, representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia distributed a letter stating that the inhabitants of southeastern Ukraine are an undeveloped, lower sort of people and a kind of ghetto must be built for them, where they will live in accordance with their ways.”

—“There Is No Intolerance for Nazism in Ukraine,” IGCP Ukraine, 4 August 2014

The issue of the Russian-speaking population came to a head over language



Map showing Donbass breakaway republics with front line on west and north roughly as of September 2021.

policy, as the ultra-nationalists have insisted on imposing the use of Ukrainian, even though Russian was the language of the education, commerce and just about every other sphere of public life. In the Soviet Union, following the national policy of the Bolsheviks under Lenin, there was no official language, although given the weight of the Russian-speaking population, Russian was inevitably the *lingua franca* of the multinational USSR. In the early years of Soviet rule, there was a conscious effort to promote the use of Ukrainian as part of the policy of *korenizatsiya*, or “putting down roots,” to facilitate the integration of non-Russian nationalities. But under capitalism, organized around the nation-state, enforcement of a single language is often key to development of nations. In France, the Revolution enthroned the French language that was only spoken by a minority in 1789, while the suppression of Occitan (*langue d'oc*), Breton, Basque and other languages predominant in different regions took place over time.

But in seeking to consolidate a nation at a forced-march pace in a deeply ethnically and linguistically divided state with a powerful neighbor, imposing the “national” language can be a bloody affair. According to the aphorism, a language is a dialect with an army and navy. A section of Ukraine's capitalist rulers figured that since independence in 1991 they have the army and navy. But in seeking to impose Ukrainian, which until the 1990s was predominant mainly in peasant areas and the western half of the country, they required



NATO arms and trains Ukrainian fascists. Here Azov Regiment receives British NLAW anti-tank weapons and training. In the past, the U.S. Congress banned weapons deliveries to Azov, but in Biden's 2022 request for \$500 million in weapons delivery to Kiev, that provision was dropped.



Killer elite: Azov Regiment of Ukraine's National Guard in Mariupol, June 2017. These storm troopers seized the Russian-speaking city in June 2014, carrying out a massacre of the day before the population voted for self-rule and separation from Ukraine. The fascist forces that have besieged the Donbass for eight years must be rooted out and permanently stopped, their program of nationalist ethnic cleansing smashed by internationalist workers action.

the aid of forces unrestrained by democratic considerations. Hence the role of the Azov movement, Pravy Sektor and the other Nazi-fascist Ukrainian ultra-nationalists in waging the eight-year war against the breakaway regions of the Russian-speaking eastern part of the country. The counterpoint is that the alternative to brutal fascist suppression of the population points to the separation of the predominantly non-Ukrainian areas, with the delineation decided on the field of battle.

As proletarian internationalists, our goal is not to build the Ukrainian (or Russian) nation, but to further the unity and revolutionary struggle of the workers of all countries against their capitalist rulers. As we wrote on the eve of the present reactionary nationalist Russia-Ukraine war:

“A Soviet Ukraine in a multinational USSR could have overcome regional and ethnic tensions, although Stalin’s brutal centralization negated that. But ever since Ukraine’s 1991 independence as a bourgeois state, it has been a deeply divided country, ruled by an inveterately corrupt, self-dealing oligarchy using ultra-nationalist and fascist shock troops as a battering ram to enforce ‘Ukrainization’ on the Russian-speaking east and south.”

—League for the Fourth International, “Defeat U.S./NATO War Drive and Sanctions Against Russia!” *The Internationalist*, 23 February 2022.

The ultra-nationalist fascists and Nazis embedded in the Ukrainian state and its repressive organs – who played the central role in the killing of over 10,000 people in the Donbass region – must be rooted out, and as we have written, “permanently stopped and brought to justice, and their program of ‘ethnic cleansing’ smashed.”¹⁵ While Putin proclaimed his war aim to be “demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine,” to have a lasting effect this can only be accomplished by the working people themselves, on an *internationalist* basis. By waging a nationalist war on Ukraine as a whole, and not just against the fascist/nationalist forces threatening the embattled eastern republics, while Russian forces may eliminate some hundreds or a few thousand fascist Azov fighters, many of whom are actual war criminals, thousands more Nazis and other ultra-nationalists will be created and portrayed as heroes of national resistance. And now that foreign fighters are flocking to Ukraine, it is all but guaranteed that those who return to their countries will pass on their knowledge and training to be used against leftists, minorities and all the oppressed “at home.” Their glorification by the makers of “public opinion” has already begun.

Once again, U.S. imperialism and its NATO allies are promoting and financing an insurgency that will come back to haunt them, as the arch reactionary *mujahideen* used to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan eventually did. As we wrote in the declaration of the League for the Fourth International on the eve of the war, “As the imperialists continue to whip up war fever and impose escalating sanctions that ultimately point to world war, those who follow the internationalist program of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks fight for world socialist revolution against all the bourgeois ruling classes.” ■

¹⁵ See “Behind the War: U.S./NATO War Drive Against Russia, China,” *The Internationalist*, 28 February.

Question Answered: Who Was Behind the 2014 Maidan Massacre?



Screenshot from Belgian vrt television, from video appendix C by Ivan Katchanovski

“Euromaidan” protesters on 20 February 2014 pointing to snipers firing on them from Hotel Ukraina, the headquarters of the Maidan protests, yelling for them to stop. The 48 protesters and several policemen killed in the Maidan massacre were murdered in a false flag operation by the fascist action squads, backed by the oligarchic Ukrainian nationalist bourgeoisie, not by the riot police of the government that was overthrown in a U.S.-backed coup d’état the next day

In a box accompanying the lead article “Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!” in *The Internationalist* No. 37 (May-June 2014), we asked: “Who Were the Snipers Who Killed Kiev Protesters and Police on February 20?” The massacre in the Maidan (Independence Square), in which 48 protesters against then-president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich and several policemen were killed, was the trigger that the very next day set off the coup d’état led by fascist and Ukrainian ultra-nationalists and backed by Washington. The coup plotters, the imperialist press and U.S. authorities in unison blamed the riot police unit (the Berkut) of the Ukrainian government of the Yanukovich government, which they considered pro-Russian. But from the outset there were numerous questions about where the fusillade came from. A large number of the killed and wounded were shot by snipers firing from above.

In our article we detailed the many doubts/questions/suspicions about who did the shooting raised by protesters and news media present at the scene. We asked: “*cui bono*, who benefits? Why would regime supporters single out women, bystanders and medics as targets, which would only inflame protesters and set public opinion against the government?” And we concluded that “there is *more and more reason to suspect that the bulk of the killings were carried out by provocateurs from the Maidan.*” After our article was published online, we included an addendum in the print edition citing a report of the Monitor program of the German ARD television network. That program interviewed numerous witnesses, obtained audio tapes of Berkut communications and visited the site from where most of the shots were fired, the Hotel Ukraina, which was then the headquarters of the Maidan protesters and in particular of the fascist groups leading their action squads.

The supporters of the Ukrainian nationalist post-coup regime, their fascist-infested repressive apparatus and their impe-

rialist backers continue to insist – despite conclusive evidence to the contrary – that the pro-Russian Yanukovich government and its riot police were to blame. But a Canadian academic, Ivan Katchanovski of the University of Ottawa School of Political Studies, who was in the Ukrainian capital in February 2014 and visited the site soon after the massacre, has courageously pursued the question of who shot the protesters and police. His investigations, detailed in a series of academic papers and online video annexes, show beyond any doubt that the deadly fusillade came from buildings controlled by the Maidan protest leaders and the fascist squads, particularly the Pravy Sektor (Right Sector).

In an initial paper, “The ‘Snipers’ Massacre’ on the Maidan in Ukraine,” presented at a seminar at the University of Ottawa in October 2014 and then updated and revised for presentation along with two video appendixes at the American Political Science Association (APA) annual meeting in September 2015, Katchanovski summed up his findings:

“This academic investigation concludes that the massacre was a false flag operation, which was rationally planned and carried out with a goal of the overthrow of the government and seizure of power. It found various evidence of the involvement of an alliance of the far right organizations, specifically the Right Sec-

tor and Svoboda, and oligarchic parties, such as Fatherland. Concealed shooters and spotters were located in at least 20 Maidan-controlled buildings or areas. The various evidence that the protesters were killed from these locations include some 70 testimonies, primarily by Maidan protesters, several videos of ‘snipers’ targeting protesters from these buildings, comparisons of positions of the specific protesters at the time of their killing and their entry wounds, and bullet impact signs.”

In a subsequent paper, “The Far Right in Ukraine During the ‘Euromaidan’ and the War in Donbas” (September 2016), Katchanovski analyzed the role of Pravy Sektor and other fascist squads in the brutal war on the Russian-speaking breakaway republics of Donetsk and Lugansk, including evidence that some weapons used in the Maidan massacre were used in a provocation that blew apart a U.S.-Russia-European Union-Ukraine peace accord signed in Geneva.

Ivan Katchanovski continued to follow the evidence about the Maidan shootings, including the trial of Berkut policemen accused of perpetrating them. In another paper, “The Maidan Massacre in Ukraine: Revelations from Trials and Government Investigations” (May 2017), he cited evidence from the General Prosecutor’s office that at least 77 of those wounded (out of a total of 157) were clearly shot from buildings occupied by Maidan squads and not from Berkut positions. He cites statements of over 100 witnesses and the testimony of 22 wounded Maidan protesters that they were shot from, witnessed, or were informed by others of snipers in the Hotel Ukraina, Bank Arkada, Music Conservatory, Main Post Office and other locations of Maidan forces. Yet prosecutors denied that snipers shot any protesters from Maidan-controlled buildings.

Then in 2018, Ukraine’s General Prosecutor declared the case closed, based on a 3-D model reconstructing the crime scene that supposedly proved that the Berkut police massacred Maidan protesters. This was publicized in a *New York Times Magazine* (3 June 2018) article, “Who Killed the Kiev Protesters? A 3-D Model Holds the Clues.” As Katchanovski delicately put it in his 2017 paper, “The media often follows their respective governments or political elites in covering foreign countries and conflicts, in particu-

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The same group of protesters continued to be fired on by snipers in the Euromaidan headquarters, leaving five dead (seen here lying on the street) and at least seven injured.

Pseudo-Trotskyist Imposters Line Up with Imperialism

NATO Socialists in Italy

The following article is from the forthcoming issue of L'Internazionalista, published by the Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia, section of the League for the Fourth International

In the present Russia-Ukraine war, instigated by the imperialist powers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), communists in the imperialist centers, including Italy, are duty-bound to fight for working-class actions against the war, to oppose imperialist sanctions against Russia and to mobilize to defeat the NATO war drive through class struggle against “their own” imperialist bourgeoisie. The main enemy is at home, especially in the warmongering European Union (EU), Britain and United States. But in Italy and elsewhere, a large part of the left has lined up with their own imperialist bourgeoisie and sided with the NATO-backed Ukrainian “resistance.” **These NATO socialists are actively supporting the imperialist war drive.**

A prime example of this is the Partito Comunista dei Lavoratori (PCL, Communist Workers Party)¹ that proclaims: “*Today we defend Ukraine against the invasion of imperialist Russia, in spite of the reactionary Zelensky government*” (emphasis in original) and “Today we are on the side of the Ukrainian resistance against the Russian forces of occupation” (“Neither Atlanticists, nor Putinists, nor Pacifists” (in Italian), PCL, 2 March). The PCL then calls for the maximum arming of the “resistance” including by the NATO powers:

“In their resistance against the invasion the Ukrainian people have the right to use all the arms that are available to them, whoever they come from. This is the right of every resistance. We do not contest this right or sabotage the implementation of this right.”

–“Imperialist War, National War and Resistance” (in Italian), PCL, 19 March

The League for the Fourth International, in contrast, calls for revolutionary defeatism on both sides of the nationalist Russia-Ukraine war – for workers struggle to bring down the capitalist rulers in Moscow and Kiev – and above all to oppose the NATO imperialist war drive ultimately aimed at bringing about counterrevolution in the (bureaucratically deformed) Chinese workers state.

Meanwhile, vigilant airport workers in Pisa recently refused to handle weapons (disguised as “humanitarian cargo”) to be sent to the Ukraine and blocked their shipment. Port workers in Livorno, Genoa and elsewhere expressed their support for this proletarian internationalist action, and a demonstration was held in Pisa in support of it. The PCL position of upholding a supposed “right” of the Ukrainian “resistance” to receive arms is directly counterposed to this courageous action. In fact, a member of the PCL wrote on Facebook that the airport workers’ action was an “error” and

¹ The PCL is one of a number of groups in Italy falsely claiming to be Trotskyist. In sharp contrast to the Bolshevik revolutionary Leon Trotsky, who defended the Soviet Union in World War II despite and against the betrayer Stalin, almost all of these groups are camp followers of imperialism, refusing to defend China against counterrevolution while siding with NATO-backed Ukraine against Russia.

complained that “to impede the Ukrainians from defending themselves means handing victory to Russia.”

It should be noted that some of the arms sent to the Ukraine are used by the Ukrainian fascist gangs against the Russian-speaking population of Donbass and Mariupol to kill separatist fighters and the general population. The LFI, in contrast, calls to defend self-rule in the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk against the siege by Ukrainian ultra-nationalists who would “ethnically cleanse” the area of its Russian-speaking population.

The PCL compares its defense of the Ukraine today with its previous defense of Iraq and Serbia against U.S. and Italian imperialism. But while it condemned the imperialist slaughters in Serbia and Iraq, today the PCL is supporting the same side as Italian and U.S. imperialism in Ukraine. And for Leninists, capitalist Russia, despite Putin’s imperial ambitions, is not an imperialist country but a regional power (see “The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism’,” *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015). The stark fact is that the NATO socialists of the PCL have lined up with their own imperialist bourgeoisie.

They are not alone. The social-democratic Sinistra Anti-Capitalista (SA, Anti-Capitalist Left), associated with the “International Bureau (IB) of the Fourth International” (formerly United Secretariat, followers of the late Ernest Mandel), also backs the Ukrainian “resistance” and its own imperialist bourgeoisie. The IB grotesquely proposes a “democratic” path for Ukraine to join NATO: “It is up to the Ukrainian people – and not to blackmail and negotiations between great powers – to decide on their membership or not in NATO” (*International Viewpoint*, 1 February). It later added the call for “the delivery of defensive weapons to the victims of aggression...in this case the Ukrainian state...” SA’s support for Italian imperialism is nothing new. A current main leader of SA, Franco Turgliatto was a senator for Rifondazione Comunista in the Prodi government of 2006-08.² During this time Turgliatto voted to finance Italy’s forces in Afghanistan, and also voted 23 times for confidence in the government.

The Frazione Internazionalista Rivoluzionaria (FIR), associated internationally with the Trotskyist Fraction (FT) current, has been busy enthusiastically supporting pro-NATO demos. Up to 50,000 people came out for a national demonstration in Rome for “peace” on 5 March, which was organized by the Italian Network for Peace and Disarmament. The demonstra-

² Rifondazione Comunista (RC) is a rump of the former Italian Communist Party (PCI), once the strongest pro-Moscow Stalinist party in the West. Under the impact of the 1989-92 counterrevolution that swept through the East European Soviet bloc and ultimately destroyed the Soviet Union, the PCI simply closed up shop. First posing as left-wing social democrats, the ex-PCI ultimately joined with Christian Democrats to form the bourgeois Democratic Party. The RC continued as a shadow of the PCI, with the same politics of class collaboration as its progenitor, sometimes in opposition, sometimes supporting bourgeois government such as that of Romani Prodi

tion was politically based on the slogans of “Solidarity with the Ukrainian People” and “We Condemn the Aggression and War Triggered by Russia.” While the demo condemned Russia, NATO was not mentioned, nor was there any call to stop the imperialist supply of arms to Ukraine or against NATO’s eastward expansion. It appealed to the Pope, called for intervention by the United Nations and suggested a possible progressive role for the European Union in a “Europe of Peace.” This was in fact a pro-NATO demonstration with a fig leaf of pacifist rhetoric.

An article in the FIR’s *La Voce delle Lotte* (6 March) states, “In Rome, 50,000 in the Streets for Peace in Ukraine and Against NATO Militarism” (in Italian), written the day after the demonstration by its editor, Giacomo Turci of the FIR, enthused over the pro-imperialist demonstration’s “success” and polemicized against anybody who failed to support it. This included the bourgeois populists of Potere al Popolo who dared to counterpose themselves to the demonstration by raising the slogan “Italy out of NATO” from a physical distance. According to Turci, this pro-imperialist demonstration was a “first important step” forward in the struggle for “immediate peace in Ukraine with the withdrawal of the Russian troops from the country, and the utilization of truly democratic and non-military means to resolve the questions of freedom and national self-determination, in Ukraine and everywhere else.”

Perhaps the most hard-core and consistent supporter of imperialism among the NATO socialists in Italy is the Partito di Alternativa Comunista (PDAC, Party of the Communist Alternative), part of the International Workers League (IWL) of followers of the late Nahuel Moreno. The main headline of a March 5 declaration of the IWL is “Defeat the Russian Invasion. Arms for the Resistance.” Since such arms can only come from the NATO imperialists, the IWL’s pious call for the “dissolution” of NATO is simply a cover-up for its pro-imperialist stance. The statement also calls to “defend the unity and independence of Ukraine” as well as for “Restitution of Crimea.” In other words, the IWL opposes self-rule in the Donbass, which broke away from Ukraine after the imperialist-backed fascist/nationalist coup in 2014, and wants to overrule the overwhelming vote of the Crimean population to rejoin Russia. So much for support for self-determination.

The Morenoite PDAC has called for imperialist sanctions against Russia (and other countries) in the past. In this case, instead of opposing the economic warfare of U.S./NATO/EU sanctions, it offers the imperialists the helpful suggestion that the sanctions should be directed against the Russian “oligarchs.” Echoing the NATO-stoked round-the-clock war propaganda that people in the imperialist countries are subjected to, the declaration praises the “strong and heroic resistance of the Ukrainian military and popular masses.” The front page of the PDAC’s *Progetto Comunista* (11 April) features a photo of civilians training with plywood replicas of AK-47 rifles. Yet who is training these volunteers are the fascist Azov Regiment and neo-Nazi Pravy Sektor (Right Sector) that have

been integrated into the Ukrainian armed forces. Such pro-imperialist politics are to be expected from an outfit that in 2011 proclaimed “Long live the Libyan revolution, which destroyed the regime of Qaddafi”³ – backhanded support for Italian imperialism, which aided the massive bombings that largely destroyed the Libyan economy.

The NATO imperialist powers and others like Australia and Japan have been stepping up their sabre-rattling against China, accusing it of aiding Russia. The imperialists see their war preparations against Russia as a stepping stone towards their ultimate aim of sparking capitalist counterrevolution in China. The pseudo-Trotskyist NATO socialists know perfectly well that the imperialists have China in their sights, but pretend the Chinese workers state is capitalist, even imperialist, so as to wash their hands of the duty to defend it. We in the League for the Fourth International stand for the unconditional defense of China and the other deformed workers states of Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam against imperialism and internal forces of counterrevolution.

Nor is it a surprise that the NATO socialists are also pro-imperialist Cold Warriors. The FIR, PDAC and SA (as well as Sinistra Classe e Rivoluzione, part of the International Marxist Tendency) all supported the anti-communist racist riots in Hong Kong in 2019. This counterrevolutionary movement carried U.S. flags, beat up residents from the Chinese mainland and called for Donald Trump to intervene against China. For its part, the PCL declares that Chinese “imperialism” is as much an enemy of the world’s working class and oppressed as U.S. imperialism. And a central international leader of the Trotskyist Fraction, Emilio Albamonte, wrote that “millions of workers in China” have been reduced to “slaves” and claimed that: “The Chinese bureaucracy achieved the monstrosity of generating a capitalism a thousand times more savage than that which the struggles of the Western proletariat managed to put the brakes on” (“Revolutionary Marxism vs. Postcapitalism,” *Left Voice*, 3 January 2021).

This vile anti-communist propaganda besmirches the name of Leon Trotsky, Lenin’s comrade in arms in leading the 1917 October Revolution. Even some imperialists admit that China raised life expectancy at birth from 35-40 years in 1949 to 65.5 in 1980 (World Bank, 2009) and 76.4 years today, while lifting more than 800 million people out of poverty in the space of a few decades (as the head of the World Bank noted in 2016) – feats that are unprecedented in world history. Against the “NATO socialist” pseudo-Trotskyist imposters, the League for the Fourth International calls to defeat the imperialist war drive against Russia and China, and to defend China and the other deformed workers states against counterrevolution from within and without as we fight for proletarian revolution worldwide. ■

³ Muammar Qaddafi was the nationalist leader of Libya (a former Italian colony), who was often a thorn in the imperialists’ side. He was ousted by the U.S./NATO assault on Libya in 2011, taking advantage of the “Arab Spring” uprisings elsewhere in the region, and then murdered by some of the imperialist-created “rebels.”

Imperialist Racism and the Russia-Ukraine War

Peter Lazar / AFP



Racist imperialist war propaganda: photos of refugees showing “European people with blue eyes and blond hair” fleeing from “relatively civilized, relatively European” Ukraine.

BERLIN, March 16 – Every weekend now, tens and hundreds of thousands of protesters pour into the streets of German cities in “peace” demonstrations supposedly against war in Ukraine. This past Sunday there were, according to the organizers, some 60,000 in Berlin, 35,000 in Stuttgart, 12,000 in Frankfurt, 10,000 in Hamburg (*Junge Welt*, 14 March). Yet in reality, many if not most of these are *pro-war* demos in that they are overwhelmingly for support to Ukraine in the reactionary nationalist war with Russia. Blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flags are everywhere. Many speakers call for arms deliveries to Ukraine, i.e., by the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) imperialists who provoked this fratricidal war in their escalating war drive against Russia and China. Politicians of the Social Democratic (SPD) and Green/Alliance 90 government parties, who voted to double the German military budget and to deliver arms to Kiev, spoke, as did representatives of the Left Party, which one-sidedly condemned the Russian invasion and (along with the governing militarist parties) supported imperialist sanctions against Russia.

Meanwhile, in stark counterpoint to the chauvinist backlash against refugees from Middle Eastern wars that has been building in the last several years, there has been an unprecedented outpouring of support for Ukrainian refugees – contributing to aid funds, collecting supplies, offering to take in families, organizing private transport from border regions. The contrast is so striking that the bourgeois media have sought to explain it away. An article on the subject of “Why the War in Ukraine Affects Us So Much,” in the RedaktionsNetzwerk Deutschland (6 March), close to the SPD, resorts to pop psychology. A “trauma specialist” explains that “Our brain is the same as that of someone from the Stone Age”:

“We identify with a situation the closer it is to us. If we see pictures from the jungle or the desert, that creates a different kind of proximity than pictures from a cultural space where we can directly identify with people.

“The apartment complexes in Kiev are

just like those in Berlin-Marzahn. People’s clothes are the same, the faces are the same. The scenes in the Kiev train station could be the same here. So we feel much closer to that situation.”

But along with the junk science, at least the “expert” has the rectitude to note other factors. Such as: “The German-Soviet war [i.e., Hitler’s assault on the USSR, which led to 27 million Soviet casualties] is only two generations ago, my uncle fell in the Ukraine, half of all surviving grandfathers fought on the Eastern Front. These fears and experiences are being revived.”

The massive “solidarity with Ukraine” is not just the result of tribal reactions, or memories of the German defeat by the Soviets (“the Russians”) in World War II. Nor is it simply an instinctive response to photos of civilian casualties from Russian bombs and rockets (photos of civilians killed by rockets of the Ukrainian fascists in the Donbass are never shown). These pale in comparison to the indiscriminate bombing by U.S./NATO imperialists from Yugoslavia (1994-99) to Afghanistan (2001-2021), along with the U.S.’ wanton slaughter in the Gulf War (1990-91). And then there are the brutal invasion and occupation of Iraq, the drone killings and massive destruction in Syria, and the mass murder of millions by imperialism in the Vietnam and Korean wars.

The pro-Ukraine popular response is whipped up in an across-the-board campaign of virulent anti-Russian war propaganda in the entire bourgeois media in unison. What we are seeing today is the most recent example of imperialist powers’ molding of “public opinion” as an echo chamber for their geopolitical power moves and military build-up for global war.

The quintessential expression of the outright *racist* media coverage was a February 26 broadcast by CBS News senior foreign correspondent Charlie D’Agata in which he declared that Ukraine “isn’t a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilized, relatively European – I have to choose those words carefully, too – city, one where you wouldn’t expect that, or hope that it’s go-

ing to happen.” But D’Agata’s Eurochauvinist trope was hardly unique. Moustafa Bayoumi, a professor at Brooklyn College in the City University of New York, cited a number of similarly grotesque paeans to (white) European “civilization.”¹ The former deputy prosecutor general of Ukraine remarked: “It’s very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blond hair ... being killed every day.” And Daniel Hannan (a/k/a the Baron Hannan of Kingsclere, England) commented in the establishment London press:

“They seem so like us. That is what makes it so shocking. Ukraine is a European country. Its people watch Netflix and have Instagram accounts, vote in free elections and read uncensored newspapers. War is no longer something visited upon impoverished and remote populations.”²

So brutal, bloody war is something that routinely affects economically impoverished “Third World” regions, and thus implicitly not of great concern, but is shocking and worthy of compassion when it affects “civilized” Europe. Even an *Al Jazeera* anchor opined: “Looking at them, the way they are dressed, these are prosperous ... I’m loath to use the expression ... middle-class people. These are not obviously refugees looking to get away from areas in the Middle East that are still in a big state of war.” The casual racism was so pervasive that it was repeated on British ITV, on French BFM TV, and even more explicitly on NBC (“They’re Christian, they’re white, they’re very similar”). This worldview is deeply engrained, and also represents a truly Orwellian forced amnesia as to the brutal imperialist assault in the Balkans in 1999, which was in fact the first major military conflict in Europe since 1945.³

¹ “They are ‘civilised’ and ‘look like us’: the racist coverage of Ukraine,” *The Guardian*, 2 March.

² “Vladimir Putin’s monstrous invasion is an attack on civilization itself,” *The Telegraph*, 26 February.

³ See “Defend Yugoslavia – Defeat the Imperialist Attack!” and “German Fourth Reich: Back in the Balkans,” *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999.

D’Agata’s chauvinist reporting unleashed a Twitter storm of outrage on social media. Postings noted how “a very civilized Germany ... sent millions to their deaths on one-way train journeys,” and recalled the mass murders of the Herero and the Nama peoples in Namibia by German colonialism at the turn of the 20th century. One showed photos of the U.S.’ “civilized” torture center at Abu Ghraib in Iraq, while another listed 64 U.S. interventions since 1945. Yet another showed the destruction of Gaza and Beirut by Zionist Israel. Several noted that Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq) was the “cradle of civilization” while Europe was in the Stone Age. Still another referred to the murderous war against eastern Ukraine, including a photo of the fascist Azov Brigade with the Wolfsangel Nazi symbol and a portrait of Hitler. And, of course, there were the imperialist World Wars I (14 million dead) and II (70-85 million dead).

D’Agata, of course, “apologized” for his “carefully chosen” words, but only to say he “regretted” having said them on air, not for the racist content. His reference to Ukraine as “relatively civilized” indicates that Slavs and Magyars are not quite up there on the racist scale either (and Russians are being demonized en masse in the U.S. and Western Europe). In Britain, where the Brexit campaign against European Union membership exploited and exacerbated resentment against Eastern Europeans from EU countries, ghoulish interior minister Priti Patel sought to limit Ukrainian refugees to the immediate families of Ukrainians already in the United Kingdom. The scandal-ridden regime of Boris Johnson has even threatened to unleash naval warfare in the English Channel against “illegal” refugees, as a diversion from its failings and crimes.

Racist Selection at the Ukrainian Border

This imperialist racism is not just a media or Internet phenomenon, it reflects official policy, both in East and West Europe. This was reflected in numerous sto-

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African refugees from Ukraine at Medyka, Poland, February 27. Refugees from Africa, Middle East and India were subjected to mistreatment at the border.



Azov Battalion, with Nazi “Wolfsangel” symbol and portrait of their hero, Hitler. Liberal media try to deny that these murderous thugs are fascists.

ries of the sharply contrasting treatment at the border of white refugees fleeing Ukraine and those considered non-white:

- “‘We entered the train last,’ Kass says, describing how she and other African women were forced to wait outside as snow was falling, while white women and children were allowed to board before them. She believes her gender is the only reason she was spared being beaten.” (Grace Kass from the Democratic Republic of Congo to *Time* magazine, 1 March)

- “The Ukrainian border guards were not letting us through. They were beating people up with sticks.... They would slap them, beat them and push them to the end of the queue. It was awful.” (Nigerian doctor Chineye Mbagwu to *The New York Times*, 1 March)

- “They acted like we are criminals. They forced their guns in front of our faces. After we were walking for almost three days continuously, we reached the border and they treated us like animals.” (Ahmed, a Yemeni language student in Odesa, to the *Financial Times*, March 4)

Amid the hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian women, children and elderly fleeing westwards (Ukrainian men from ages 18 to 60 are subject to conscription) were thousands of students as well as professionals from Asia and Africa. It soon became obvious that those non-Ukrainians classified as non-white were being singled out for abuse. Despite initial attempts by Ukrainian politicians to dismiss it all as pro-Russian “fake news,” it was clearly widespread, and drew rebukes from various governments and the African Union.

The willingness of almost all Eastern European regimes to take in Ukrainian refugees is in sharp contrast to their equally universal opposition to refugees from the Middle East and Africa – a refusal which reached a crisis point last year when Poland militarized its border against refugees coming through Belarus. Ukraine hosted more than 76,000 foreign students as of 2020, a quarter of them from Africa – mainly Nigeria, Morocco and Egypt, but with the largest single contingent being 20,000 Indians. They were drawn by a high standard of education, particularly in the field of medicine, combined with low fees and living costs. This is a not insignificant element in the Ukrainian economy. *Time* quoted one medical student: “‘Ukrainians treated us alright as they saw us as money,’ said Ashraf Muslim, a 23-year-old from Morocco, sitting on the curbside with his wife, dentistry student Lina Kuretta” in the Polish border village of Medyka. “‘The moment we became useless to them, they turned us into bums,’ he said.”

After eyewitness testimony and footage

of the racist attacks spread rapidly around the world, the Western media took up the matter – so embarrassing for their crusade to depict the Ukraine as the champion of “democracy” – in order to depict it all as a series of disconnected individual dramas. Why the border guards/police/vigilantes were doing this was not examined. In line with this, to “answer” references to the fascist infestation in Ukraine, the media make much of the fact that Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelensky is Jewish. Yet they assiduously try to hide or deny the fact that he sits atop a state apparatus shot through with actual fascists and Nazis glorifying collaborators with Hitler’s Third Reich. These forces have been integrated into the core of Ukraine’s armed forces and paramilitary outfits, and are surely well-represented among those harassing and attacking refugees. They have likewise attacked Jews and Jewish institutions, and have launched ferocious attacks on the Roma people, as in Kiev in April 2018, and driven them out of several cities.

Meanwhile there are reports from the German-Polish border that German police are boarding trains from Warsaw and singling out dark-skinned people for checking, detaining some – there might be some “free riders” who are only “pretending” to be fleeing the war in the Ukraine! But in the viciously anti-refugee and anti-immigrant repressive system of “Fortress Europe,” it is the Balkan countries, and especially Greece that are on the front lines of keeping out refugees so the core imperialist states can pretend to have clean hands. These are the structures behind the hypocritical utterances of the imperialist media and the brutal action of the thugs – uniformed or otherwise – who do the dirty work.

On the eve of World War II, after Cuban and U.S. authorities refused to let a ship (the S.S. *St. Louis*) dock that was carrying 937 refugees from Nazi Germany, almost all of them Jews, revolutionary Marxist Leon Trotsky noted sarcastically, “The world of decaying capitalism is overcrowded. The question of admitting a hundred extra refugees becomes a major problem for such a world power as the United States. ... Amid the vast expanses of land and the marvels of technology, which has also conquered the skies for man as well as the earth, the bourgeoisie has managed to convert our planet into a foul prison” (*Manifesto of the Fourth International on Imperialist War and the Imperialist War*, May 1939).

Today, as almost 3 million Ukrainians (so far) have fled the war, European governments are welcoming them, while erecting massive fences to keep out refugees

from the Middle East and Africa and letting over 15,000 drown in the Mediterranean since 2014 – and that’s just according to official statistics. Germany, with its low birth rate may accept a substantial number, at first. But as economic crisis spreads, even the white, European, Christian refugees from Ukraine could well be forced out in large numbers. Against the all-sided pro-imperialist “solidarity with Ukraine” war propaganda, the League for the Fourth International calls for *revolutionary defeatism on both sides* of the reactionary nationalist Russia-Ukraine war, for *revolutionary struggle against the capitalist rulers in Moscow and Kiev*, and to *defeat the U.S./NATO war drive* pointing to World War III against Russia and China. ■

Behind the War...

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struggle against the capitalist rulers in Moscow and Kiev.” That situation very quickly came to pass with the Russian offensive for Putin’s expanded war aims, which go far beyond defense of the southeastern breakaway regions. At the same time, we noted that if the conflict “turned into a war by Ukraine’s imperialist backers against Russia that would be a very different matter.” With the U.S. and NATO warmongers’ responses to Putin’s attack, that danger is very real.

That being said, contrary to our and many others’ expectations, after decades of imperialist misinformation, in this case the increasingly bizarre scenarios painted by U.S. intelligence agencies of an adventurist Russian action turned out to be fairly accurate. The Great Russian chauvinist ruler in the Kremlin has embarked on a course that, whatever his calculations based on overwhelming military superiority in the immediate theater, will whip up nationalist hatred against Russia in the Ukrainian population and will accelerate U.S./NATO preparations (already well advanced) for imperialist war on Russia. Even if Putin is able to wring concessions from Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky for some form of Ukrainian “neutrality,” and even if the fascist and ultra-nationalist Ukrainian militias besieging the embattled Donbass regional republics can be militarily neutralized, the war will increase the weight of fascistic forces within the Ukrainian state.

We support the right of national self-determination of Ukraine, as did Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks, an expression of revolutionary internationalism denounced in the February 21 anti-communist tirade of the current inhabitant of the Kremlin (see “Rus-

sian Nationalist Putin vs. Bolshevik Internationalist Lenin,” page 15). At the same time, we are for the right of self-determination of the predominantly Russian-speaking region of Donbass and defend Crimea’s democratic decision to join Russia. We are for bringing down both the Ukrainian and Russian capitalist regimes through internationalist workers revolution. We combat Putin’s overt Great Russian chauvinism (as well as that of Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny, lionized in the West as an “anti-corruption activist”) – and we combat the reactionary nationalism of the Ukrainian bourgeoisie looking to be the front line of NATO and the European Union (EU). Zelensky just applied for emergency entry into the EU, the very issue that set off the 2014 “Euromaiden” Kiev putsch, as the German government announced it would double its military budget and begin delivering arms to Ukraine, in the name of peace and “democracy.”

Ukrainian nationalism has always appealed to imperialism against communism and Russia, and is historically anti-Polish *and* anti-Semitic. That was the case with Symon Petliura and the Ukrainian Rada (governing council) in 1917-18, which allied with the German imperial army and Russian White Guard generals against the Bolsheviks. This was also true of Ukrainian nationalist Stepan Bandera, who joined with the German Nazis and the SS extermination squads to fight the Soviet Union and terrorize the Ukrainian population. Today, as well, Ukrainian nationalists of all stripes – from the fascist Svoboda, Right Sector, Azov and Dnipro battalions, etc., to business moguls beholden to Wall Street, to comedian/president Zelensky, a protégé of Israeli/Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Komoisky, funder of several militias – one and all aspire to be the tools of imperialist domination.

In the former Soviet bloc deformed workers states, now capitalist countries of Eastern Europe, Putin’s attack on Ukraine has activated anti-Russian sentiment and a beefed-up NATO presence. Poland’s racist, anti-woman, fascistic regime, which last year used its military to keep out Middle Eastern refugees, letting them die in the woods along the Byelorussian border, now welcomes white Christian Ukrainian refugees as well as thousands more U.S. troops. This highlights yet again the vicious anti-refugee and anti-immigrant offensive of “Fortress Europe.” In the Baltic statelets, which celebrate the fascist “Forest Brothers” who killed thousands of Soviet citizens in World War II, post-Soviet independence was accompanied by anti-Russian language laws such as Ukraine has enacted since the



Russian rockets hit headquarters of Ukraine secret police, SBU (above) on March 2, where repression of Russian-speaking population of eastern Ukraine was orchestrated.



Screen shots from *New York Times* video of fascist paramilitary militia preparing to strike near the “line of contact” with the eastern Donetsk republic. Over 14,000 people have been killed in eight years of Ukrainian nationalist war against the predominantly Russian-speaking regions. On the wall, the red-and-black banner of Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera now adopted by the “Ukrainian Volunteer Army.”

2014 Kiev coup. “Plucky little Lithuania,” where local nationalists carried out some of the worst anti-Jewish pogroms on the eve of Hitler’s invasion of the USSR (and whose rulers dream of medieval glory when the Lithuanian Grand Duchy ruled Ukraine and Byelorussia), now hosts a German army battalion. The Baltic barons who governed Estonia and Latvia in the years between World War I and II acted then as agents of German imperialism. Today they offer their lands for NATO military maneuvers and practice landings for U.S. imperialist war on Russia.

While Western media proclaim that Ukrainian president Zelensky has “found his roar” and is reveling in his new role acting as wartime leader, Democratic U.S. president Joe Biden is trying to regain his stature after the Kabul exit fiasco, posturing as a statesman firmly upholding the international security order (i.e., U.S. hegemony). In his February 24 speech announcing his war aims, Putin took aim at “the whole so-called Western bloc formed by the United States in its own image and likeness” which is an “empire of lies.” As *New York Times* Editorial Board member Farah Stockman noted in a round-table discussion of pundits of U.S. imperialism’s house organ: “It’s bigger than Ukraine because he’s been watching for the last, I don’t know, 20 years – he’s been watching the United States do things like this [invading countries].... He hated what we did in Libya. He was furious. He hated the Iraq war invasion. He has been seeing us throw our might around and call it international law. And I think he’s just saying, well, I can play that game, too. And this is really about telling the United States that it’s no longer the sole superpower and showing that we are weak.”¹

At the level of geopolitics, Stockman went on, Putin “went to Beijing before this and basically got some kind of agreement from President Xi that somehow China was going to back them up with economic deals so that they could live maybe without

Europe for a while.” The February 4 Putin-Xi joint statement of Russia-China mutual support greatly worried the war gamers in the Pentagon and “defense” think tanks. “U.S. Officials Repeatedly Urged China to Help Avert War in Ukraine,” headlined the *New York Times* (26 February). The Beijing bureaucrats would have to be blithering idiots to fall for this sucker bait, as Biden has made it perfectly clear that the U.S. war drive against Putin’s Russia is only a way station on the road to a showdown with China. The massive hysterical bipartisan propaganda war blaming China for the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic underlines once again that the U.S.’ ultimate

aim is counterrevolution in the bureaucratically deformed workers state.² Yet China’s Stalinist rulers are still forlornly seeking the will o’ the wisp of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism.

Back in Ukraine, the super-corrupt “oligarchs” who dominate the economy skipped town in their private planes as the war threats heated up. The Ukrainian kleptocrats are exclusively interested in their own enrichment, grabbing whatever formerly state-owned properties they can at fire-sale prices. Their Russian brethren on the other hand have to deal with Putin, who draws on the lessons of Russian history, as tsars from Ivan the Terrible to Peter the Great understood the imperative of keeping the boyars (barons) subordinate and beholden to the autocracy. Many ordinary Ukrainians have responded to Zelensky’s appeals to resist the Russian attack, practicing with plywood mock AKs in rudimentary training. Now actual rifles are being handed out. This is a cynical ploy to increase the number of civilian casualties, by a reactionary regime which offers its services as imperialist stooges to provoke war on Russia, and that has been persecuting the Russian-speaking population for years. The Ukrainian fascists besieging eastern Ukraine are a threat to all working people. These murderous thugs must be permanently stopped and brought to justice, and their program of “ethnic cleansing” smashed.

In the imperialist West, the population is being subjected to an endless barrage of overblown war propaganda. No mention of the fact that Ukrainian border guards put up little resistance. And the 82 Ukrainian navy men reported killed by Russian bombing of Zmeiny (Snake) Island on the border with Moldova – who Zelensky announced would be posthumously awarded the title Hero of Ukraine for their “defiant last stand”?³ They actually surrendered to the Russians and turned up in Sevastopol, Crimea “safe and

² See “Biden Escalates Anti-China War Plans,” *The Internationalist* No. 64, July-September 2021; and “U.S. Big Lie Over Wuhan Is War Propaganda,” *The Internationalist*, No. 65, October-December 2021.

³ *Washington Post*, 25 February.

sound.”⁴ More sober war-mongering military analysts report a Russian “operational pause on February 26-27” to bring up additional forces, fuel and artillery, while “Russian forces have encircled Mariupol” (a majority Russian-speaking city that voted for self-rule in 2014 but was brutally retaken by fascists) and “threaten to isolate Ukrainian forces in place on the line of contact in Donbas if they do not withdraw.”⁵ In all the imperialist media coverage there has been zero about the precarious situation of the besieged population in Donetsk and Lugansk, regions with a population of over 4 million (more than that of Estonia and Latvia combined), where 14,000 people have been killed in eight years of war by Ukrainian forces.

Meanwhile, the bulk of the Western left has lined up with the NATO imperialists in one-sidedly denouncing the Russians. The French Communist Party (PCF) “condemned” Putin’s “grave decision” to launch a military operation in Ukraine, while only complaining of NATO “fueling the fire of confrontation.”⁶ The ex-Stalinist PCF called on imperialist France (i.e., the anti-worker government of Emmanuel Macron) to push for peace negotiations “under the aegis of the U.N.,” which has served as a cover for imperialist aggression and occupation from Congo to Haiti. The German Left Party, home to many former members of the East German Stalinist ruling party, issued a February 22 statement opposing Russian recognition of the independence of the East Ukrainian “people’s republics” as “violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.” It also called the Russian attack a “war contrary to international law, and which we unequivocally condemn.”⁷ These pseudo-communists and “left” social democrats are a prime case of what Lenin denounced during World War I as “social-imperialists,” who are actively supporting the imperialist war drive.

Of the smaller left groups, the pseudo-Trotskyists almost all join the anti-Russia front, sometimes trying to cover their tracks with fig-leaf criticism of NATO. This is most blatantly the case with the Socialist Alternative (SAlt) tendency, which called for “full solidarity with the people of Ukraine” and demanded that “Russian troops should be immediately withdrawn from Ukraine.”⁸ No call to cut off NATO arms to Kiev, however. A previous SAlt statement⁹ vituperated against “Russian imperialism,” a claim of many Trotskyoid groups which we definitively refuted at the time of the 2014 pro-imperialist Kiev coup.¹⁰ That statement also denounces “Chinese imperialism,” a constant theme of the SAlt tendency, which was perhaps the most virulent left “cheerleader” for the pro-imperialist Hong Kong riots of 2019.¹¹

⁴ *News Front*, 27 February.

⁵ Institute for the Study of War, “Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, February 27, 2022.”

⁶ Parti Communiste Français, “Ukraine : Non à la guerre, la France doit porter urgemment une offre de paix” (24 February).

⁷ Die Linke, “Erklärung zur Abstimmung über den Ukraine” (27 February).

⁸ International Socialist Alternative, “No War in Ukraine!” (24 February).

⁹ ISA, “What Now for Ukrainian Conflict?” (22 February).

¹⁰ See “The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism’” (May 2014), *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015.

¹¹ See “‘Hong Kong Democracy’ Riots: Pro-Imperialist, Anti-Communist, Fascist-In-

Also pushing the “Russian imperialism” claim is Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers International (CWI), from which SAlt split in 2019. An anti-Russia and de facto pro-imperialist stance is par for the course for a tendency that backed U.S. puppet Boris Yeltsin in the 1991 U.S.-engineered counter-coup that brought counterrevolution in the USSR. Another of the NATO socialist currents vituperating against “Russian imperialism” is the International Marxist Tendency (IMT), from which the CWI split in 1991. An initial commentary by IMT guru Alan Woods, “Imperialist hypocrisy and the invasion of Ukraine,”¹² made mention that “our fight is against imperialism.” But the operative line was the call by Russian supporters of the IMT for “No to war with Ukraine! Against Russian military intervention!” which opposed Russian recognition of the independence of the Donbass republics and said nothing about opposing NATO or the Ukrainian nationalist government.¹³

These mealy-mouthed statements pale in comparison to the position of the “International Bureau of the Fourth International” (formerly United Secretariat), which we have previously cited, that grotesquely proposed a “democratic” means for Ukraine to join the NATO imperialist military alliance.¹⁴ What an abomination coming from groups that falsely lay claim to Trotsky’s Fourth International, which stood for the most intransigent struggle against imperialism! Now, in response to the outbreak of war in Ukraine, the International Bureau published two articles by one Gilbert Achcar. The first compared Putin’s attack on Ukraine to Saddam Hussein’s ill-fated takeover of Kuwait in 1990. The second calls for “the delivery of defensive weapons to the victims of aggression ... in this case the Ukrainian state....”¹⁵ This grotesque call for NATO arms to Ukraine recalls Achcar’s support for the NATO attack on Libya in 2011, and how he has helped train the British military’s Defence Cultural Specialist Unit for counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

This brings us to the misnamed Trotskyist Faction (FT), whose *modus operandi* is to pose as left critics of the leaders of whatever mass movement is currently in vogue, sometimes citing Marxist positions on paper, only to go with the flow of these class-collaborationist mobilizations. Thus an article on the FT’s U.S. site is headlined, “Protesters Across the Globe Demand ‘No War in Ukraine!’ But Not All Demonstrations are the Same” (*Left Voice*, 26 February). It notes that in various countries, protests “against the war” have “demanded *more* intervention by NATO to ‘save’ the Ukrainian people,” pleading for “help from the United States” and its partners in the military alliance. In the past, the FT has polemicized against the false claim that Russia is imperialist. But as always with the FT, what it writes in analytical articles remains academic and what it does on the ground is another story. Praising a Madrid rally that chanted “Neither Putin nor NATO,” the same article calls for an “anti-war movement” based on “denunciations of both Russia and NATO” – i.e., equating Russia and the imperialist military alliance, and

festated,” *The Internationalist* No. 40, Winter 2020.

¹² In Defence of Marxism, 24 February.

¹³ In Defence of Marxism, 24 February.

¹⁴ *International Viewpoint*, 1 February.

¹⁵ “A memorandum on the radical anti-imperialist position regarding the war in Ukraine,” *International Viewpoint*, 28 February.

carefully omitting any denunciation of the Ukrainian forces. In Mexico, the FT affiliate called an “antiwar” rally – in front of the Russian embassy.

In times of war, the real nature of political forces on the left is sharply exposed. The assorted social-imperialists, social-pacifists and double-talking pseudo-Trotskyists stand counterposed to the most basic principles and program of revolutionary Marxism. In the urgent fight for revolutionary leadership, as we wrote in our February 22 LFI statement: “Trotskyists defend the democratic, national and linguistic rights of all sectors of the population, seeking to unite Russian and Ukrainian workers in common struggle together with the workers of East and West Europe. As the imperialists continue to whip up war fever and impose escalating sanctions that ultimately point to world war, those who follow the internationalist program of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks fight for world socialist revolution against all the bourgeois ruling classes.” ■

Defeat War Drive...

continued from page 1

For years, Putin has complained of the increasing encirclement by NATO and its threatening military actions against Russia, to no avail. Two months ago, Moscow handed the U.S. proposed language for security guarantees, and for emphasis, it mobilized its armed forces for military maneuvers all around Ukraine’s borders. The imperialist media went into full Russia-bashing mode, calling up Cold War images of the Russian bear seizing Europe. Non-stop fear-mongering over a supposedly impending Russian invasion of Ukraine recalled the war propaganda over non-existent “weapons of mass destruction” in Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. The Western powers responded to Putin with nothing but empty arms-control talks and flatly refused to rule out NATO expansion. With its almost 1,300-mile border with Russia, inclusion of Ukraine in the Western military alliance would be an act of war. By declaring any limitation on NATO’s eastward expansion a “non-starter,” Biden and his European allies are declaring that the imperialist alliance is gearing up for war on Russia, sooner or later.

Biden is beating the war drums against Russia in a desperate attempt to appear strong after the U.S. imperialism’s humiliating defeat and flight from Afghanistan, where two decades of U.S./NATO invasion and occupation could not keep the puppet government from collapsing. The current inhabitant of the White House is desperately trying to resuscitate a unipolar “New World Order” that was proclaimed by the U.S. with the counter-revolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union three decades ago. But Washington no longer has the military and economic strength to impose its global hegemony, and instead has to rely on its European and Asian allies. In large part, the U.S.’ insistence on isolating and attacking Russia with economic warfare measures is driven by a determination to keep its imperialist ally and rival Germany in line, particularly by insisting on cancellation of Nord Stream 2.

In his speech announcing recognition of the two breakaway republics, Putin noted that in negotiations over the reuni-



Azov Battalion marching in Kiev. Symbols on their flags include the Wolfsangel (black, foreground), used by the German Nazi SS Panzer Division Das Reich which was involved in tank battles in Kharkov, Ukraine. The Azov Battalion includes known Nazi fascists, but has been funded by the U.S. government and incorporated into the Ukraine National Guard. It is one of the main forces fighting against pro-Russian republics in eastern Ukraine and has engaged in war crimes against Russian-speaking inhabitants, including rape and torture.

fication of Germany in 1990, the U.S. assured Soviet leaders that there would be no expansion of NATO to the east. The existence of this pledge, which the U.S. now pretends was never made, is confirmed in a February 1990 exchange in which U.S. Secretary of State James Baker vowed to Mikhail Gorbachev that “not an inch of NATO’s present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction,” and in a classified German government document recently leaked by *Der Spiegel*. Yet NATO’s *Drang nach Osten* (march to the east) goes on unabated. And while Putin hails Russia’s “contribution to overcoming the legacy of the Cold War,” we Trotskyists fought tooth and nail against the capitalist reunification of Germany and the counter-revolution that brought down the multinational Soviet workers state.

The current crisis over Ukraine has been building for years. In 2014, Ukrainian fascists and ultra-nationalists staged a coup d’état that ousted the elected, pro-Russian president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich. This was a second attempt, after the 2004 so-called Orange Revolution, one of the U.S.-sponsored “color revolutions” for “regime change” in post-Soviet states. In 2014, the State Department’s Europe chief financed and directly coordinated with the nationalist fascists and hobnobbed with them in Maidan square in Ukraine’s capital.³ Ukrainian nationalists marched with portraits of Stepan Bandera, the infamous collaborator with the Nazi invasion of the USSR during World War II, who has now been officially declared “hero of Ukraine.” Following the February 2014 coup, its organizers launched a war on Russian-speaking eastern Ukraine and staged a pogrom in the south, burning dozens of people alive in the trade-union headquarters in Odessa.⁴ The use of Russian in schools and government was banned.

When an uprising against this murderous Ukrainian national chauvinism broke out in the east, the Kiev junta considered the army unreliable and dispatched fascist squads to try to put down the revolt. Yet the populations of Donetsk and Lugansk

oblasts (regional divisions) voted overwhelmingly in a May 2014 referendum for independence from the central government, and after hard close-quarters fighting, the would-be ethnic cleansers failed. In Crimea (whose largest city Sevastopol has for centuries been the headquarters of the Russian Black Sea fleet), after Russian troops seized the peninsula in March 2014 without a shot being fired, the overwhelmingly ethnically Russian population voted in a referendum to exercise their self-determination by joining Russia. The League for the Fourth International called to support the eastern uprising and to defend the regional republics that have tenaciously resisted the Ukrainian nationalist/fascist attacks, as well as defending Crimea’s democratic choice to join Russia.

Russia’s move to recognize the Donetsk and Lugansk republics puts an end to the 2015 Minsk Accords between Russia and Ukraine for regional autonomy of the eastern oblasts. While the separatists sought independence, Putin preferred that the Donbass be an autonomous part of a neutral Ukraine that could be a buffer between Russia and NATO. But the Kiev government never undertook promised reforms providing security guarantees and a say in foreign policy to the breakaway regions. Recently, the prohibitions on use of the Russian language have been intensified, even though it is the predominant language in the cities of the east and south, and is widely used in the capital, in business and popular culture. Putin talks of “genocide” against Russians, which is an exaggeration, but Russian-speakers in the east are definitely threatened by the Ukrainian nationalist army and fascists that have besieged the region for eight years. As for the now-defunct Minsk Accords for autonomy in Ukraine, it was always hard to see how the central government could reassert control without a bloodbath.

The escalation of anti-Russian provocations by the Ukrainian government is a direct result of the election of Democrat Biden to the U.S. presidency. As Republican Trump sought to make nice with Putin and Russia, the Democrats whipped up the “Russiagate” frenzy, blaming the Kremlin for Hillary Clinton’s loss of the 2016 election. The Democrats have been tight with

Ukraine’s anti-Russian nationalists for years, engineering the 2004 and 2014 coups, sitting on the board of a Ukrainian gas company, etc. As soon as Biden got in, the Ukraine government began a string of provocations, announcing a new military strategy in March 2021 centered on joining NATO and getting it to support Ukraine against Russia. Russian-language television stations were shut down, and the main pro-Russian “oligarch” business mogul in Ukraine was placed under house arrest on charges of “treason.”

The Ukrainian government and nationalist paramilitar-

ies simultaneously launched a military escalation in the east, to which Moscow responded by beefing up its forces on Russian territory on the other side of the border. In the fall, Russia again mobilized for a series of military exercises, stating over and over that it had no intention of invading Ukraine. The purpose of those exercises was to make clear to the Western imperialists that if Ukraine joins NATO, it would be considered an act of war, and to indicate what would be the consequence. If Russia wanted to, it could easily take much of Ukraine. Even the Ukrainian top military brass admitted they would not last more than a few days against the modernized Russian military. So Putin’s point was made very clearly. The U.S. response was frenzied propaganda portraying the Russian leader as the embodiment of evil.

For all the feverish denunciation of Moscow’s military buildup, NATO has been intensifying aggressive military operations near Russia. “Trident Juncture” in 2018 was billed as “the biggest exercise since the end of the Cold War,” focusing on the Baltics, including a D-Day style landing in Latvia. This was followed up in May-July 2021 with “Defender Europe 21,” a joint exercise involving 28,000 troops and a giant landing of more than 1,000 military vehicles in Albania. This was linked to the simultaneous “Sea Breeze” naval exercises in the Black Sea, with ships of 32 countries (including Japan), along with ground exercises in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. None of these are ever mentioned in the imperialist media, and *all* are aimed at Russia. Since 1999, NATO has expanded to include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Romania, encircling Russia. And now the imperialists want to tighten the noose by refusing to rule out entry of Ukraine and Georgia, which were told in 2008 they could join NATO if they got their houses in order.

The League for the Fourth International calls to defend self-rule in the breakaway regions of southern and eastern Ukraine and to defeat the war drive against Russia and China. We militantly oppose imperialist sanctions and denounce the U.S./NATO hue and cry over Russian troops shoring up the besieged Donbass republics as the bleating of frustrated war-

³ See “Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!” *The Internationalist* No. 37, May-June 2014.

⁴ See “Fascist Pogrom in Odessa, and the Aftermath,” *The Internationalist* No. 37.

mongers and their social-democratic acolytes. The conductor of this orchestrated uproar is U.S. imperialism, with its record of countless bloody invasions.

The Internationalist Group/U.S. warned repeatedly before the 2020 election that the Democrats were campaigning as “the more consistent warmongers against China, Russia and – of course – North Korea.”⁵ In an interview during the election campaign, Biden declared that the “biggest threat to America right now ... is Russia,” while “the biggest competitor is China” (60 Minutes, 25 October 2020). And upon being named Biden’s ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield called China “a strategic adversary” (AP, 27 January 2021). Thus the February 4 joint statement of Putin and Chinese president and Communist Party leader Xi Jinping proclaiming friendship with “no limits” between China and Russia, which explicitly opposed the expansion of NATO, caused great consternation in Washington. Facing the escalating threats and dangers, we call on the world working class to defend China and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialism and counterrevolution.

Russian intervention may put a damper on shelling along the “line of contact” between Ukrainian and Donbass forces. If, however, clashes lead to a full-blown war between Russia and Ukraine, Trotskyists would be for a policy of revolutionary defeatism in both of these regional powers, calling for workers to actively oppose the war effort of “their” bourgeoisies and to wage intransigent class struggle against the capitalist rulers in Moscow and Kiev. But if it turned into a war by Ukraine’s imperialist backers against Russia it would be a very different matter.

Today, the overriding class issue is to fight against the aggressive U.S./NATO imperialist warmongers and their flunkies in Kiev, as well as against the fascist and ultra-nationalist pogromists threatening the population in eastern Ukraine. In no case do Marxists give political support to the Ukrainian leaders or to the Russian nationalist and anti-communist Vladimir Putin, whose February 21 speech began with a diatribe against Lenin and the Bolsheviks for creating Ukraine in the first place. A Soviet Ukraine in a multinational USSR could have overcome regional and ethnic tensions, although Stalin’s brutal centralization negated that. But ever since Ukraine’s 1991 independence as a bourgeois state, it has been a deeply divided country, ruled by an inveterately corrupt, self-dealing oligarchy using ultra-nationalist and fascist shock troops as a battering ram to enforce “Ukrainization” on the Russian-speaking east and south.

Trotskyists defend the democratic, national and linguistic rights of all sectors of the population, seeking to unite Russian and Ukrainian workers in common struggle together with the workers of East and West Europe. As the imperialists continue to whip up war fever and impose escalating sanctions that ultimately point to world war, those who follow the internationalist program of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks fight for world socialist revolution against all the bourgeois ruling classes. ■

⁵ “Democrats’ Pro-Cop Ticket Vies with Trump Over ‘Law and Order,’” *The Internationalist* No. 61, September-October 2020.

Russian Nationalist Putin vs. Bolshevik Internationalist Lenin

A lot of nonsense is published in Western media about Russian president Vladimir Putin supposedly wanting to bring back the Soviet Union. Nothing could be further from the truth. What Putin wants to bring back is the tsarist empire. In a recent photo of the Russian president observing military exercises with his Byelorussian ally Alexander Lukashenko, we see in the background the Russian imperial flag with the double-headed eagle. And in his February 21 address recognizing the east Ukrainian “people’s republics” as independent states, the Russian president fumed, “as a result of the Bolshevik policy, Soviet Ukraine arose.”

In his speech, Putin noted that Ukrainian nationalists who demolished monuments to Lenin said they were engaged in “decommunization.” He goes on: “Do you want decommunization? Well, that suits us just fine. But it is not necessary, as they say, to stop halfway. We are ready to show you what real decommunization means for Ukraine.” Since he has previously stated that Ukraine is not a separate nation but part of the “large Russian nation,” the implications are clear. In fact, Lenin and the Bolsheviks, including Leon Trotsky, a Ukrainian Jew, called, as Putin said, for “the right of nations to self-determination, up to secession,” and this was enshrined in the 1922 declaration of Soviet statehood and the 1924 Soviet constitution. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was a multinational state, in keeping with the communist internationalist program.

For Putin, what this comes down to, as he complained in a speech last July “On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians,” is “Russia was robbed.” He denounces Lenin’s call to fight against what Putin derisively terms “so-called Russian great-power chauvinism.” Today the Russian nationalist president praises Stalin for implementing “in practice not Lenin’s, but his own ideas of state structure” in a unitary state. Lenin and Trotsky fought together against Stalin’s Great Russian chauvinism. The Bolsheviks were indeed the founders of Soviet Ukraine, upholding the democratic right of self-determination as part of the internationalist fight for so-



Great Russian chauvinist Vladimir Putin yearns to restore the tsarist empire. Above: Russian president holds court with the Russian Security Council, with Russian imperial flag behind him.

cialist revolution. That hardly makes them the fathers of a bourgeois nationalist Ukraine.

In December 1917, when the nationalist Ukrainian Rada (governing council) was collaborating with White Guard counterrevolutionaries, Lenin and Trotsky issued a short “manifesto/ultimatum” that succinctly summed up Bolshevik policy on the national question (the three-point ultimatum was written by Trotsky):

1. “Accordingly we, the Council of People’s Commissars, recognize the Ukrainian People’s Republic, and its right to secede from Russia or enter into a treaty with the Russian Republic on federal or similar relations between them....”
2. “Will the Rada undertake to assist the revolutionary troops in their struggle against the counterrevolutionary Kadet-Kaledin revolt?...”
3. “In the event no satisfactory answer is received to these questions within 48 hours, the Council of People’s Commissars will deem the Rada to be in a state of open war with the Soviet power in Russia and the Ukraine.”

—V.I. Lenin, “Manifesto to the Ukrainian People with an Ultimatum to the Ukrainian Rada” (16 December 1917)

At the time of the breakup of the USSR, counterrevolutionary forces seized upon the national question, first with Armenia vs. Azerbaijan, as a vehicle for their drive to restore capitalism. This reactionary appeal to nationalism was backed by a number of

pseudo-Trotskyists currents. Throughout East Europe anti-communists used nationalist demagoguery to grab power, leading to the breakup of other multinational workers states, notably Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. This often resulted in monstrous ethnic atrocities on all sides, not only Serb attacks on Bosnian Muslims and Kosovo Albanians but also reverse attacks by Kosovo Albanians and the Croatian expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Serbs from Krajina in the early 1990s. The bloodletting then became the pretext for the U.S. and NATO imperialist bombing campaign that finally buried Yugoslavia. And today the imperialists prate about the supposed inviolability of borders!

In the West, Putin’s recent denunciation of Lenin for creating a Soviet Ukraine was declared a “misreading of history,” as pundits discovered “Ukrainian identity politics and nationalism” going back to “feudal czarist times” (*New York Times*, 22 February), all in the service of Russia-bashing war propaganda. Grotesquely, in Germany various pseudo-Marxists in the Left Party are citing Putin’s attacks on the Bolsheviks and his Great Russian chauvinist version of history in order to justify pro-NATO calls for sanctions against Russia and for admitting Ukraine to the European Union (*Junge Welt*, 23 February)! After earlier calling on former chancellor Angela Merkel (!) to mediate the conflict with Russia, these latter-day social-imperialists have snapped to attention as soldiers in the imperialist war drive.

Among these social-imperialists is the self-proclaimed Fourth International Bureau, which falsely claims to represent Trotskyism, which denounced Russia as imperialist and argued that “it is up to the Ukrainian people - and not to blackmail and negotiations between great powers - to decide on their membership or not of NATO” (*International Viewpoint*, 1 February). So in line with social democrats going back to the days of World War I, they work to provide a “democratic” cover to the warmongering imperialists and their military alliance. Genuine Trotskyists oppose NATO down the line: the answer to nationalism and the barbarism of imperialist world war is the internationalist program of the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky for world socialist revolution. ■



Soviet poster from 1919 during the Russian Civil War of Red Army against imperialist-backed counterrevolutionaries. Title reads: “Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic: Comrade of Ukraine.”

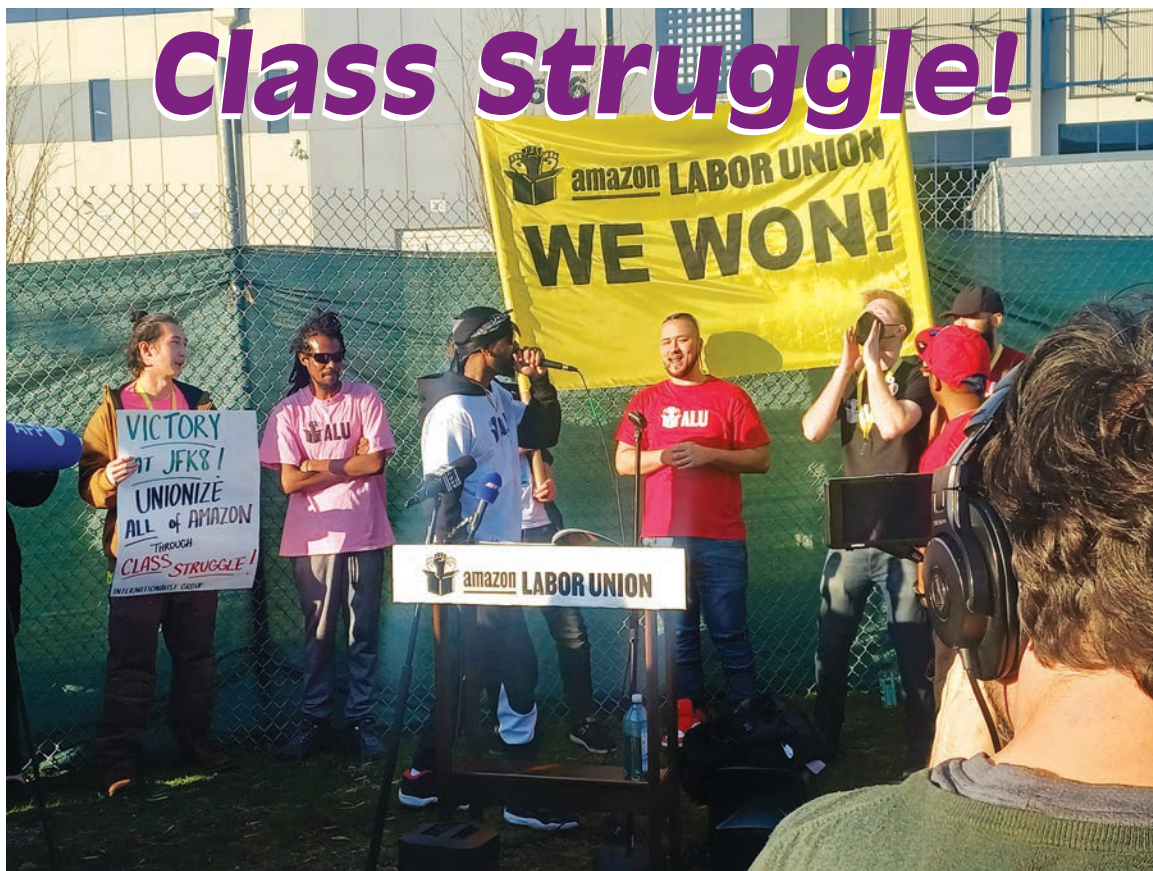
Democrats, NLRB No Friends of Labor

Amazon Labor Union Victory at JFK8

Unionize All of Amazon with

Class Struggle!

On Friday, April 1, the Amazon Labor Union (ALU) won a historic vote to unionize the massive JFK8 warehouse on Staten Island, New York, by a vote of 2,654 to 2,131. This is the first union victory in North America against the giant distribution and e-commerce monopoly, which has 1.1 million employees in the U.S. alone. The vote, which the *New York Times* (1 April) called “one of the biggest victories for organized labor in a generation,” came amid growing restiveness in the working class, and followed large strikes last fall at John Deere, Nabisco, Kellogg’s, and elsewhere. It will be a beacon for millions of workers at Amazon and throughout country who desperately need unionization to fight against the low wages, miserable “benefits” and deadly working conditions that are the standard in capitalist America. As Internationalist Group placards declared at victory celebrations after the vote: **Victory at JFK8! Unionize All of Amazon with Class Struggle!**



Members of the Amazon Labor Union (ALU) talk about organizing at JFK8 and celebrate the union victory at press conference outside the Staten Island, NY, warehouse, April 8.

centrally by the UMWA bureaucrats’ refusal to build mass picket lines that would stop the scabs and shut down production. The capitalist courts of course issued injunctions against picketing, but every class-struggle militant knows that you can’t play by the bosses’ rules and expect to win.

After the RWDSU’s loss last spring in Bessemer, many commentators weighed in on why the union lost. Now many are commenting on how and why the Amazon Labor Union won in Staten Island, an outcome unexpected by many. The ALU announced its campaign only eleven months ago, soon after the April 2021 defeat in Bessemer. The ALU was initiated by Chris Smalls, a former supervisor at JFK8 who had been fired in March of 2020 after leading a protest against the lack of COVID safety protocols in the warehouse. When Smalls, along with a few workers in the warehouse, launched the unionization campaign, they said that it would be different than Bes-

The next stage of the battle will be to get the viciously anti-union Amazon bosses to negotiate and sign a contract. The union has issued a statement demanding that collective bargaining begin in early May. But even in Europe, where Amazon workers have been represented by unions in several countries for many years, in only one location, in Italy, have the workers been able to force the giant company to sign a contract – through a strike. After the victory at JFK8 was announced, on April 8 Amazon filed 25 objections with the National Relations Board (NLRB) contesting the election, scurrilously claiming that the union “intimidated” workers and that the NLRB – a capitalist body – unfairly influenced workers to vote for the union! Amazon will seek to avoid recognizing and bargaining with the ALU by tying it up in the capitalist courts and the NLRB, whose fundamental purpose is to control and suppress workers’ struggles.

It has now been reported that Amazon is planning to set up an employee app in which workers could message each other

to cheer on fellow workers to more productivity, while banning words like “union,” “plantation,” “slave labor,” “grievance,” “living wage,” “robot” and “restroom,” among many others. (“Restroom” is banned because Amazon workers, typically treated worse than Amazon’s robots, often are not given time to go to the bathroom.) Working for Amazon is so dystopian it makes Boots Riley’s 2018 anti-capitalist movie “Sorry to Bother You,” with its slave-labor company WorryFree, seem like social realism rather than fantasy.

Also on April 1, initial results were announced from a mail-in vote to determine if the RWDSU (Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union) would represent workers at Amazon’s BHM1 warehouse in Bessemer, Alabama. Votes against the union were in the lead by 993 to 885, but with 416 contested ballots the election is too close to call. While the union is unlikely to win, the result is much closer than the first vote at Bessemer a year ear-

lier, when the company won by more than a two-to-one margin. That first election was declared void by the NLRB based on Amazon’s brazen and pervasive efforts to intimidate workers even beyond what the government’s “labor laws” typically allow.

Staten Island Win Follows Bessemer Setbacks

Last year, the Internationalist Group traveled to Bessemer repeatedly during the unionization drive (see our article, “Amazon Union Drive in Alabama Electrifies Labor,” *The Internationalist* No. 62, January-March 2021). This year, an Internationalist team attended a February 26 union solidarity rally in Bessemer, where we talked with union activists who had come from around the South, and with some of the worker-activists who have been organizing inside BHM1. There was a contingent of miners from the Warrior Met coal strike, now over a year old, in nearby Tuscaloosa County; that strike has been ground down

semer because the ALU was “worker-led” and independent of the traditional unions. Amazon immediately responded with an anti-union campaign, spending millions to fly in highly paid “union-prevention” consultants. The racist Amazon bosses smeared the mostly black ALU activists as “thugs,” erected fences in an attempt to drive them away from the warehouse, and fired at least one union activist.

The ALU over time expanded its core of worker-organizers and gathered some 2,500 election authorization cards in six months. An initial attempt to file for an election for four warehouses on Staten Island with more than 10,000 workers was withdrawn by the union in October as the NLRB indicated that half the cards were of workers who had already quit or been terminated by Amazon. Gathering more cards and restricting the filing to the JFK8 warehouse and the LDJ5 sortation center, the ALU re-filed on December 22. This time the NLRB ac-

continued on page 22



Class struggle trade-unionists from Pacific Northwest, New England, Los Angeles and New York traveled to Bessemer, AL, to support drive to unionize Amazon warehouse there.



Teamsters at Los Angeles rally to support unionizing Amazon workers in Alabama, March 2021. To unionize the e-commerce giant will require mobilizing workers’ power in sharp class struggle, including strikes.

The “Green Tide” in Latin America: A Festival of Class Collaboration

The Struggle for Full Abortion Rights, From Latin America to the U.S.

MARCH 8 – On this International Women’s Day, the battle over abortion is at a critical point throughout the Americas. As reactionary forces in the United States wave the banner of the “right to life” and “the family” to eliminate rights won in the past, elsewhere in the hemisphere there has been an upsurge in actions to eliminate laws that have sent thousands of women to jail for the “crime” of ending an unwanted pregnancy – or even for having a miscarriage. Everywhere, the issue of control of women’s bodies by the state is poised point-blank, as decaying capitalism endangers the rights of all the oppressed. The pending calamity in the U.S., where the constitutional right to an abortion is on the verge of being eliminated after being in force for a half-century, underlines the need for a revolutionary class struggle for the liberation of women.

In Latin America much has been made of an advancing *Marea Verde* or “Green Tide,” as feminist groups have labeled the mass mobilizations in Argentina that won a partial legalization of abortion. The National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe and Free Abortion in Argentina goes back to 2003, growing out of the 18th Encuentro Nacional de Mujeres (National Meeting of Women).¹ At that conference, it was decided to adopt as symbol of the abortion rights campaign the bandana associated with the Grandmothers and Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo,² but dying it green to signify life. In early 2018, it was announced that a legislative debate and vote on legalizing abortion would be held. In response, a *pañuelazo* (bandana action) was

¹ The ENM is a feminist gathering in Argentina that has met annually since 1986, including supporters of bourgeois liberal and conservative parties, professional associations, unions, leftists and unaffiliated activists.

² The courageous grandmothers and mothers of leftist activists murdered by the Argentine military dictatorship (1976-1983) demonstrated weekly wearing white headscarves in the square (the Plaza de Mayo) in front of the presidential palace in the capital, Buenos Aires.

Free Abortion on Demand – For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution



Internationalist contingent at 12 September 2021 protest in NYC against Texas anti-abortion law.

held outside the Argentine Congress that drew thousands of young women in particular, all sporting green bandanas. This gave rise to the “Green Tide” of mass mobilizations lasting until Congress finally approved the Law for Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy (IVE) in the last days of 2020.

Elsewhere in the continent, the *Marea*

Verde/Green Tide has been presented as a “feminist revolution.” Yet the Argentine National Campaign for abortion rights was begun by mainstream professional women (doctors, lawyers and academics), and selection of the symbol of the green bandana was made in an accord with the organization Catholic Women for the Right to Decide. The prior

feminist movement, *Ni Una Menos* (Not One Less), protesting murders of women, was built in collaboration with capitalist politicians and the Catholic church.³ Unlike in many countries where bourgeois politics is marked

by a counterposition of social and economic conservative forces on one side and social/economic liberals on the other, in Argentina defenders of abortion rights are found both among supporters of right-wing president Mauricio Macri (2015 to 2019), and of the populist Frente de Todos (Everyone Front) now in office.

The Frente de Todos is the current political expression of Peronism,⁴ which specializes in coopting protest movements and integrating them into its clientelist patronage networks. The IVE bill was debated (and defeated in the Senate) when it was filed for the seventh time in 2018 under President Macri. But finally, on 30 December 2020, under the Peronist government Law 27,610 was passed legalizing abortion in the first 14 weeks of gestation. This was a notable advance for women’s rights in Argentina and in much of Latin America, where abortion has been treated as a serious felony. Yet despite the praise from the left, the Green Tide that mobilized for this law was hardly radical. Rather, it is a festival of class collaboration led by bourgeois political currents – bringing with it obstacles and limitations to winning crucial rights, let

³ See “Italian Trotskyists on International Women’s Day,” *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017: “Yet the first *Ni Una Menos* demonstration in Argentina was not only endorsed by bourgeois politicians but also by the Church, the same clerical hierarchy (including the current Pope Francis) which covered for the military junta’s theft of children of leftists it murdered.”

⁴ Peronism is a bourgeois populist current in Argentina going back to the presidencies of General Juan Domingo Perón, who governed the country from 1946 to 1955, and again in 1973-74. Perón gained considerable working-class support with welfare measures bolstered by “anti-imperialist” rhetoric, while breaking left-led unions..



Feminist activists sporting green bandanas march through Buenos Aires, Argentina, 28 May 2019, demonstrating in support of a bill to legalize abortion in the country.



Hard-line abortion opponent Juan Manzur and Cristina Fernández.

alone the actual liberation of women.

A central figure in this is Cristina Fernández – wife of the late president Néstor Kirchner, herself former president (from 2007 to 2015), and current vice president – who is the standard-bearer of the Kirchnerist current of Peronism. Under her presidency she was explicitly anti-abortion, but after her chosen successor was defeated in the 2015 elections – and after the size of protests showed electoral winds blowing in a new direction – she came out in favor of abortion rights in 2018. In the 2019 election campaign, current president Alberto Fernández (no relation) likewise endorsed the decriminalization of abortion. In the #AbortoLegal2020 campaign, mass vigils and sit-ins in front of Congress served as a sounding board for Frente de Todos legislators. These bourgeois politicians replaced the feminists' bill with their own version that was approved with a predominantly Peronist majority, but also with support from members of the Unión Cívica Radical (UCR) and other traditional conservatives, as well as from the Frente de Izquierda y de los Trabajadores – Unidad (FIT-U, United Left and Workers Front) electoral coalition.

Approval of the IVE law in Argentina had a great impact throughout the continent. But after initial celebrations died down, since the very first days of 2021 attempts to sabotage it have multiplied: legal appeals to declare the law unconstitutional, injunctions in several states to suspend its application, and above all refusal to perform abortions by doctors under the “conscience clause” contained in the law. Then, after the Frente de Todos suffered a defeat in the November 2021 midterm parliamentary elections, Alberto Fernández appointed as head of his cabinet (at the suggestion of vice president Cristina Fernández) an infamous abortion-rights opponent, Juan Manzur, who as governor of Tucumán required that an eleven-year-old girl, Lucía, give birth even though she had requested an abortion because she had been raped.

In the November elections, the Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas (PTS), part of the Trotskyist Fraction (FT) international current and a leading component of the FIT-U, criticized the appointment of Manzur and accused “the Frente de Todos and its feminist, union, political, student and related social movements” of “demobilizing the women’s movement.” Yet at the same time, representatives of Pan y Rosas (Bread and Roses), a feminist tendency linked to the PTS, were engaging in sisterly outreach to Ofelia Fernández, a

young Buenos Aires legislator and rising star of the Kirchnerist Frente Patria Grande (Broad Fatherland Front), only gently criticizing the “lukewarmness” of her concept of “popular feminism.”

The PTS-affiliated “socialist feminists” say they are for “the organization of a women’s movement independent of the state, which has no commitments to the governments of the day.”⁵ Yet with its effusive praise of the Green Tide and enthusiastic and almost entirely uncritical support for the #AbortoLegal2020 campaign, the pseudo-Trotskyist PTS was in fact part of a popular-front feminist movement of support for the Peronist “government of the day.”

Peronism is and has been a pillar of capitalist politics in Argentina since the times of General Perón in the mid-20th century. This populist current plays a key role in subjecting labor unions and popular movements to the tutelage of a sector of the bourgeois ruling class, almost always with opportunist “socialists” as the caboose of the populist train. Its role in the struggle for the right to abortion is a repeat of this pattern. Authentic Trotskyists would have voted critically in favor of even the very partial legalization of abortion that was put to a vote in 2020, while insisting at all times on the unconditional right to abortion at any time during pregnancy, and calling for a political break with the Frente de Todos and all bourgeois politicians, parties and coalitions. But it will take a socialist revolution to win the right to free abortion on demand.

Abortion Rights Under Frontal Assault in the U.S.

Winning a limited legalization of abortion by legislation in Argentina, and now through court decisions in Mexico, sent a wave of excitement and hope throughout Latin America (see “Mexican Trotskyists Call for Free Abortion on Demand,” *The Internationalist* No. 65, October-December 2022). However, north of the border in the United States, there is a wave of fear of an imminent overturn of the individual right to abortion that was established in the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision. Almost simultaneous with the Mexican Supreme Court’s ruling declaring outright bans on abortion unconstitutional, an extreme anti-abortion law in Texas – SB8 – took effect. This would outlaw abortion after the first six weeks into pregnancy with no consideration for rape victims. Even⁵ “Candidates campaigning for women’s struggle” (in Spanish) on candidates of the PTS and Pan y Rosas in the Argentine elections, *Izquierda Diario*, 20 October 2021.

more immediate is the threat of a Mississippi law, now before the U.S. Supreme Court, which could be the occasion for the right-wing anti-abortion supermajority on the Court to overturn *Roe v. Wade* altogether. Similar “heartbeat” laws, supposedly based on detection of cardiac activity in an embryo, have since been passed in other states with Republican-dominated legislatures, including Kentucky, Georgia and Ohio.

The issue is sharply posed of how to fight against the broadscale assault on women’s rights, abortion rights, gay and transgender rights. Some mainstream bourgeois feminists have declared the court battle lost: “Roe Is as Good as Gone. It’s Time for a New Strategy,” headlined the *New York Times* (1 November 2021). So what is this “new strategy”? It is protests, boycotts and above all seeking “political power, and that means getting active in electoral politics” – in other words, vote for the Democratic Party. But that has been the dead-end “strategy” of the bourgeois feminist movement since whenever. What they foresee, given that the anti-abortion movement is based on asserting “states’ rights” to ban abortion, is a fundamental social divide between “red” (Republican) states, where abortion is banned, gay and trans rights are denied and demonized, etc., and “blue” (Democratic) states, where abortion (with limits) is legal and those rights are affirmed, at least formally, plus some “purple” states where the battle hangs in the balance.

Among petty-bourgeois feminists, the new-old strategy is to build a “mass movement” to engage in pressure politics in the streets. The online media outlet *Left Voice* embodies this political line, declaring that the struggle for abortion rights will be won “as a result of a mass heterogeneous movement” modeled after the Marea Verde (Green Wave) in Argentina. *LV*, which is part of a “network” of digital publications affiliated with the “Trotskyist Fraction,” tendency wrote that in Argentina “while the capitalist parties of all stripes had members [who] refused to support the right to an abortion, the mass movement resulted in a victory” (“We Need a Mass Movement to Defend Abortion Rights and We Need it Now,” 4 September 2021). What they are calling for is basically a “militant” brand of lobbying. And what does a “mass heterogeneous movement” mean? They are talking of a movement embracing bourgeois feminist politicians, as in Argentina. This is the politics of *class collaboration*, and anywhere and always the bourgeois components – in Argentina, the Peronists, in the U.S., Democrats – set the real agenda.

In building “heterogeneous” mass movements involving different and counterposed class forces, according to the logic of the lowest common denominator, it is the more “moderate” elements that will prevail. In Argentina, Peronist Cristina Fernández declared in 2005 that she was opposed to abortion. In the U.S., Democrat Hillary Clinton declared in 2007 during her first presidential run that abortion should be “safe, legal and rare, and by rare, I mean *rare*.”⁶ If pressure from mass move-

⁵ Clinton has often qualified her support for abortion rights, saying “late-term abortions should be prohibited except to save the life of the mother” (1996) and “I can support a ban on late-term abortions, including partial-birth abortions, so long as the health and life of the mother is protected” (2000). From Hillary Clinton on Abortion – On the Issues (2016).

ments could move them, it was only to a degree. The partial legalization of abortion in Argentina is a significant gain in a country dominated by the Catholic Church, but the limitations of the law are real: not only the “conscience clause” allowing doctors to refuse to perform the procedure, but also the restriction to the first 14 weeks of pregnancy. In the United States, the Mississippi law *rolling back* abortion rights would ban abortion after 15 weeks. Yet the PTS’ deputies in the Argentine legislature, at least according to posts on the FT’s *Izquierda Diario* website, had only the barest criticism of the conscience clause (a couple of interventions in support of a “partial dissent” in committee) and evidently no attempt to amend, in a deluge of daily articles for the law.

Another article on the FT’s U.S. website declared that in a 2 October 2021 nationwide “Women’s March,” *LV* would “march for the right to free, safe, legal abortion on demand and without apology.” But while the article said that “we can’t trust the courts or the Democrats,” those “mass heterogeneous” *marches were in fact rallies to build support for the Democrats* in the midterm November elections. The Internationalist Group participated in a September 12 NYC abortion rights rally called by *LV* and other assorted leftists. Our signs called to “Defend the Abortion Clinics,” for “Free Abortion on Demand” and “Labor: Defend Trans, Gay and Lesbian Rights!” We also warned, “Democrats: No Friends of Women,” “Democrats Seek Women’s Votes But Bury Abortion Rights Bill,” and “Hillary [Clinton], [Kamala] Harris, [Nancy] Pelosi, AOC [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez], Capitalist Pols – Not Our Sisters!” But the IG did not join in the October 2 get-out-the-vote-for-Biden-and-the-Democrats marches that *Left Voice* helped build.

The *LV* article for the October 2 rally headlined: “Free, Safe, Legal Abortions Will be Won in the Streets” (*Left Voice*, 2 October 2021). But although it is a simple democratic demand, *the right to free abortion on demand will not be won simply by marching in the streets*. In the U.S., under the standard set in *Roe v. Wade* and the accompanying *Doe v. Bolton* ruling, abortion may be performed even in late-term or third-trimester (after 24 weeks) pregnancy if needed for “preservation of the ... health of the mother.” “Health,” according to examples cited in *Roe*, could include the “stigma of unwed motherhood,” the burdens of childcare and “the distress, for all concerned with the unwanted child.” But aside from abortion not being free (the 1976 Hyde Amendment, passed under the Democratic administration of Jimmy Carter, prohibits federal funds to pay for abortions), this is still qualitatively different from *abortion on demand*. Whether under “welfare-state” capitalism in Scandinavia or in the U.S. “free-market” variety, the right to abortion is *not* available at the sole decision of the pregnant person.

The Family: Building Block of Capitalist Society, and of Women’s Oppression

Why is this simple medical procedure everywhere regulated by the state, and denied to millions of women, causing tens of thousands of maternal deaths every year? There is, of course, the opposition of Catholic, Evangelical, Muslim and Jewish religious fundamentalists who claim that a fetus in the womb is an

“unborn person,” or who oppose women’s right to control their bodies altogether. But beyond the “god squad” bigots who besiege abortion clinics – and even murder abortion providers in the name of a hypocritical “right to life” – the fact is that almost no bourgeois politician backs full rights to abortion *because they all support the family*, the building block of capitalist society. A woman’s right to choose to bear children or not could lead to a decline in births and undermine a social order built on the subjugation of women. That is also a reason why gay and transgender rights are deemed subversive. And it is key to the core of anti-abortion hysteria: for the racists, not enough *white* babies are being born.⁷ Black, Latino and immigrant women, in contrast, are often subject to involuntary abortions and forced sterilization.

Revolutionary Marxists have always been in the forefront of the struggle against women’s oppression and for equality. In his fundamental work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), Friedrich Engels writes (Chapter 2): “The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage, and the first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by the male.” In the monogamous marriage, he goes on, “the supremacy of the husband over the wife in the modern family, the necessity of creating real social equality between them, and the way to do it, will only be seen in the clear light of day when both possess legally complete equality of rights. Then it will be plain that the first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry, and that this in turn demands the abolition of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society.”

In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx and Engels famously called for the “Abolition of the family!” adding, “Even the most radical flare up at this outrageous proposal of the communists.” This is as true today as it was then, and even many Stalinist and social-democratic reformists join in seeking to bury this revolutionary call. Maoists of all stripes declare the family to be a “fighting unit of socialism.”⁸ But what does that mean, “abolition of the family”? In the Internationalist Group pamphlet edition of the *Manifesto* we included an explanatory footnote:

“Here and throughout the *Manifesto* when speaking of ‘abolition,’ the original German is *Aufhebung*, which also denotes overcoming, superseding. In Hegel’s dialectic, the *Aufhebung* represented the resolution of a contradiction. Thus the meaning of Marx and Engels’ phrase included the concept of the superseding of the family by higher, collective social institutions.”

Engels spelled this out in *The Origin of the Family*...:

“With the transfer of the means of production into common ownership, the single family ceases to be the economic unit of society. Private housekeeping is transformed into a social industry. The

care and education of the children becomes a public affair; society looks after all children alike, whether they are legitimate or not.”

We fight for demands such as *free 24-hour childcare* which point to such institutions of a socialist society, along with democratic demands like *free abortion on demand* which will not be fully realized without a revolution as they affect vital institutions of capitalist society. In the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution under Lenin and Trotsky not only was equality of men and women before the law established, along with freedom of divorce and abolition of laws against homosexuality and sodomy, but in 1920 Soviet Russia became the first country in the world to permit abortion, free and on request, at all stages of pregnancy. At the same time, a start was made in establishing daycare centers, low-cost restaurants and laundries. But the material conditions of an economically backward country besieged by imperialism imposed limitations, and with the bureaucratic political counter-revolution under Stalin after 1924, these gains were rolled back, to the point that in 1935 abortion was made illegal. The family was rehabilitated at the expense of women’s rights.⁹

Yet a collectivized planned economy can *lay the basis* for the liberation of women. In fact, in places such as the German Democratic Republic (DDR) – the East German bureaucratically deformed workers state – low-cost restaurants, laundries, daycare centers and other socialized means of overcoming domestic slavery of women became possible, as women were “brought back into public industry,” with 95% employed outside the home. This also made possible a largely unrestricted right to abortion. But as a result of capitalist counter-revolution, the right to abortion was almost entirely eliminated in places like Poland, leading to recent struggles, and in reunified imperialist Germany abortion is still illegal (though not prosecuted in the first trimester).

Bottom line: overcoming the oppression of women is impossible under capitalism. The League for the Fourth International fights for *women’s liberation through socialist revolution*.

Feminists Accept the Framework of Capitalism

Ruling-class feminists are not the only ones who refuse to call for abolition and replacement of the family by socialized institutions to overcome household drudgery. This is also the case of many petty-bourgeois leftist feminists. An example is Silvia Federici, the Italian American “autonomist” feminist who is often cited by “radicals” in Mexico and elsewhere. Known since the 1970s for her participation in the “wages for housework” movement along with Selma James¹⁰ and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Federici has become something of a guru to feminists close to Zapatismo and even in circles claiming to be Marxist. The Trotskyist Fraction has flirted with Federici, writing that her “contributions are important” and complaining that “different currents

⁹ See the chapter on “Thermidor in the Family” in Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936).

¹⁰ See “Dalla Costa / James and the Subversion of Marxism: A Critique,” in *Women and Revolution* No. 5, Spring 1974.



Selma James (left) with the Trotskyist Fraction's Andrea D'Atri.

use Silvia Federici to make criticisms of Marxism.”¹¹ Even with her recent sharp denunciations of Marxism, the FT makes only the most lukewarm, implicit criticism of this icon of “radical” feminism. In fact, Federici’s feminism has always been deeply anti-Marxist. Her first major work, *Caliban and the Witch* (2004), upholds the absurd thesis that women in Europe supposedly enjoyed far greater freedom in the feudal Middle Ages but were then enslaved by capitalism.

Using supposedly Marxist language, Federici’s recent collection of essays titled *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender and Feminism* (2018) is in fact an extended jeremiad against Marxism. (The Spanish edition makes this explicit, with the second part of the title reading: “Feminist Critiques of Marxism.”) She argues that “Marx’s lack of interest in domestic labor” was because it seemed “an archaic form that would soon be superseded by the progress of industrialization.” This leads her to say that “we have been forced to reconsider one of the main dogmas of Marx’s theory of revolution,” namely that “capitalism and modern industry are prior conditions to free humanity from exploitation.” Instead, this could supposedly be accomplished by dispersed communities (“commons”) based on “cooperative association.”

In one of the essays, Federici declares that male workers who “called for the exclusion of women from the factories and other workplaces, arguing that their place was in the home,” supposedly showed that “the interests of the proletarian man and the capitalist coincided in this aspect.” Her grotesque claim that this classic example of bourgeois false consciousness somehow represented the interests of the male workers is nothing but a “theoretical” aid to the capitalists, an attack on women workers and sabotage of the Marxist struggle to unite men and women workers against male chauvinism, discrimination and oppression of women in the workplace. In a bizarre twist to this stay-at-home line, Selma James actually argued that women who go to work are

¹¹ “Marxismo y feminismo: ‘El Calibán y la bruja’ de Silvia Federici,” *Izquierda Diario*, 14 February 2017.

taking work away from men!¹²

In arguing for Zapatista-style “commons” instead of communism, Federici basically accepts the capitalist framework, and denies that liberation of women must be based on developing the productive forces in a socialized economy. In a pamphlet praised by anarcho-syndicalists she claimed that socialization of housework amounts to “state” control. She instead calls for “wages for housework.” Women must *embrace the role of housewife*, she holds, to “realize that they are housewives too” and denial of this amounts to “a weakness which is maintained and perpetuated through the lack of self-identification.” Federici continues,

“We want and have to say that we are all housewives, we are all prostitutes and we are all gay, because until we recognize our slavery we cannot recognize our struggle against it, because as long as we think we are something better, something different than a housewife, we accept the logic of the master, which is a logic of division, and for us the logic of slavery.”

—Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (1974)

Federici argues that recognition of all women as housewives, and of housework and “reproductive labor” as social labor, grants women recognition as workers, collective bargaining and strike action rights, and negates the existing “social contract” of unpaid housewife duties that women across the planet have supposedly accepted. As she puts it, “From now on we want money for each moment of it, so that we can refuse some of it and eventually all of it.” Not only does this view wholeheartedly accept the family, it makes a virtue of women’s oppres-

¹² In a 7 November 1974 speech in Philadelphia, James, who claims to be a communist, “asserted, among other things, that women *are* the working class and therefore need not ally with working men in struggle, that the trade unions must be smashed, that leftists are the conscious agents of capitalism and that Lenin’s *What Is to Be, Done?* is a fascist pamphlet because it argues for the necessity of a vanguard party to bring revolutionary consciousness to the working class” (from “Selma James Peddles Male Chauvinism, Anti-Communism,” *Women and Revolution* No. 7, Autumn 1974).

sive separation from social labor – implying that women *doubly exploit themselves* if they take on “second jobs”! This accepts the man as “boss,” and thus lets the bourgeoisie off the hook for its brutal exploitation of working-class men and women.

More than that, it reeks of petty-bourgeois privilege, for if the goal is to “refuse” all domestic tasks, rather than to socialize them, and if the answer is pay for them, why then a woman can simply hire another woman – her “sister” – to sell her labor power and perform those tasks for a measly slave wage. This, moreover, is exactly what happens today under capitalism, as bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women hire other women – many of them undocumented black and Latina immigrants – to clean the house, care for children and keep the household functioning. This underscores the argument of Bolshevik women’s leader Alexandra Kollontai that the feminists are only seeking privileges for themselves:

“For the majority of women of the proletariat, equal rights with men would mean only an equal share in inequality, but for the ‘chosen few,’ for the bourgeois women, it would indeed open doors to new and unprecedented rights and privileges that until now have been enjoyed by men of the bourgeois class alone. But each new concession won by the bourgeois woman would give her yet another weapon for the exploitation of her younger sister and would go on increasing the division between the women of the two opposite social camps. Their interests would be more sharply in conflict, their aspirations more obviously in contradiction.”

–Kollontai, “The Social Basis of the Woman Question” (1909), reprinted in the Internationalist pamphlet, *Bolsheviks and the Liberation of Women*.

What a “Heterogeneous” Women’s Movement Leads To

In its article for the 2 October 2021 Democratic Party “women’s march” headlining that abortion rights “will be won in the streets,” *LV* presents a skewed picture of how *Roe v. Wade* came about, referring to tens of thousands in the streets to bend the Supreme Court to the will of the masses. It also cites the “context” of antiwar marches, the civil rights movement, the New Left, etc. Certainly, the conservative justices in their black robes didn’t decide on the basis of arcane legal reasoning that abortion was constitutionally protected due to a woman’s right to privacy. But what led

the bourgeoisie to take this step went far beyond street protests. U.S. society was blowing up, with ghetto upheavals across the country, cities under martial law enforced by the army and National Guard, workers occupying auto plants, while a losing war was waged in Indochina, where U.S. soldiers refused orders and even “fraggged” officers using fragmentation grenades. In these conditions, the right to abortion was conceded, a moratorium was declared on the racist death penalty, and laws were passed limiting government secrecy and presidential war powers.

The bourgeois feminist organizations *LV* cites were built in good part to *head off* the rising New Left and radical feminist movements. An object lesson of what building a “heterogeneous” multi-class – i.e., class-collaborationist – “mass movement” for women’s rights leads to was provided by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) foray into the National Organization for Women (N.O.W.), the premier bourgeois feminist organization in the U.S. The SWP’s vehicle was the Women’s National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC), a reformist outfit run by these long-since ex-Trotskyists. Naturally, the SWP sought to win people to its politics. But typically for reformists, it mainly sought organizational control rather than waging a political battle against the liberal Democrats, which it would only lose. But at a September 1971 N.O.W. national conference, the SWP went head-to-head with the N.O.W. leadership leading to an explosion of the most vicious redbaiting.

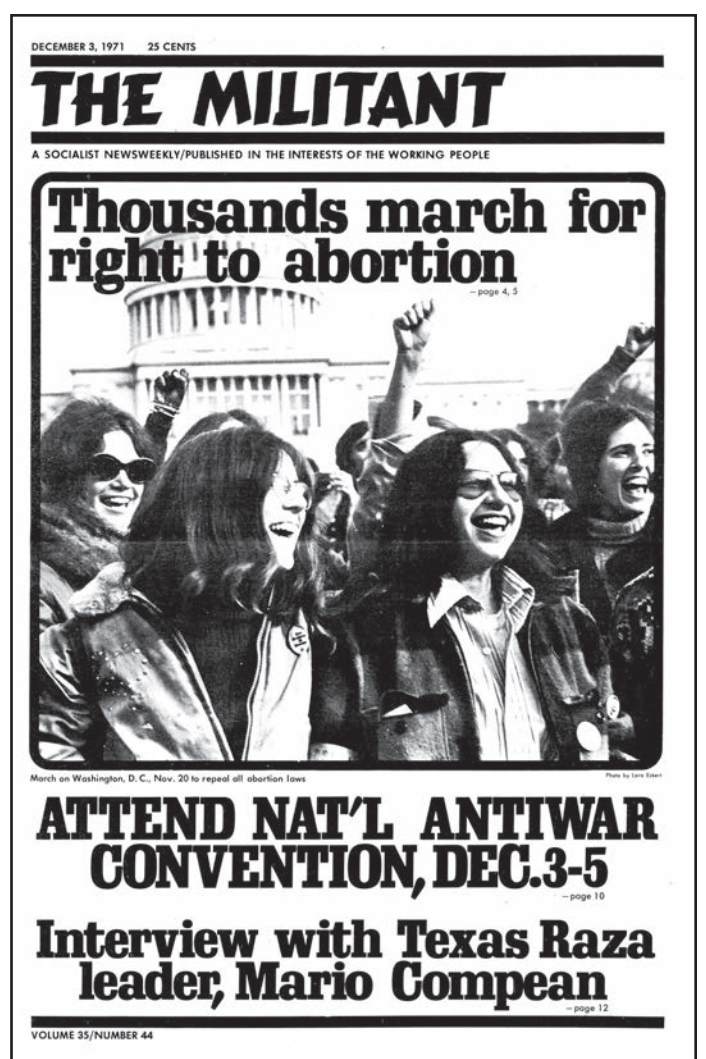
The dispute arose over a proposal to endorse WONAAC efforts to coordinate a national campaign to repeal all anti-abortion laws, leading up to the 20 November 1971 demonstrations in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco that *LV* hails. But underlying this was the unvarnished anti-communism of forces in the N.O.W. leadership that wanted to turn away from mass demonstrations to working within the Democratic Party. At the September 1971 N.O.W. convention, a resolution condemning the SWP for “dividing and exploiting” the women’s movement for its “own goals and purposes” was authored by one Lucy Komisar. While that motion was voted down, another was passed to condemn in general any organization that “divides and exploits” the women’s movement. But that was not the end of it. A few months later, Komisar turned in a “Confidential Report to the NOW Governing Board on the Activities of the Socialist Workers Party and the

Young Socialist Alliance” that called for the organization “not to have any dealings with SWP/YSA members and groups.”

Komisar was working with the Women’s Political Caucus, which likewise called to work within and support the capitalist Democratic Party. But rather than combatting this bourgeois political program directly, a convention of the SWP passed a resolution declaring: “No matter what orientation women’s groups have toward lobbying and toward elections, we should all be able to unite to show our strength behind an issue like the repeal of all abortion laws.” The resolution continued: “The truth is that women are at the same time both united by sexist oppression and divided by class society. There is an objective basis for a unified struggle of women of different nationalities and classes because all women are oppressed as women by capitalism” (“NOW, Women’s Political Caucus, & Nov. 20,” *The Militant*, 19 November 1971). In fact, the *class* contradictions are fundamental. The liberal Democratic women doctors, lawyers, professors and businesswomen of N.O.W. were adamant in calling to *reform* anti-abortion laws, not abolish them, and in kicking out any “reds” (or even pale pink social democrats like the SWP) who might get in the way.

So much for a “heterogenous mass movement” for abortion rights: it was tried then and the bourgeois ladies called the shots. Try again and the result will be the same. Racial, gender and economic equality was not in the bourgeois feminists’ program: they were and are, as Kollontai explained, concerned to gain privileges for themselves. The logic of feminism, of every variety is to call for the unity of all women. Against what or whom? Men? Or “the Patriarchy?” That may sound radical, but it in fact it preserves the bourgeois family as the basic unit of society. The struggle against women’s oppression is not at bottom a gender struggle, or simply a struggle for democratic rights (as many liberals and reformists hold), or an “intersectional” struggle of multiple oppressed sectors (with often conflicting interests) as the “left” purveyors of identity politics pretend. It must be a *class struggle* of all the oppressed against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us all, leading to the revolutionary overthrow of that system.

The real struggle has to be a common struggle of both proletarian women and men against *all forms of oppression*, not sectoralism and class collaboration. This basic issue has bedeviled the feminist movement going back to the post-Civil



The ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party sought in vain to win bourgeois feminists to support November 1971 WONAAC abortion rights demo. N.O.W. responded with anti-communist witch hunt.

War 15th Amendment (1870) prohibiting limiting or denying the right to vote “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Because that meant granting black men the right to vote while it was still denied to women, many feminists opposed it, allying with notorious pro-lynch-law bourgeois politicians after breaking with the Equal Rights Association.¹³ But this is not just a “women’s issue.” The fight for abortion rights and the liberation of all the oppressed is crucial to the class struggle. That’s why the transitional organizations fraternally allied with the League for the Fourth International (Class Struggle Education Workers, Class Struggle Workers – Portland, Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas, Comité de Luta Classista n Brazil) all call in their founding statements for free abortion on demand, as well as for full citizenship for all immigrants.

Any “strategy” purporting to win fundamental gains through a class-collaborationist, “heterogeneous mass movement” is doomed to failure. For women to be truly free, to win full rights to abortion and for those rights be available to all pregnant people regardless of their economic, racial and legal status, it is necessary, precisely as Friedrich Engels and the *Communist Manifesto* stated, to abolish the family as the basic unit of society and to replace domestic slavery with socialized institutions, which require a socialist revolution to be achieved. ■

¹³ The American Equal Rights Association was formed in 1866 to win “the right of suffrage, irrespective of race, color or sex.” It included men and women, black and white abolitionists. However, it split three years later as many feminists refused to support the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that outlawed denial of voting rights on the basis of race, but did not embrace women’s right to vote. Female suffrage was only won in the U.S. in 1919.



Internationalists at September 2018 protest against nomination of anti-abortion macho pig Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

Democrats Uphold the Hyde Amendment Race, Class and the Right to Abortion

Women's right to abortion is also a race and class issue. Across the country, at least 59% of women who obtained legal abortions in 2019 were black and Latina, according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. Moreover, "75% of women who obtain abortions are low-income, with nearly half living below the federal poverty level" (MarketWatch, 4 October 2019). Today, with the passage and implementation of severe anti-abortion laws, these women are particularly at risk. In Texas, where the new law bans abortion after the first 12 weeks, 27% of those receiving abortions reported in 2018 were black women and 39% were Latina women ("Texas abortion law will hurt people of color, those with low incomes and other marginalized groups, advocates say," MarketWatch, 4 September 2021). And in Mississippi, where *Roe v. Wade* is immediately threatened, 74% of reported legal abortion patients were black women in 2019 ("Distribution of legal abortions in Mississippi in 2019, by ethnicity," Statista, 2 December 2021).

What these statistics show is that the drive to ban abortion is deeply racist (see "Defeat Racist Abortion Bans With Class-Struggle Action," *The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019). This is underlined by

the Texas law, SB 8, under which it is not the state that enforces the law, but rather private citizens have effectively been deputized to carry it out, by giving anyone legal standing to sue those who perform or aid abortions, including taxi drivers who taken women to an abortion clinic! The purpose of this subterfuge is to make it difficult to challenge in court, as it is not the state or a state agency enforcing the law but individuals bringing the claim. And individuals are given an incentive to sue in the form of a \$10,000 award per case won, in addition to covering all legal costs. This empowerment of "bounty hunters" is reminiscent of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, which also doled out hefty monetary rewards for the capture and return of escaped slaves. This abomination was only ended by the Civil War, which abolished slavery by force of arms, later codifying this through Constitutional Amendments.

After the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision established the right for women to have an abortion, in the years that followed Medicaid paid for about 250,000 to 300,000 abortion procedures per year for low-income women. But there was an immediate backlash, ultimately resulting in the 1976 Hyde Amendment, to prevent federal funds from paying for abortion, except in to



Barry Thumma / AP

Democrats Jimmy Carter and Joe Biden supported the Hyde Amendment.

save the life of the women (later expanded to include victims of rape and incest). Both Democratic Party president Jimmy Carter, who signed the bill including the amendment, and Democratic then-senator Joe Biden supported Hyde, and Biden continued to vote for it year after year as it is a rider to the federal budget bill that must be repeatedly renewed. Only in 2016 did the Democratic Party finally call to repeal the Hyde Amendment, and only in 2020 (after coming under fire in the presidential race)

did Biden pledge to overturn it if elected.

In 2019, Democrats Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ayanna Pressley introduced an amendment to repeal Hyde, but it was never voted on in the House of Representatives, as Democratic Speaker Nancy Pelosi said she "didn't see an opportunity to get rid of [Hyde]" under Trump. In 2021, Biden introduced a Hyde-free budget, but that has gone nowhere and the ban on federal funds for abortions for poor women is still law, thanks to Republicans and Democrats. ■

"No Cis Dudes": Feminist Sectoralism Ad Absurdum

In Argentina the pseudo-Trotskyist milieu is large enough to boast of its presence in congress, while internationally the "Trotskyist Fraction" (FT, from its initials in Spanish) has brought its Argentine section's feminist Pan y Rosas (Bread and Roses) franchise to Mexico, Bolivia and elsewhere. In the United States, the FT's *Left Voice* Internet media outlet is bereft of a "mass" milieu to tail after and offer helpful advice to. As hot air from Vermont senator and former Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders was ballooning the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), *LV* tried its hand at a kind of entrism ... into this pressure group in and on U.S. imperialism's Democratic Party.

There, finding a niche in the NYC DSA Socialist Feminist Working Group, *LV*'s pandering led to lengths that less unrestrained opportunists might have found embarrassing. This included putting on a DSA reading group on "Anti-Imperialism from a Socialist Perspective" in April 2020 whose advertisement specified that "no cis dudes" could attend.¹ That the author of *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* would presumably have been banned (not to mention many of the world's most renowned anti-imperialist fighters, from Vietnam to Angola to Cuba) apparently did not trouble *LV*, any more than the absurdity of tacking the slogan "Workers of the World Unite" onto a male-exclusionary event. At the

¹ Cisgender is a term used to contrast with transgender.

Tatiana Cozzarelli
February 11 · 🌐

Imperialism is more than just a policy. It's more than immorality of a few leaders. It's a structural part of modern capitalism. NYC folks, come discuss imperialism and how socialists should fight against it.

Women, trans and non binary folks only— no cis dudes.

**WORKER'S OF THE WORLD
UNITE: ANTI-IMPERIALISM
FROM A SOCIALIST
PERSPECTIVE**

AN NYC-DSA SOCIALIST
FEMINIST WORKING
GROUP READING GROUP
ON IMPERIALISM

Workers of the World Unite: Anti-Imperialism & Socialism
The Graduate Center, CUNY · New York

same time, seeking to market its brand of "Marxism"-lite as innocuously hip and inoffensive to its social-democratic siblings, *LV* says "Lenin Would Be a Beast on Twitter", posts "socialist" musings on Valentine's Day, etc. This is pop-pseudo-Marxism *ad absurdum* ... and *ad nauseam*. In fact, the cutesy gimmicks serve a political purpose:

signaling to all and sundry (and ultimately the ruling class) that this is not a serious group fighting for power.

With its tailist outlook and political appetites, it is logical that *LV*'s portrayal of the abortion rights movement of the early 1970s echoes the politics that the *reformist*, *ex-Trotskyist* U.S. Socialist Workers Party was

peddling at the time, to the disgust of tens of thousands of radical leftists. *Left Voice* sees it as a model because it wants to play a similar role, and not just on the woman question. *LV* articles have repeatedly praised the SWP of that period, including its role as brokers for the "antiwar" fronts of that time, whose basis was explicit class collaboration, putting Democratic imperialist politicians on the platforms of "peace" marches. (This was also when the SWP served as international publicists for the FT's forebears in Argentina, the ultra-reformist Partido Socialista de los Trabajadores of Nahuel Moreno.)

This tradition that *LV* and the FT are latching onto is that of the popular front, not of revolutionary Trotskyism. It is clearly counterposed to that of the Revolutionary Tendency, formed by the founders of the SWP's youth organization, which in the early 1960s fought to uphold the program of Lenin and Trotsky and was expelled by the SWP as that formerly Trotskyist party moved from a period of centrist degeneration to the embrace of open class collaboration. While the SWP tailored its "Bring Our Boys Home" social-patriotism to its bourgeois allies in the "antiwar movement," genuine Trotskyists stood for victory to the Vietnamese revolution, raising the calls for "Labor Strikes Against the War" and "All Indochina Must Go Communist" together with the fight for free abortion on demand and women's liberation through socialist revolution. ■

Victory at JFK8...

continued from page 16

cepted the cards as sufficient and approved holding the election at JFK8 and also one at LDJ5, where the election will be held at the end of April. Right now, ALU organizers are fighting against an intense anti-union barrage by the Amazon bosses at LDJ5.

As Chris Smalls and others have noted, it is almost impossible to get 30% of currently employed workers (as required under NLRB rules) to sign cards at an Amazon warehouse, because of the company's staggering worker turnover rate of 150% a year, almost double the logistics industry average. This means that workers only stay at Amazon for nine months on average. The rapid turnover of workers is a deliberate policy of Amazon not only to prevent the cohering of a pro-union workforce, but also to ruthlessly squeeze the workers for productivity and pace, maximizing the rate of exploitation, and then discarding the workers.

Amazon's production methods thus notoriously produce a "surplus" of injured and dead workers. Its injury rate is 80% above the "normal" rate of capitalist maiming in this industry (see our front-page article, "Unionize Amazon with Class Struggle!" in *The Internationalist* No. 65, October-December 2021). Just last December 10, six Amazon workers were killed in Edwardsville, Illinois when tornadoes struck a flimsily built company warehouse. Workers were not provided proper shelter and not allowed to leave. Amazon's business model has relied on a pool of millions of workers willing to take its conditions of employment, with pay and benefits above the legal minimum but far below an actual "living wage." Amazon's model ran into trouble with the pandemic-related "labor shortage." And its \$18.25 per hour wage at JFK8 is worth little in New York City, where the cost of living is more than 50% higher than in Alabama.

The ALU refers to itself as a "worker-led" union. In countering the company's anti-union propaganda barrage, part of its greater success than the RWDSU has had in Alabama was that it was hard for Amazon to put over its lie that unions are a "third party" of "outsiders." In the final push, ALU activists at JFK8 (including an Internationalist Group supporter) carried out intensive phone banking and "occupied" break rooms to talk to workers and distribute union literature. Union activists sought out and won over respected workers and intervened to counter the anti-union propaganda in the company's mandatory "captive audience" meetings. Also, a week before the election, the union issued a list



ALU founders Derrick Palmer (left) and Chris Smalls campaigning for the union outside the JFK8 warehouse, May 2021.

of eight "immediate demands" that would improve pay and working conditions. The UNITE HERE union and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) provided office space and assisted in the campaign's final get-out-the-vote push.

Yet in significant ways, the ALU campaign was not very different than "traditional" union organizing campaigns. It looked to the present government-regulated system of "labor relations" for support, including a heavy orientation to and reliance on NLRB election rules, rather than basing itself on a mobilization of workers' power independently of the capitalist state and its parties. The ALU correctly filed regular complaints with the NLRB against Amazon's violations of labor laws. In the past, under both Democratic and Republican administrations, complaints about companies' gross violations of workers' rights often went nowhere. But the violations at JFK8, along with findings at other Amazon warehouses, resulted in a national settlement between Amazon and the NLRB in December under which Amazon agreed to post notice to all its employees that the company would agree to abide by labor laws that allow union activists to talk to workers in non-work areas during non-work times.

Contrary to some reports, the ALU did not engage in "wildcat strikes," and did not call for large rallies of JFK8 workers at the warehouse as a show of strength, as our supporter had advocated. Like the RWDSU in Alabama, while promoting statements of support by celebrities, the ALU also sought the usual grandstanding photo ops by Democratic politicians, such as New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (a no-show for an ALU rally). The ALU

leadership lauded New York State attorney general Leticia James, who in November 2021 sought a monitor to see that Amazon would abide by COVID-19 safety protocols (after beginning an investigation over a year earlier). Following the victory at JFK8, Senator Bernie Sanders praised the ALU for launching a "national, sweeping movement," while Democratic president Joe Biden declared "Amazon, here we come." Yet between these capitalist Democratic politicians currently running the federal government (as well as many cities and states) and Amazon workers toiling on Jeff Bezos' plantation, there is no "we."

New Showdown Coming Soon

In the aftermath of its victory, the ALU says it has received emails and texts from workers at some 100 Amazon facilities asking for help or advice on how to organize. ALU leaders Chris Smalls and Derrick Palmer traveled to Washington to meet with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), which last year announced a national campaign to organize Amazon warehouse workers and drivers, on how to proceed with organizing Amazon. Sean O'Brien, the new head of the Teamsters, pledged to intensify efforts to organize Amazon after the ALU victory, while Liz Shuler, the new head of the AFL-CIO, has pledged to support the Teamster campaign. It sounds good, but worker-activists and organizers should be under no illusion that playing by NLRB rules will be sufficient for a mass organizing campaign, nor even for winning a contract on Staten Island.

Building on the ALU's win in the union recognition election, what will it take to defeat labor-hater Jeff Bezos – off and on the richest man in the world – in the looming battles? As we wrote in "Unionize Amazon with Class Struggle":

"To unionize Amazon, it will be necessary to mobilize the power of the workers movement in sharp class struggle. The normal tactics of 'business unionism,' based on collaboration with management, won't cut it. To defeat the hard-nosed union-busters at Amazon will take strikes and walkouts, flying pickets, plant occupations – the kind of class-struggle methods that built the unions in the 1930s. Unionization must include everyone from pickers and drivers to airline pilots, nationally, and internationally. And it requires independence from the bosses' government and parties, as we fight to build a class-struggle workers party that defends black people, women, immigrants and all the oppressed."

This perspective is counterposed to the trade-union bureaucracy's decades-long support to U.S. imperialism's Democratic Party, which has received big bucks from Amazon management (as well as from other Wall Street and Big Tech bosses). Often posing as "friends of labor" to garner votes, at every turn of serious class struggle a Democratic mayor, governor or president will call out their police and National Guard to repress workers, as did Franklin D. Roosevelt, who is supposed to have given workers the "right to organize." (In fact, FDR was trying to control militant

labor struggles, including sit-down strikes and general strikes, which are what actually established the mass industrial unions.) It is the trade union tops' obedience to the bourgeois labor laws and court injunctions, and their political "partnership" with the bosses and their parties, that has led to the decimation of the labor movement over the past several decades.

Illusions in the capitalist Democrats are also spread by reformist groups, some of which have worked hard in supporting the Amazon unionization drive in Staten Island, notably the Communist Party (CP) and its youth group, the YCL, as well as Workers World Party (WWP) and its Workers Assembly Against Racism (WWP/WAAR). Despite its name, the CP has supported the Democrats in every election for decades. WWP/WAAR, for its part, absurdly calls on Democratic president Biden to "issue an executive order to implement the PRO Act" (a bill to reform the NLRB, rather than fighting to get rid of capitalist state regulation of unions) and appeals to Jeff Bezos – Amazon's founder, pandemic profiteer and chief space cadet – to just "recognize the union and negotiate now!" Such appeals for class collaboration are counterposed to the hard class struggle it will take to win.

The first-ever victorious union-recognition vote at an Amazon warehouse in North America has sent shock waves around the country and internationally. The vote for the ALU could spark a broad unionizing effort at Amazon and beyond, and energize labor struggles generally. Yet among mainline labor bureaucrats – notoriously unsuccessful in unionizing Amazon, Walmart, fast food and other low-wage industries – the conclusion of some is to do even less, to let the newbies do the hard work and throw them some change and pro bono hours from union lawyers. Mainstream media highlight the ALU's use of TikTok videos, while Amazon complains about the union's offer of free weed. In reality, a major factor, as the ALU's Chris Smalls pointed out, is that New York City is still a union town. But crucial to the outcome in Staten Island was not one or another gimmick or new tactic but the hard work of connecting with workers day in and day out (see our interview with an ALU activist at JFK8). And it is only the first step.

The key to winning the major class battle at Amazon, as well as to organizing the unorganized and building a fighting labor movement overall, will be to forge a solid core of class-struggle militants in the warehouses, factories and other workplaces. This is vital to building a fighting leadership capable of waging and winning the big battles ahead. They must explain to the ranks that it was reds that built the industrial unions, and it will take genuinely revolutionary political struggle to break the stranglehold of capitalist Democrats and pro-capitalist labor bureaucrats that has been driving the unions to the grave. Amazon, with its brutally "efficient" methods of squeezing every last drop of blood out of its "associates," is a glaring example of the whole system of exploitation that makes the wheels of capitalism turn. The struggle to unionize Amazon highlights the urgency of building a workers party to fight for a workers government. Because only through socialist revolution can we put an end to the capitalist system of exploitation, racist oppression and war. ■

Internationalist photo



At solidarity rally for Amazon Labor Union, Staten Island, NY, April 24.

Interview with ALU Worker at Staten Island Amazon Warehouse

Unionizing Amazon Will Be a Huge Class Battle

The Internationalist interviewed Will, a supporter of the Internationalist Group who works at Amazon's big warehouse in Staten Island, New York and has been part of the Amazon Labor Union effort almost from the start.

Internationalist: Tell us a little about your work, and what things are like at the warehouse.

Will: I work at the JFK8 Fulfillment Center, I've worked there for about a year now, and I am a packer, which means I put items into boxes. Working conditions are pretty grueling. My shifts are 12-1/2 hours long, plus I have at least a two-hour commute going to and coming from work. That's very common for the workers there.

We are expected to keep up our "rate," which is the speed at which we complete our tasks. That is often very difficult physically. We get three breaks – two 15-minute breaks, one 45-minute lunch break. That's way too little. The two 15-minute breaks used to be 20 minutes during the pandemic, but then they reduced it back to "normal." That made a lot of workers angry. The union is demanding a restoration of 20-minute breaks.

Internationalist: Can you tell us a little about the union and the campaign?

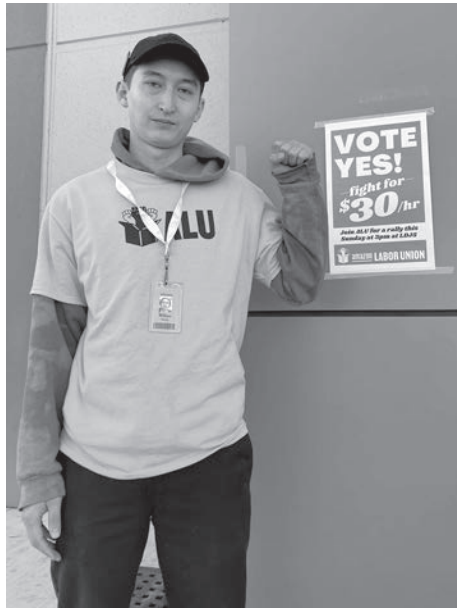
Will: I started working with the union in April or May of 2021, right after the campaign began. The first task that I volunteered to do was to convince my coworkers to sign union authorization cards, which was the main thing we were doing before the election was authorized. Sometimes in the warehouse during breaks, sometimes at the ALU table out near the bus stop. After we got the election authorized in December, I also did some "phone banking," calling coworkers to try to convince them to vote yes for the union and answer any questions that they had.

Internationalist: What were some of their questions?

Will: A lot were basic ones, about what is a union, why would they want a union. So I would answer that that a union is a collective body of workers fighting to win better conditions. Without a union, when the company wants to discipline us or fire us we stand alone against a huge corporation. With a union, instead of a single worker against the entire Amazon company, it would be the collective of workers against the company. And as an organized group, we would also fight to improve working conditions: longer breaks, more PTO [paid time off], higher pay, better benefits and ending the system of counting every "unproductive" minute we're on the job, what Amazon calls TOT. That's "time off task," and workers hate it.

Internationalist: I think our readers would be interested in what other concrete things the union did, especially since the ALU's victory in the election was the first time ever in North America.

Will: I think what was key was the work inside the warehouse. In the month and week preceding vote, the ALU "occupied" the break room. We had a table there, distributing food and leaflets and talking to workers, convincing them to vote for



Will tabling for the ALU outside second Staten Island warehouse, LDJ5.

the union, telling them what a union can do. I'm on the overnight shift, where there wasn't as much union activity. I suggested that workers on the weekend overnight shift keep the table up and I helped tabling during my breaks. It went well, we distributed union literature and talked to quite a few workers. One night I and a co-worker talked to maybe 75 people during the breaks, and we "flipped" a decent amount. In other words, won over workers who had been skeptical about the union.

Many of the union rallies were in Manhattan and Brooklyn. From early on, I suggested that we hold a union recognition rally at shift change at the warehouse. I thought that would be a good way to get workers to see the strength of the union and participate in union activity, to have a show of force so that other workers could see that there were many of us in support of the union and that they shouldn't be afraid of being vocal in support of it. Also that we should raise some specific demands, like for a big pay hike and longer breaks.

Internationalist: How did Amazon try to fight the union?

Will: As soon as the union started tabling outside in April of last year, Amazon started putting up display messaging on monitors throughout the facility that had slogans like "Know what you sign before you sign it." They started putting anti-union messages and slogans on monitors implying that signing authorization cards

would take away our "rights."

In addition, after the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] authorized the election, Amazon started holding mandatory captive-audience meetings in which an anti-union "associate" was flown in from another city to give a lecture to workers about why we didn't need a union. The pretext was that these were "training" meetings. But after ten minutes of talking about the "family-like, cooperative culture" at Amazon, they started trash-talking about the ALU. The main idea they were pushing was that a union would take away the workers' voice because Amazon has an "open door" policy. But the union went to a number of these meetings to put forward the ALU position and won some workers away from these union-busters.

Internationalist: How did workers' attitude to the union change during the campaign?

Will: Early on in the campaign, a lot of workers were hesitant to show their support. As the ALU became more visible, and especially with the break room tabling, more workers were comfortable with showing support for the union. Amazon's anti-union propaganda campaign focused on getting workers to not trust the ALU. It was a very crude appeal, but had some success. Based on the results of the election, it seems that in the end a lot of workers decided to go out on a limb and support the union. But in order for workers to be fully on board with the union, we need to win a good contract that wins important improvements. Believe me, that's going to be a fight.

Internationalist: What would you say were some of the import factors that led to the ALU winning the vote?

Will: First, the union organizers put in a lot of work, a lot of hours tabling for the election. Sometimes there would be ALUers tabling as my shift went into work at 6:15 p.m., and the same ones were there at our midnight break. Another significant factor was that the organizers were able to "flip" some of the workers who others saw as their leaders or people they trusted. And those workers with some authority then flipped a bunch of others.

I would also say that the low pay was a big motivating factor. Workers at JFK8 commute from all five of New York City's boroughs and many workers do voluntary overtime just to make a living and pay the rent. That's definitely a huge factor pushing workers to organize, to get a better wage.

This is an expensive place to live. Many workers are paying over \$2,000 a month in rent. I mean, you can't really make ends meet on \$18.25 an hour.

Internationalist: What was the reaction at the warehouse when the news came about the win?

Will: Many workers were very excited when the news of the victory came out. Workers who were celebrating on the floor were told to "get back to work" by managers. A lot of workers were wondering what winning a union means, and when would we get a raise? I told them that we need to win a contract, and Amazon is not just going to give it to us, we need to fight for it and use this union-recognition victory to get organized practically so that we can wage that fight.

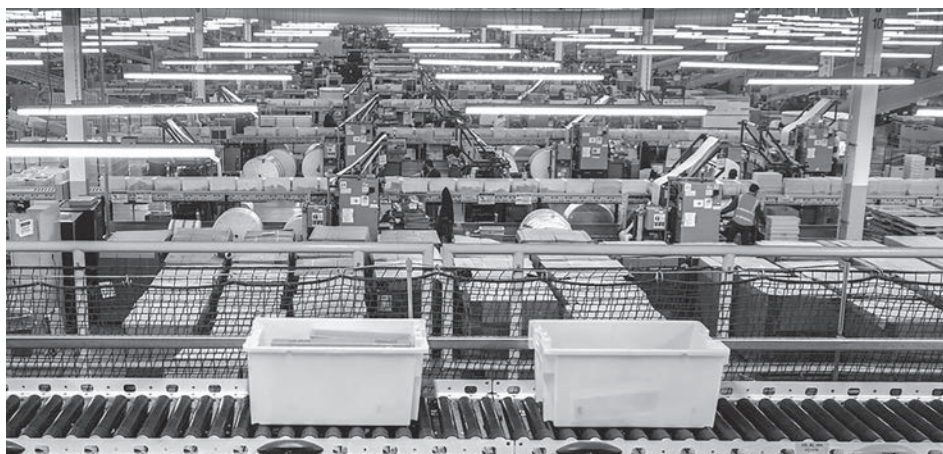
Internationalist: A lot of people talk about the ALU victory as showing a "new model" for union organizing.

Will: The ALU since the beginning of its campaign said that it was unique in that it is an independent and "worker-led" movement. It is true that the leaders and organizers of the ALU are Amazon workers not affiliated with any established union. But much of what the union has been doing is not fundamentally different from other campaigns which rely on the NLRB government-supervised elections, court Democratic Party politicians and so on. I've been critical of this. If we're going to win, we can't go down the path of the business unionists who support the Democratic Party, which represents the interests of capitalists like Jeff Bezos. Politicians like Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez use "leftist" language in order to lure workers into support to the Democratic Party, but in office they continue to work in the interest of capitalists like the owners of Amazon.

Internationalist: What will it take to win a contract and organizing all of Amazon?

Will: To do both of those things there would need to be some hard-fought class struggle. It will take strike action. But to take on Amazon, which will soon be the largest private employer in the U.S., and which is notoriously anti-union, will take a lot of preparation. Amazon is not going to be organized by a thousand different elections at each warehouse, and a contract with real gains won't be won on Staten Island by every worker signing a petition.

Unionizing Amazon is going to be a huge class battle, there's no other way. As Amazon workers we have a lot of potential power, but we have to organize to use it. To unionize Amazon as a whole and win major gains for over a million workers would mean shutting down facilities, going on strike. But to win, we would need to bring out the power of organized labor to support the unionization of all unorganized workers. And that battle has to be waged politically, by breaking with the Democrats. As long as workers are chained to the Democratic Party, or any other capitalist party, we lose. History shows that. To win, in the course of the struggle to unionize Amazon, we must build a fighting workers party, based on a program of sharp class struggle. ■



Life at JFK8: Amazon speeds up line while counting minute by minute workers' "time off task."

Chang W. Lee / New York Times

Democrats, Republicans: Enemies of Public Education Use Union Power to Keep Schools Open Safely

Capitalists Using Pandemic to Gut Public Education

By Class Struggle
Education Workers/UFT

The following article is reprinted from *Marxism & Education* No. 6 (January 2022), the journal of Class Struggle Education Workers.

JANUARY 12 – At the beginning of this school year (2021-22), in-person instruction was the norm in public schools throughout the country, even as the COVID-19 pandemic continued. The fall surge of the more virulent Delta variant of the coronavirus, causing more severe illness in adults, led to an increase in hospitalization of children, but except episodically in particular schools, it did not result in extensive shutdowns. Vaccination mandates for school staff and the beginning of childhood vaccination (from age 5 up) in November played an important role in this, as the vaccines are all overwhelmingly effective in preventing serious disease. Now with the far more contagious Omicron variant, whose incidence is reportedly reduced by some vaccines but not prevented by any, the spread of COVID among children and school-age youth has increased greatly. While many of those infected do not show symptoms, or experience a milder case, this has caused much justified worry among educators, parents and students.

This concern has been seized on by some in the teachers unions to push to return to “remote education,” possibly for an extended period of time until the current high levels of infection are past. **Calling to close the schools is a huge mistake. It does not protect teachers, it will almost certainly increase infections among students, and it plays into the hands of enemies of public education.** This includes not only Trump Republicans but also Biden Democrats like the mayors of New York City and Chicago, Eric Adams and Lori Lightfoot. These forces, who back charter schools and are out to break the power of the teachers unions, are angling to mobilize parents against teachers on a program of keeping the schools open. Instead, Class Struggle Education Workers calls to **use union power to keep schools open safely**. That includes, first and foremost, demanding a **drastic reduction in class sizes**, entailing **hiring thousands of new teachers, custodians, counselors and nurses**; and requiring **frequent testing of all in the schools**. That’ll cost big bucks? You bet. Want the schools open? Find the money!

On the danger of COVID spreading in the schools, multiple studies show that “SARS-CoV-2 transmission among students is relatively rare, particularly when

prevention strategies are in place.”¹ No multi-site studies have shown an increase in childhood infections associated with the opening of schools. In fact, in the U.S. last fall the rate of child COVID infections fell steeply (by 60%) from the moment schools reopened.² All fall infections in NYC schools were quite low, not just according to the deeply flawed D.O.E. “random” testing results but also in the somewhat more reliable daily count of students absent because of COVID. The current number of students with reported COVID cases is under 1% of total enrollment (1.1 million), while daily school attendance is back up to 76%. And many if not most of those infections took place when school was out of session over the winter break. Even if there is an undercount, provided that the necessary measures are taken to make schools safe, to shut down the system when 99% of students are not ill with COVID is wrong. The task at hand is to undertake those measures.

The bottom line is that schools are not a major source of COVID infection. On the other hand, the *disastrous effects of virtual classes* on students’ education, as well as on mental health and social development, particularly for the most vulnerable, is so well-known and documented, that there is no need to dwell on it here.³ Every educator knows from their own experience that getting real student involvement when teaching to 30+ faceless screens is well-nigh impossible. As we have said from the outset, “remote education” is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. *Education is social* (Vygotsky). And the stark fact is that if youths are out on the street more, or at home (or a homeless shelter?!), they will be *more* exposed to infection than in school where preventive public health measures can be taken. Yes, a number of teachers may be at particular risk because of underlying health conditions or for other medical-related reasons. They must receive appropriate medical accommodations instead of the usual run-around and harassment from the NYC Department of Education. But that does not require shutting down the schools.

Already at the start of the last school year, Class Struggle Education Workers

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Science Brief: Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs – Updated” (17 December 2021).

² American Academy of Pediatrics and Children’s Hospital Association, *Children and COVID-19: State Data Report*, 30 December 2021. From the same report: in New York City, the total number of deaths from COVID of children and youths under the age of 18 since the start of the pandemic is 29.

³ See “Chaotic Reopening of NYC Schools: This Is What Mayoral Control Looks Like” (23 February 2021) on page 56 of this issue of *Marxism & Education*.



Class Struggle Education Workers outside United Federation of Teachers headquarters, January 10. Keep schools open safely, with smaller class sizes and frequent testing of everyone.

put forward a “Class-Struggle Program to Reopen New York City Schools Safely.”⁴ This included demands for **billions for sanitation and ventilation improvements, tripling the number of classrooms and hiring thousands of teachers and staff**. We called to drastically **lower class sizes to 10-15 tops**, and at every school for **union-led safety committees to approve reopening**. We **demand cops out of the schools** and **against mayoral dictatorship, for teacher-student-parent-worker control of the schools**. One modification we would make is that even in localities and at times where community infection rates are high, experience has shown that *if rigorous mitigation measures are enforced*, schools can remain open safely. Such measures can include temporarily going remote for a limited period at particular schools where there is an outbreak. That is very different from shutting down the whole system for a period that could extend for many weeks.

Now that safe vaccines are available for all adults, youths and children age 5 years and up, the CSEW is for **obligatory vaccination for COVID-19 for everyone in the schools** (teachers, staff, students, vendors, administrators) as a necessary public health measure. There must be **no religious exemptions**, and any medical exemptions for specific health conditions can be addressed with existing procedures and forms. Schools are environments where large numbers of people interact and rigid social distancing is not possible, although every effort must be made to ensure safe distances wherever possible, particularly in classrooms. All students are already required to be vaccinated for measles, mumps, rubella (German measles), varicella (chicken pox), polio, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, hepatitis-B, and in upper grades against meningococcal disease. As educators we support **and help enforce** such public health requirements, which are vital to the safety of all.

All the more so in the case of the potentially fatal disease of COVID-19.

Additionally, given the high contagiousness of the Omicron variant, **frequent widespread testing in the schools is essential**. Weekly PCR screening testing should be greatly expanded to sizeable random samples drawn from *everyone* in every school, with no “opt-in” requirement of parental consent. Potential outbreaks can be forestalled by instituting **rapid (antigen) tests for all**, weekly or twice-weekly and upon returning from mid-winter and spring breaks.⁵ Particularly given the near collapse of the Situation Room in December, there should be **union-led safety committees at every school** to take charge of testing and contact tracing and, where necessary, to **decide on classroom or school closures**, according to criteria and protocols agreed to by the unions.⁶ This obviously means substantially increasing the number of school nurses and assistants. The defective air purifiers the Department of Education (D.O.E.) bought from the lowest bidder must be replaced by **larger-capacity, high-quality HEPA-filter machines for proper ventilation**. And the schools must provide **sanitary, functioning bathrooms**.

But the most effective measure by far for ensuring the safety of students and educators alike in the long run is **sharply reduced class sizes**, which is also key to students’ educational achievement, socialization and emotional well-being. With classes of 25-33 students, a teacher simply cannot give the individual personal attention needed to deal with the myriad problems of students in New York City where three-quarters are from low-income families.

⁵ Los Angeles schools required PCR tests for everyone in the schools – no parental “opt in” or “opt out” excuses – at the beginning of the school year and now in January.

⁶ This was included in the recent settlement between the Chicago Public Schools and the Chicago Teachers Union.

lies, two-thirds are black and Hispanic, one in five have disabilities, one in seven are English language learners and more than one in ten are homeless.⁷ In surveys, parents have for years listed smaller class sizes as their no. 1 demand, as have teachers and students. Moreover, as Leonie Haimson of Class Size Matters emphasized in testifying before the NYC City Council last October 27, New York's highest court ruled in 2003 in the Campaign for Fiscal Equality (CFE) suit that the state had illegally short-changed New York City schools by billions of dollars, so "that NYC schools have excessive class sizes, and that class size affects learning," and ordered restitution.

Yet ever since the 2008 economic crisis, the state has continued to underfund New York City schools, while "class sizes have risen in NYC public schools, especially in the early grades, and are 15-30% larger than those in the rest of the state" (CSM testimony). Haimson was testifying in favor of Intro 2374, which would raise the space requirement for classrooms from 20 to 35 square feet per student, resulting in a maximum class size of around 19 students. This is more than the 10-15 students per teacher per class in elite NYC private schools, but would certainly make a qualitative difference both in health and educational terms. But even though it was *sponsored by 41 of the 51 members* of the overwhelmingly Democratic city council, the initiative was allowed to die in committee, due to resistance from Mayor Bill de Blasio and the council speaker. Haimson emphasized that for once the city has the money in hand to pay for it, with billions in extra federal and state aid, as well as foundation aid funds under the CFE lawsuit. Yet the NYC D.O.E. with its bloated bureaucracy refuses to spend the money to lower class sizes.

The CSEW says there should be a *concerted union-led drive to force the drastic lowering of class sizes and the hiring of tens of thousands more teachers and staff* – including, if necessary, *strike action* to get it. Instead of calling to close the schools and

to resort to impossible "remote education" out of fear of COVID, which would give reactionary forces an opening to mobilize working-class and middle-class families against the teachers unions, as they have done elsewhere in the country, a campaign for lower class sizes organized by *union-led councils of teachers, students, parents and workers* would win broad and enthusiastic support. It could even help undercut resistance to mask and vaccination mandates, and to school integration. Right now, amid the pandemic, educators and their allies have the capitalists, their politicians and educrats over a barrel. You want the schools open safely? Then lower class sizes. Do it now. This is the time for defenders of public education to go all out and *win*.

But to successfully wage that battle will be a big political fight against powerful forces. The new NYC mayor, black ex-cop Democrat Eric Adams, is trying to bully educators ... and anyone else who gets in his way. In the election campaign he ran on an "anti-crime" platform, saying he was going to "show America how to run a city." Against anti-racist protesters who denounced police brutality, he opposed cutting the New York Police Department budget and opposed the city council bill banning chokeholds, passed after the cop murder of Eric Garner in 2014 but overturned by the courts. He has called to bring back the racist police tactic of "stop and frisk," which was used overwhelmingly against African American and Latino youths. He opposes eliminating bail for minor crimes. He has vowed to reintroduce solitary confinement at the Rikers Island prison hellhole, and haughtily announced that he would ignore a letter from a majority of the city council, including the new black speaker, Adrienne Adams, denouncing this form of torture. This Democratic cop mayor wants to run New York City like a police state.

On the schools, former Republican Eric Adams still praises the policies of then-Republican billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg, who exacerbated educational segregation in the name of "school choice" and pushed one anti-teacher "reform" after another. Like Bloomberg, Adams supports privatiz-

ing "charter schools," and received millions in campaign donations from them and their Wall Street backers. His new schools chancellor, David Banks, has a chain of "Eagle Academies" which are run like boot camps for black young men. Banks chose as his top deputy Daniel Weisberg, who was chief teacher union-basher under Bloomberg. Eric Adams appointed as deputy mayor David Banks' brother Philip, a former NYPD chief of department who was forced to resign in a corruption scandal featuring free trips to Israel. And on his first day in office, in response to calls to close the schools over Omicron, Adams declared that the way to fight COVID is with "swagger": "all we did was wallow in COVID.... We need a mayor with swagger, ... we need a chancellor with swagger, we need a police commissioner with swagger."

Well, "swagger" won't stop a deadly virus any more than it did for tough-guy frauds like Donald Trump or Andrew Cuomo, but it does foretell tough battles ahead. Mayor Adams wants to keep police in the schools, CSEW calls for *cops out of the schools and out of the unions*. He calls to keep and expand the "gifted and talented" school program, we fight to end to this elitist, racist program and for *integrated high-quality public schools for all*. Banks has called for a longer school day and school year, and if teachers "don't want to work all year long," then he would look to "community-based organizations" to staff the schools. You can see the writing on the wall: they're gearing up to rerun the 1968 NYC teachers strike to try to break the power of the union. Wall Street and its charters tried this tack under Bloomberg but failed, as black parents sided with the UFT. Now they're going to try again, this time with a black mayor and black chancellor. You can be sure that any resistance will be labeled racist. In this high-stakes scenario, calling to keep schools closed plays right into the hands of forces seeking to gut union power.

This is exactly what black Democratic mayor Lori Lightfoot has been doing in Chicago, continuing the war on the teachers union of her predecessor, former Obama chief of staff Rahm Emanuel. In the recent stand-off that led to the schools being closed for a week, the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) raised important demands for increased COVID testing, after the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) winter break do-it-yourself home testing scheme failed utterly. Faced with *no testing at all* – unlike in New York, Los Angeles and elsewhere where there was some, although inadequate in the face of Omicron – the CTU rightly refused to teach in-person. But instead of focusing on testing, it called to go remote until an arbitrary date (January 18), a counterproductive demand clearly intended to extend much longer. In the end, CTU won some increases in testing and in powers of union-majority school safety committees, but not the needed comprehensive testing, and it said nothing about class size. In the end, particularly with the CPS' bungling, Lightfoot's attempt to line parents up against the union failed again.

In New York City, the Movement of Rank and File Educators (M.O.R.E.), an opposition caucus in the UFT which looks to the CTU, called two rallies last week for "safe schools." While including some sup-

portable demands (weekly COVID testing for all, schools as vaccination sites), it focused on calls to go "remote until Jan. 18" and for a "remote option for all." M.O.R.E. has for months been promoting this reactionary proposal which would segregate schools by wealth, as poor and working-class families cannot afford to keep children at home. The January 10 rally outside UFT offices reeked of privilege, and the next day a M.O.R.E.-supported student walkout took place at three elite high schools (Brooklyn Tech, Bronx Science and Stuyvesant). In terms of safety, it makes no sense to close schools when the rest of the city is wide open, with parents working in grocery stores, medical facilities, public transit, restaurants, etc. With its simple trade-unionist outlook, even taking on the word "social," M.O.R.E. ignores the fact that public school educators perform a vital service for working people.

On January 10, Class Struggle Education Workers came out to the UFT headquarters separately, and with a very different program. Our signs proclaimed "Use Union Power to Keep Schools Open Safely." We declared "Remote Education is an Oxymoron" and called for "Vaccines, Frequent Testing for All & Union Safety Committees," and above all, for "Smaller Class Sizes (10-15 Tops) to Keep Schools Open Safely." CSEW and Internationalist signs demanded, "Mayor Adams, Hands Off the Schools!" "No to Mayoral Dictatorship" and "For Teacher-Student-Parent-Worker Control" while denouncing "Democrats, Republicans, Enemies of Public Education." The fact that the UFT bureaucracy (as well as the reformist opposition groups), the D.O.E. bosses, mayor and city council are all Democrats or support the Democratic Party underscores our call for a *class struggle workers party to fight for a workers government*.

Driven by fear rather than an understanding that the COVID crisis is another battlefield in the *bipartisan capitalist war on public schools* going back to the 1980s, many teacher union activists are playing into the hands of our class enemies while missing a unique chance to push through major gains. The class struggle doesn't stop because of rampant disease, it intensifies. The last time class sizes in New York schools were lowered was in 1938, during a tuberculosis epidemic amid an upsurge of militant labor struggle. Across the country and around the world, we are witnessing the inability of the capitalist system to provide even the basic needs of the population. Instead of containing the deadly coronavirus, as China with its collectivized economy was able to do, the watchword throughout the capitalist world was to "flatten the curve." That meant spreading out – not stopping – infections, so that the hospitals are not overwhelmed. Today Democrats and Republicans alike declare we must "live with COVID." Like hell.

In China, the most populous country in the world, there have been less than 5,000 deaths by COVID; in the capitalist world, 5.5 million dead, going up by another 100,000 every few weeks. Do the math. Capitalism kills. The fight for effective public health measures, and for a public education system that truly serves the interests of working people and the oppressed, must be part and parcel of the struggle for international socialist revolution. ■

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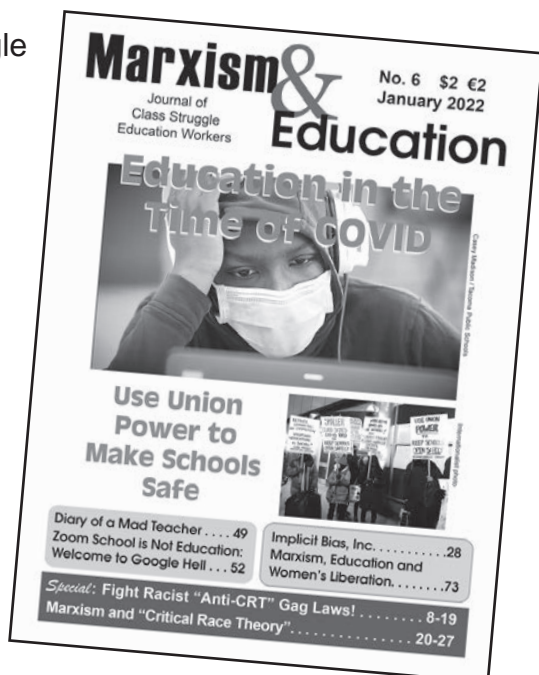
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For Vaccine Mandates and Free Testing – “Vaccine Passports” = Police Control, Not Public Health

Fascistic Forces Take Lead of Reactionary Anti-Vaccine Protests

Last October 9, a crowd of some 10,000 opponents of obligatory vaccination against COVID-19 and the European Union (E.U.) “vaccine passport,” known in Italy as the Green Pass, swarmed into in Rome’s Piazza del Popolo screaming “*Libertà, Libertà!*” (Freedom). On stage leading the reactionary “no-vax” mobilization were leaders of Forza Nuova (FN), a fascist terror squad. This included Roberto Fiore, FN’s political leader, and Giuliano Castellini, the Rome capo (boss) of the armed bands notorious for attacks on immigrants, gay rights demonstrations and Jewish synagogues. Also present was Luigi Aronica, a member of the fascist NAR (Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari), which was responsible for a number of assassinations in Italy’s 1970s “years of lead,” and for the 1980 bombing of the Bologna train station that killed 85 people.¹

After an hour of vituperation against vaccines, masks and lockdowns, against “medical dictatorship” and for “personal freedoms,” some of the crowd sought to march on parliament. The fascist leaders took off (with police permission) in another direction with a crowd of 600 to assault the national headquarters of the Italian General Confederation of Labor (CGIL). There, with the FN capos in the forefront denouncing the union as “traitors,” the mob vandalized the entrance and broke into the offices, where they destroyed computers and ransacked the premises, leaving it in a semi-destroyed state. According to some media, an official of the Questura (local police) was running back and forth between the police and the mob, and in any case the cops made no attempt to stop the assault. It was a classic attack by fascist *squadristi* (bands) on Italy’s largest union, and thus on the workers movement, *with the connivance of the state*.

Two days later, on October 11, a nationwide “general strike” was called by SI Cobas and other syndicalist “rank-and-file unions” protesting against layoffs, against the “Jobs Act” (permitting short-term jobs), for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay, and demanding that employers pay for the COVID tests required of all workers who didn’t have a vaccination Green Pass. These were supportable demands, but in Milan on the same day, some syndicalist unions (SOL Cobas), as well as some leftists – and rightists – marched past the local CGIL offices chanting “sellouts” and

¹ Following the student/youth rebellions of 1968 and the “hot autumn” of militant workers struggles in 1969, the Italian capitalist state responded with a “strategy of tension,” unleashing fascist terror groups that it had armed and financed as part of the U.S./NATO “Operation Gladio,” for a “stay-behind” secret army in case of a Communist takeover of Italy. The fascist massacres in the ensuing “years of lead” included the 1969 bombing of Piazza Fontana in Milan (17 dead) and the 1974 bombing of the Italicus express train (12 dead).



Above: Fascist-led mob attacked the headquarters of Italy’s largest labor federation, the CGIL, on October 9, with the connivance of the police. Below: Roberto Fiore (left) and Giuliano Castellino, heads of the fascist Forza Nuova, incited “no vax” protesters to attack the labor federation offices.



carrying signs for “No Green Pass” (the major labor federations have supported the vaccination certificate). The mobilizations against the pass, led by right-wing anti-vaxxers, opposed medical mandates protecting the lives of workers. Against this provocation, the place for class-conscious workers was with the CGIL defense squad in Milan.

But instead of looking to mobilize the working class against the fascist threat, the CGIL tops embraced the capitalist rulers – literally. The day after the October 9 Rome attack, Italian prime minister Mario Draghi, head of the “national unity” government, went to the union headquarters where he hugged labor federation leader Maurizio Landini. Then on Saturday, October 16, 200,000 unionists from all over Italy gathered at Piazza San Giovanni, where on the same date in 1943 the Gestapo rounded up more than a thousand Jews from Rome’s ghetto and deported them to the extermination camps. Signs proclaimed, “Never Again Fascism.” This time Landini embraced the head of the Democratic Party, Enrico Letta, the crowd sang the World War II Communist Resistance anthem *Bella ciao* over and over, and there were calls from the platform for laws to “dis-

solve neo-fascist movements.” It was a classic celebration of the kind of “anti-fascist” class collaboration that led Italian workers to historic defeats.

As a public health measure, in order to protect the population from infection

with the deadly coronavirus, we of the League for the Fourth International support vaccine mandates – that is, obligatory vaccination – to the extent feasible. In some occupations (health care, schools, airlines), where people are necessarily in close contact for extended periods, the requirement that everyone must be vaccinated should be absolute – no exceptions, religious or otherwise. In other settings, a proviso for frequent testing – paid for by the bosses or their state – could be possible. Particularly with the ultra-contagious Omicron variant, against which existing vaccines are less effective, massive testing is vital to contain the spread. But no-vax protests, whatever the particular target, are reactionary expressions of the capitalist credo placing individual “rights” over the welfare of the population. No wonder, then, that outright fascist elements have frequently taken the lead.

To be sure, not everyone in anti-vax demos is a fascist. There is also a difference between vaccine hesitancy and vaccine refusal – although in practice, it is often hard to differentiate. In the face of a deadly threat – over six million have died of COVID internationally, with thousands more dying every day – or even of serious illness, there is no individual “right” to refuse effective public health measures that can protect the well-being of all. At the same time, while requiring proof of vaccination for health reasons is legitimate, we warn that “vaccine passports” – particularly digital ones – can be used for repressive purposes. As revolutionary Marxists, we do not look to, much less call on, the capitalist state to use repressive measures even against reactionary and fascist forces; such measures can be, and frequently have been, used as a precedent for stepped-up repression against the workers and oppressed. It is up to the working class, acting independently of bourgeois



CGIL leader Maurizio Landini (left) embraces Italian premier Mario Draghi the day after the fascist attack. Instead of looking to the capitalist state to use its repressive forces, which would much sooner attack leftists and labor, revolutionary Marxists call for workers action against the fascist threat.



Above: the October 15 “No Green Pass” sit-in at one of the five gates in the port of Trieste involved a small minority of the dockers and several thousand no-vaxxers from around Italy. Below: Leaders of the action, right-wing unionist Stefano Puzzer, left, and former boxer and fascist city council member Fabio Tuiach.



forces, to use its class power to put paid to such provocations where possible and there is an immediate threat.

Ultra-Rightists Capitalize on Reactionary Anti-Vaxxer Protests

Following the October 9 assault on the CGIL offices in Rome, fascist and other ultra-rightist forces have taken the helm in anti-vaccine protests around the globe. On the day the Green Pass went into effect in Italy, October 15, there was much talk of a shutdown of the port of Trieste on the Adriatic by “No Green Pass” port workers. The call was from an “autonomous” union, the CLPT (Committee of Trieste Port Workers), representing about one-fifth of the 1,500 port workers. This union several years ago split to the right from one of the rank-and-file unions and joined a small federation led by a no-vaxxer who has run for office as a candidate of the fascist groups Casa Pound and Fiamma Tricolore. The three main trade-union federations represent twice as many Trieste dockers as the rightist-led CLPT and did not join the walkout, after winning the demand that the port authority provide free tests for the unvaccinated.

The Trieste “No Green Pass” show-down was hardly a working-class action. Its spokesman, Stefano Puzzer of the CLPT, formerly with the CISL (the anti-communist Catholic union which in the Cold War was funded by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency), led a 2015 strike for hiring preferences for local workers. Another docker promoting the walkout was Fabio Tuiach, a former boxer and fascist (Forza Nuova) city council member. On October 15, only 150 port workers struck,

closing one gate out of five, mainly due to the presence of 5,000 anti-vax protesters from all over Italy. Loading and unloading continued, at a slower pace. The next day, the CLPT announced that it was not continuing the sit-in and Puzzer resigned as union spokesman. The “no-vax” protest continued for another couple of days until it was broken up by police using water cannon and tear gas, whereupon the protesters moved to the main city square.

As COVID infections increased in the fall and new measures to limit the spread were ordered, ultra-rightists around Europe called anti-vaccination and anti-lockdown demonstration that attracted large numbers. In Austria on November 20, the day before vaccination became mandatory and a 20-day lockdown was to begin, some 40,000 people came out to a protest in Vienna called by the anti-immigrant fascist Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP). The crowd was addressed by video link by ÖVP leader Herbert Kickl (who couldn’t attend after testing positive for COVID), and included neo-Nazi and fascist Identitarian Movement figures. A banner declared, “Control the Borders, Not Your People.” In Brussels, Belgium the next day a “Protest for Freedom” drew an estimated 35,000 marchers, prominently including members of parliament from the Flemish fascist Vlaams Belang.

In Germany, there were protests against COVID lockdowns from the spring of 2020 on, mostly led by so-called *Querdenker* (mavericks), a mixture of pandemic skeptics and conspiracy theory junkies, including rightists and some from a more leftish milieu, notably in the

former West Germany. By early 2021, these protests were increasingly led by ultra-rightists, such as the Freie Sachsen (Free Saxons) fascist coalition in eastern Germany² and the Reichsbürger (German Empire Citizens).³ Many of the participants were the same “*völkisch*,” or ethnic nationalist rightists that populated “Pegida” anti-immigrant mass protests in 2015-16 and who vote for the fascistic Alternative for Germany (AfD).⁴ The protests were relatively small until the summer of 2021 and especially in the fall, when they ballooned into mass mobilizations of thousands and tens of thousands marching against vaccine mandates, sometimes led by neo-Nazis.

This ominous development continued into 2022, even as the numbers infected by the Omicron variant of COVID-19 soared. While frequently posing as peaceful “strolls” and identifying with the 1989 “Monday demos” in the East German bureaucratically deformed workers state that soon became rightist-led mobilizations for capitalist reunification of Germany, many of the fascist-led no-vax protests were outright provocations. This included, for example, gathering on February 7 in front of a Vivantes clinic in East Berlin where thousands of COVID patients have been treated. A class-conscious workers movement would disperse such a reactionary mob, but instead the ruling social democrats (SPD and Left Party) and trade-union bureaucrats look to the cops (notoriously infested by neo-Nazis and the fascistic AfD) and called a weekend demo of the

² Freie Sachsen is a fascist umbrella group in the East German state of Saxony, founded in February 2021, bringing together neo-Nazis such as the NPD (National Democratic Party of Germany) and local groups like Pro Chemnitz, which organized a mass demonstration in support of the August 2018 anti-immigrant pogrom in the city, formerly called Karl-Marx-Stadt. See “Germany: Bourgeois Backlash Hits Refugees After Racist Riot,” *The Internationalist* No. 58, Winter 2020.

³ The Reichsbürger movement began as monarchists calling for reestablishing the German Empire in its pre-1914 borders and has since encompassed an assortment of ultra-rightists (for example, of the “sovereign citizen” types) who refuse to recognize the current German state.

⁴ Pegida: European Patriots Against Islamization of the West. The AfD is a fascistic parliamentary party with close ties to fascist action squads. See “Defend Muslims in Europe Against Racist ‘War on Terror’ Backlash!” *The Internationalist* No. 39, April-May 2015.

class-collaborationist governing coalition with the bourgeois Greens.

Then came the January-February anti-vax “Freedom Convoy” of Canadian truckers outside parliament in Ottawa, that spread to Toronto, Windsor and other cities. These were portrayed as examples of working-class opposition to vaccine mandates, both by the protagonists and by the bourgeois media. But the reality is that the participants were almost entirely truck owners; employees of freight haulers would never get away with idling company rigs for days and weeks. This petty-bourgeois sector has often been mobilized by ultra-rightist forces, including the 1973 work stoppage by truck owners in Chile, organized by the Patria y Libertad fascists and financed by the CIA in order to bring down the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. And the Ottawa truckers’ blockade was in fact led by white supremacists, backers of the anti-Muslim Northern Guard, the Nordic Nazi Soldiers of Odin, anti-immigrant groups and other rightists.⁵

Teamster union officials in the U.S. and Canada slammed the “convoy” as an attack on the livelihoods of working people, while the Service Employees denounced the truckers’ “targeted racism.” The Public Service Alliance called a counterprotest on February 12. The next day, hundreds blocked a new contingent from joining the convoy. But rather than combatting the anti-vaxxers politically, the labor tops and the social-democratic New Democratic Party looked to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to order in the police. He eventually did, under the Emergencies Act, a police-state measure that is the updated War Measures Act that his father, then prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau, used against Quebec independence fighters in October 1970. The League for the Fourth International calls on class-conscious workers to support independence for Quebec and to oppose police action against the truckers, knowing that such repression has been and will be used far more quickly and brutally against labor and the oppressed.

COVID-19 Vaccination Is a Public Health Measure

In the anti-vaccination protests a common sign in Germany was “I decide.” In the U.S., “My body, my choice” was

⁵ *Toronto Star*, 28 January; *Global News*, 2 February.



Hundreds of opponents of vaccination mandates, led by fascistic and other ultra-rightist forces, demonstrate in front of Vivantes Clinic in Berlin, February 2022.

frequent. In Italy, simply “Libertà.” With many illnesses, an individual’s choice to take a medication or not is indeed a personal decision. But with highly contagious diseases that are often deadly or cause extreme illness – particularly in epidemic conditions, and more so amid a worldwide pandemic – the interests of saving lives and maintaining the health of the general population take precedence. Egotistical individualism in such conditions reflects capitalist “values,” as the protesters themselves frequently underline, equating their actions to protests against communism. In contrast, revolutionary communists fight for effective public health measures, including by the capitalist state, at the same time as we oppose police-state repression and vaccine “passports.”

From the start of mass vaccination against COVID in January 2021, it was clear that all of the vaccines in use greatly reduced the chances of infection with the coronavirus original variant of SARS-CoV-2, and even more particularly the incidence of severe outcomes and death. In addition, vaccination reduced transmission to others by about 60%, according to statistics gathered by the World Health Organization (W.H.O.). However, experience has since shown that vaccine effectiveness declines over time, and with the arrival of the more infectious Delta variant in June 2021, vaccination reduced transmission rates by about 40% – lower, but still significant.⁶ Yet with the still more contagious Omicron variant, according to the director of the U.S. Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Rachel Walensky, vaccines still sharply reduce the severity of outcomes, but “What they [vaccines] can’t do any more is prevent transmission.”⁷

If that is the case (and it may not be⁸), does that invalidate the public health justification for vaccine mandates? No, it does not, because *by greatly lowering the number of cases of COVID-19 requiring hospitalization, vaccination makes medical care resources available for others.* At the time Italy’s “Green Pass” was put into effect in the fall of 2021, COVID patients in Italian hospitals were “almost exclusively unvaccinated people, in all age groups,” according to the GIMBE Foundation, which monitors Italy’s healthcare system. When the Omicron variant swept through Italy in the winter, the rate of hospitalization for COVID of unvaccinated people was *six times* that for vaccinated and boosted individuals.⁹ As the health-care system in parts of Italy nearly collapsed during the initial wave of pandemic infections in March 2020, and the number of COVID cases in January 2022 was *33 times* higher,¹⁰ the

danger of a collapse was very real.

In the United States, the same holds true. According to CDC data, from January to 31 August 2021, fully 99% of all patients hospitalized for COVID nationwide were not fully vaccinated.¹¹ Even amid the wave of Omicron infections, a study of Los Angeles hospitals showed that in the first week of January 2022, the COVID hospitalization rate for unvaccinated individuals was *23 times higher* than for those who were fully vaccinated with a booster shot.¹² The fact that vaccination in itself does not prevent infection with the latest strains of COVID-19, although it does sharply reduce the severity of the illness, is not an argument against mandating vaccination. Rather, it emphasizes that *in addition to vaccination there must be frequent massive testing* (both antigen and PCR tests), including *compulsory testing* when high transmission rates warrant it.

In the capitalist world, the rulers’ response to the deadly pandemic has been an utter disaster, particularly for poor and working people and the oppressed. The bourgeois ruling class as a whole seized on vaccination as if it were a magic bullet providing an immediate cure for COVID-19, then floundered when that turned out not to be the case. It scapegoated workers when the largest single factor in spreading the disease was that health and hospital authorities sent symptomatic patients home rather than providing isolation centers, as China with its collectivized economy did, although it was known early on that COVID is overwhelmingly transmitted in households. The capitalist authorities sought to “*flatten the curve*” rather than to “*stop the spread*” of the virus, because their priority was to prevent collapse of a public health system that they had sabotaged by cuts, closures and privatization, all in the name of supposed “efficiency.”

Opportunist Left Tails After No-Vaxxers

The COVID pandemic, with over 500 million reported cases worldwide, threw capitalist governments into disarray, and confounded the left as well. Opportunists who chase after whatever “movement” is currently in vogue were initially at a loss, but some later latched onto the anti-lockdown, anti-vaccine right-wing populist protests. (Others tailed calls to indefinitely shut down schools, including in situations where this was not medically called for and despite the damage to working-class and poor families and kids.) In contrast, genuine communists – following the program of Bolshevik revolutionary leaders V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky – put forward a series of *transitional demands* in a fight for socialist revolution. These demands include vigorous public health measures pointing to the need for a fully socialized public health system to provide free, high-quality medical care for all. In this framework, *vaccination is not a panacea, but it is vital*, as part of a broader program to combat the deadly pandemic, centering on *workers action to enforce necessary safety measures.*

France/Germany

The first venture of would-be leftists onto the terrain of rightist anti-vaccine mobilizations came in France. As the

¹¹ *New York Post*, 8 September 2021.

¹² *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 4 February.

⁶ “Vaccines reduce COVID transmission by 40%: WHO,” *Medical Express*, 24 November 2021.

⁷ In interview with Wolf Blitzer, CNN, 10 January.

⁸ A nationwide study in Denmark of the household transmission of the Omicron subvariant BA.2, which is now dominant in Europe and the U.S., showed that it was more contagious than the original variant, but that retransmission from vaccinated individuals was sharply lower. *medRxiv*, 30 January 2022.

⁹ According to Italy’s Istituto Superiore di Sanità, the rate of hospitalization of unvaccinated persons (3 December 2021 – 2 January 2022): 248.5 per 100,000. For vaccinated individuals, 37.2 per 100,000. Reuters, 28 January 2022.

¹⁰ Number of reported COVID-19 cases in Italy: 26 March 2020, 5,651; 14 January 2022, 181,822. New York Times database.



Nantes-Revoltée

Fascist and other ultra-rightist thugs beat leftists at 31 July 2021 demonstration against President Macron’s “health pass.”

government of the self-proclaimed “Jupiter-like” president Emmanuel Macron last July announced compulsory vaccination against COVID, to be attested to by a “health pass,” protests sprang up around the country. By mid-July, weekly “no-vax” demos, largely organized on social media, brought over 100,000 into the streets of French cities. In Paris, leading figures included Florian Philippot, the former vice-president of Marine Le Pen’s fascist Front National (now called National Rally), and former Gaullist Nicolas Dupont-Aignan. In the provinces, many participants were from the populist “Yellow Vests” movement of 2018-19 against Macron’s fuel tax increases. Every report indicates that the protesters were overwhelmingly anti-vaxxers, and that racist anti-immigrant xenophobes were prominent.

Virtually the entire left and labor movement routinely denounced the French president’s “authoritarian” decree, but did nothing about it. However, the French affiliate of the self-styled Trotskyist Fraction (FT), formerly a tendency in the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) until it was expelled last year, smelled a new movement in the offing. It noted that most participants had an “individualist prism, that of ‘freedom’, that could easily be consolidated on a reactionary terrain”; that “one can’t hide the fact” that the majority were motivated by a “rejection of vaccines,” and that “in Paris, the far right succeeded in its move” to “hegemonize” the protests. Even so, wrote the FT group, “by opposing health authoritarianism, the movement expresses a progressive perspective” and “this process of mobilization could be the beginning of a non-reactionary movement against the government” (*Révolution Permanente*, 18 July 2021). *Ouf!*

In France as elsewhere, the FT’s strategic “principle” can be summed up

as: if it moves, tail it. This has led it to chase after reactionary “movements” for gun control and promote illusions in calls to “abolish the police” in the United States.¹³ In Germany in early 2021, the FT affiliate RIO (Revolutionäre Internationalistische Organisation) enthused about the #ZeroCOVID appeal, which called to shut down “factories, offices, companies, construction sites, schools,” with a “general strike that would stop all non-essential production” (*Klasse gegen Klasse*, 30 January 2021). This fantasy reeks of petty-bourgeois privilege, as middle-class professionals would work from home from their laptops, at full pay of course, while low-paid “essential workers” risk their health to keep hospitals functioning, provide groceries, deliver packages, etc.

RIO argued that “in contrast to the many ‘corona-skeptic’ mobilizations,” this at least was a “left” response to COVID policies. Yet a few months later the French FT affiliate calls to join protests dominated by anti-vaxxers connected to the far right! This included the “corona-skeptic” RéinfoCovid as well ultra-rightist goon squads including Action Française (royalists), Civitas (Catholic integralists and Pétainists¹⁴), Les Zouaves in Paris and others.

So what happened with this potential “non-reactionary” movement with a supposed “progressive perspective”? On 23 July 2021, the FT group’s *Révolution*

¹³ See “‘Socialists’ Chase After Anti-Gun Movement,” *The Internationalist*, April 2018; “‘Abolish the Police’ Under Capitalism?” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020.

¹⁴ Catholic integralists insist that the church’s policies must be the basis for public law. Marshall Philippe Pétain was the bonapartist dictator of the Nazi puppet regime in Vichy that during World War II governed central and southern France in collaboration with the German military administration in the north (and with the similar Catholic nationalist dictatorship of his former pupil Generalissimo Francisco Franco in Spain).

Permanente called for “Everyone into the Streets Against Macron’s Health Pass and Authoritarianism” the next day, and the same a week later. But on July 31 in Nantes, a gang of neo-Nazi thugs from Civitas, among them a prominent local candidate of Le Pen’s National Rally, attacked and viciously beat anti-fascists amid a police charge. In Montpellier, a pharmacist was attacked by demonstrators while carrying out COVID antigen tests (*Révolution Permanente*, 6 August). That ended the leftist fiddling with rightist anti-health pass protests. But now Macron’s interior minister has threatened to ban the alternative media group, *Nantes Révoltée*, that published a dramatic photo of the fascists at work. Its “crime”? Calling a protest “against the state and cops.”

Italy

In Italy, the “No Green Pass” movement has been an issue in the labor movement in particular. As noted above, the main union federations (CGIL, UIL, CISL) support the Draghi government’s vaccine passport as part of their overall program of class collaboration, which has cost hundreds of thousands of jobs over the years, as well as acceding to massive cutbacks in social services, hospitals and public health in particular. The “rank-and-file” and “combative” unions were split over the issue, with some (SLAI Cobas) strongly for the Green Pass and others (SOL Cobas) emphatically against the pass, and against obligatory vaccination. SI Cobas, the largest of these unions, indicted the government’s attempt to excuse its disastrous handling of the COVID crisis:

“They made us die by the thousands during the acute phase of the pandemic to keep factories and warehouses open and continue making profits!

“Now they impose the Green Pass on us to relieve themselves of any obligation for workplace safety and to turn COVID into an individual problem of the individual worker, when it is the system of capitalist exploitation that is responsible.”

At the same time, SI Cobas declared its support for vaccination:

“We are the first to believe that vaccination is useful and we resolutely fight every no-vax position.”

And, declaring “we cannot accept ... depriving workers of their wages,” it called for free testing:

“We demand that tests be free of charge for those who want to take advantage of this possibility. Companies must bear the cost of their implementation, rather than this being a burden on workers’ wages.”

But coming under pressure from the publicity surrounding the rightist-led CLPT’s announcement of a “blockade” of the port of Trieste, on October 14 SI Cobas called for a strike against the “Green Pass,” declaring: “The SI Cobas supports the mobilization of the dockers of Trieste ... and all workers who intend to oppose this measure,” while adding that its support “has nothing to do with the denialist and conspiratorial ramblings conveyed by the so-called ‘no-vaxxers.’” This call was a mistake, and a capitulation to forces attacking public health. As noted, the sit-in at one of the docks in Trieste was overwhelmingly by “no-vax” protesters from all over Italy, while most port workers did not join in this reactionary action. This was particularly so because port authorities,

under pressure from all the unions, agreed to provide free testing for all workers who requested it as an alternative to a certificate of vaccination.

In the aftermath, SI Cobas rightly denounced the police repression that ended the Trieste dock sit-in, as did other unions. Later, in December, a dissident group (Banchi Nuovi) in Naples, loosely affiliated with SI Cobas, denounced the leadership for not simply calling for “withdrawal of the Green Pass, pure and simple,” and instead adding the call for free COVID tests, tacitly accepting the vaccination requirement. The Banchi Nuovi group (now part of SOL Cobas) opposed the anti-COVID vaccine itself. In response, SI Cobas issued an extensive (43-page) document, “Two Years of Struggle Against the Capitalist Use of the Pandemic” (April 2022), denouncing the “Negationist Poison” of the “no-vaxxers,” who claim to fight against “health dictatorship” and for individual “freedom of choice,” together with the “neo-fascists of Forza Nuova” who attacked the CGIL union federation headquarters, about which the Banchi Nuovi document is silent.

The SI Cobas document shows how internationally rates of COVID infection, hospitalization and death are inversely proportionate to the rate of vaccination. It has valuable information about the government’s sabotage of public health: 37 billion euros cut in the last decade, while the number of hospital beds available was slashed from 922 per 100,000 population in 1980 to 275 in 2013. It denounces anti-science forces. But it not only opposes the Green Pass – a digital ID that in itself does nothing to further public health – it also criticizes groups like the Partito Comunista del Lavoro (PCL – Workers Communist Party), which to its credit calls for obligatory vaccination. According to the SI Cobas document, this “delegate[s] to the state (and therefore to the bosses) protection of the health and safety of the proletariat.” This is an absurd argument. Would SI Cobas on that basis refuse to follow workplace health and safety requirements set by the state? Or vaccinations for tetanus, measles, polio and other diseases?

The document also reflects the SI Cobas position – common to almost the entire Italian left, as well as the bourgeois media – that China is supposedly capitalist. Yet it accepts that China was able to effectively control the spread of the coronavirus – and thus save millions of lives – where even the richest Western capitalist nations were not. The reason Beijing was able to “organically combine all the countermeasures” is precisely the collectivized economy of a workers state, although bureaucratically deformed. SI Cobas’ talk of a Chinese “state turbocapitalism,” based on a model of “exploitation of the labor force and a system of oppression of proletarians even more brutal than the Western one,” flies in the face of China’s unprecedented success in vastly raising living standards and life expectancy while eliminating extreme poverty, and echoes anti-Communist propaganda. By propagating such claims drawn from the ideological arsenal of “their own” capitalist rulers, syndicalists and opportunist leftists join the imperialist war drive against Russia and China that provoked the present Russia-Ukraine war and is leading to a third world war.

CSWP Calls for Workers Action in Coronavirus Crisis



Class Struggle Workers – Portland and other trade-unionists at 17 August 2019 anti-fascist protest.

Internationalist Group and class-struggle trade-unionists put forward program for workers control of health and safety from the beginning of the COVID pandemic.

Fight for Workers Control of Health and Safety on the Road to Socialist Revolution

Vaccination against COVID-19 is a vital public health measure, which to be effective must be near-universal. But it must be combined with mass testing, tracing of contacts and providing quality medically supervised accommodations to isolate infected or symptomatic individuals – none of which capitalist governments carried out. Certification of vaccination does not require a digital ID document, which can be expanded to include other personal (including biometric) information. SI Cobas’ demand for free testing as an alternative for those who are hesitant about vaccines can be a step toward comprehensive protection in workplaces that do not require close contact. It could also be a step toward workers control of health and safety, if it is part of an overall program for socialist revolution to put an end to capitalist slaughter.

From the onset of the pandemic, in March 2020 the Internationalist Group/U.S. and Class Struggle Workers – Portland, a trade-union tendency fraternally allied with the IG, raised a program for action by workers organizations including the call to form “health and safety committees, to be elected at every workplace, both union and unrepresented, to ensure that all safety measures are being enforced for all workers, and that all necessary equipment is available.” Other demands included “unlimited sick pay at the highest level,” “full pay for all workers who have lost time as a result of the virus” and free health care for all. For the millions of “essential workers” who stayed on the job, supplying the needs of the population, we called on unions to raise key demands including free childcare facilities, a stop to all immigration raids and deportations, closing the immigrant detention centers and freeing the detainees.¹⁵

Similarly, in New York City schools, Class Struggle Education Workers, also linked to the IG, has advocated:

“Now that safe vaccines are available for all adults, youths and children age 5 years and up, the CSEW is for **obligatory vaccination for COVID-19**

for everyone in the schools (teachers, staff, students, vendors, administrators) as a necessary public health measure. There must be **no religious exemptions**.... Schools are environments where large numbers of people interact and rigid social distancing is not possible, although every effort must be made to ensure safe distances wherever possible, particularly in classrooms. All students are already required to be vaccinated for measles, mumps, rubella (German measles), varicella (chicken pox), polio, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, hepatitis-B, and in upper grades against meningococcal disease. As educators we support and help enforce such public health requirements, which are vital to the safety of all. All the more so in the case of the potentially fatal disease of COVID-19.

“Additionally, given the high contagiousness of the Omicron variant, **frequent widespread testing in the schools is essential**. Weekly PCR screening testing should be greatly expanded to sizeable random samples drawn from *everyone* in every school, with no ‘opt-in’ requirement of parental consent. Potential outbreaks can be forestalled by instituting **rapid (antigen) tests for all**, weekly or twice-weekly.... [T]here should be **union-led safety committees at every school** to take charge of testing and contact tracing and, where necessary, to **decide on classroom or school closures**, according to criteria and protocols agreed to by the unions.”

–“Use Union Power to Keep Schools Open Safely,” *Marxism & Education* No. 6, January 2022

At a time when many teacher unionists were calling to shut the schools and return to “virtual classes” because of high rates of COVID, the CSEW declared that “remote education” is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms, causing incalculable damage to students, particularly the most vulnerable: poor, homeless and immigrants. The CSEW and IG fought instead since August 2020 for union-led committees of teachers, students, parents and workers to control reopening of schools, to ensure adequate sanitation and ventilation, emphasizing that by far the most effective measure for ensuring the safety of students and educators was to **sharply reduce class sizes**.

To reiterate, we are for obligatory

¹⁵ See “CSWP Calls for Workers Action in Coronavirus Crisis,” in *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020.

vaccination “to the extent feasible.” For the capitalist rulers, the goal of their vaccine passports and Green Passes is to uphold and enforce the authority of the state, and those who don’t comply, they say, must be punished. (Thus in Italy, employers and the governing “center-left” coalition have *opposed* free testing.) For defenders of public health, on the other hand, the goal is to get as close to universal coverage as possible. That requires taking into account, and seeking to overcome, genuine vaccine hesitancy – as opposed to ideologically driven vaccine refusal. In the United States, for historical reasons there has been reluctance among some sectors of African American, Latino and other oppressed groups. Among such reasons are the bitter memory of the heinous Tuskegee Experiment of deliberately infecting hundreds of black sharecroppers with syphilis and then refusing to treat it, and the forced sterilization of fully one-third of all Puerto Rican women.

Making special efforts to win over the unconvinced in oppressed communities is called for, while insisting on no exceptions to vaccination in key jobs, involving close contact with potentially vulnerable people. In Italy, an important factor in the ambiguous and contradictory positions on vaccine mandates among the “rank-and-file” unions is the fact that immigrant workers, where the combative syndicalist-led unions have a base, are not eligible to receive vaccination for lack of required papers. Being housed in unhealthy conditions, subject to abuse in labor gangs policed by fascist thugs, deprived of any rights, often leads to fear of anything official, including vaccination campaigns that would benefit these workers even more than their locally born class sisters and brothers. Rather than giving in to aversions born of legitimate fear, class-conscious workers should demand, *and where needed implement*, vaccination for all, regardless of their status, to be carried out by the unions themselves.

On the other hand, where ultra-rightist-led anti-vaxxer mobilizations pose an immediate threat, not only to public health but also to democratic rights and the oppressed, *workers defense guards* should confront and disperse them. Such threats have been posed repeatedly in the United States where anti-vaccine protests led by racists and neo-Nazis have sought to intimidate school boards and public health officials. An effective labor mobilization to put a stop to such provocations is called for, just as in other cases where the same forces seek to attack immigrants, demonstrations for black rights, and gay, lesbian and transgender people. The fact that not everyone in such reactionary protests is an organized fascist should not hide the fact that these mobs have a definite political character and represent a clear and present danger to us all.

It is the capitalist rulers, with their vicious cutbacks and chaotic policies, who have sacrificed millions of lives in this pandemic while unleashing hysteria and causing a wrenching social and economic crisis. This came on top of a decade of economic depression and austerity, in which workers but also petty-bourgeois sectors have had their liveli-

hoods gutted to shore up the profits of the tottering banks. Ultra-rightists feed off the panic, exploiting ignorance but also hostility to arrogant government bureaucrats and liberal elites, in order to direct the anger against false enemies, whether immigrants or public health measures. For their part, labor bureaucrats and social democrats close ranks with the state. The lesson that should have been and must be learned from the COVID carnage is that *capitalism is killing us*, turning a deadly disease into a monstrous social and economic calamity, and that to save working people from ruin a *socialist revolution* is needed to overturn this system of relentless exploitation and systemic oppression. ■

Maidan massacre...

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lar in the case of Ukraine.” But the *Times*’ “model” goes beyond this, publicizing a cynical fabrication produced in conjunction with the Ukrainian government. In an article in *Consortium News* (22 April 2018), “The Buried Maidan Massacre and Its Misrepresentation by the West,” the Canadian Ukrainian professor takes this apart piece by piece.

In the model, supposedly based on analyzing videos and photographs, the positions of the wound locations in the protesters killed in the massacre do not match those in the forensic examination of the bodies. The trajectories of the bullets are grossly altered to make them nearly horizontal rather than at an angle from above, as the medical examiners stated. A protester shot from the back (as shown in a video) is portrayed as shot from the front. Etc. SITU, a New York architectural firm which constructed the model, said it “worked with Ukrainian attorneys, activists and computer scientists.” In praising these “citizen investigators,” the *New York Times* reported that among them was a Ukrainian “volunteer,” but didn’t mention the Ukrainian general prosecutor’s admission that its office financed a group of “volunteers,” including that Ukrainian graduate student, in compiling and synchronizing the videos.

So who was behind the Maidan massacre? There is by now plenty of evidence to answer this question. Katchanovski quotes Yanukovich and his former head of Ukraine’s political police saying that the massacre was organized by **Andriy Parubiy** (the head of the Maidan goon squads, who was then made head of the coup regime’s National Security and Defense Council, and later head of Ukraine’s parliament), **Serhiy Pashynskyi** (later head of the coup regime’s presidential office) and **Volodymyr Parasyuk** (head of the Maidan paramilitary squad in the Music Conservatory, later part of the Dnipro Battalion and member of Ukraine’s parliament), backed by oligarchical politicians **Oleksander Turchynov** and **Arsen Avakov**, who took charge of Ukraine’s police and military for the ensuing years.

To carry out the dirty work, this gang brought in snipers from Georgia, the Caucasian country that was the site of the U.S.-sponsored 2003 “Rose Revolution,” whose leaders were close allies of the anti-Russian Ukrainian nationalists. This is attested to in interviews with five Georgian ex-military members and their depositions to the lawyers for the Berkut



“Shoot at Everyone on the Maidan”: 2018 article by Russian news agency RIA Novosti interviewed Georgian snipers who carried out the 2014 Maidan massacre and revealed the names of those who gave the orders. They were leading figures of the Euromaidan protests and the coup plotters who seized power the day after the shootings.

members charged with the Maidan massacre. An article by the Russian news agency RIA Novosti (“Shoot at Everyone on the Maidan”: Georgian Snipers Reveal their Paymasters” [in Russian], 14 February 2018) laid out their testimony in detail. Two of the shooters, Koba Nergadze and Alexander Revazishvili, say that they were hired by Georgian paramilitary Mamuka Mamulashvili, with a down payment of \$50,000 and promises of another \$50,000 when the job was completed. The task, they were told by Mamulashvili, was to “to create chaos on the Maidan by using weapons on all targets, protesters and police – there is no difference.”

The snipers (who spoke out because they were afraid of being “eliminated” for their direct knowledge of the massacre) reported that Pashynskyi and Parasyuk brought in the weapons, and that Pashynskyi gave the order to start firing, in which he participated with a Kalashnikov assault rifle. The Georgian snipers’ video testimony was finally presented to the much-delayed Maidan massacre trial in Kiev on 21 December 2021. But you don’t have to believe former Yanukovich officials, the Russian media or testimony from the contract killers themselves to verify it. It was confirmed by a former Ukrainian air force helicopter pilot and nationalist “hero,” Nadezhda Savchenko. She was an instructor with the Aidar Battalion, was captured in 2014 by forces of the Lugansk breakaway republic, elected to Ukraine’s parliament while being held in a Russian jail for directing a mortar attack that killed two Russian journalists, and then released in a prisoner exchange.

In 2018 Savchenko, who participated in the U.S. occupation of Iraq as part of a squad of Ukrainian “peacekeeping” troops, declared her intention to run for president. She set off a commotion by declaring that “she saw Andriy Parubiy, a key organizer of the massive protests that drove Ukraine’s former Russia-friendly president from power, leading snipers into a hotel next to the capital’s main square, the Maidan” (AP dispatch, 15 March 2018). Hours later Savchenko corrected herself to say she had confused the names (understandably, given Parubiy’s deep involvement) and who she had seen was fellow parliamentary deputy Serhiy Pashynskyi. The upshot of this explosive revelation? She was arrested, charged with planning a terrorist attack to overthrow the government, and kept in

jail for a year until after the first round of the 2019 election.

As for the Georgian paramilitary squad leader Mamuka Mamulashvili who assembled the squad of assassins, he is now the head of the Georgian National Legion fighting against Russia in Ukraine, where he boasts that his forces take “no prisoners,” executing any Russian soldier they get their hands on, as shown in video footage. In 2017, this war criminal and assassin was invited to the U.S. and feted by U.S. Congressional leaders, including New York Democrats Eliot Engel and Carolyn Maloney (Grayzone, 8 April).

The importance of determining the truth about who unleashed the Maidan shootings is severalfold. First, it shows that the post-coup regime was born of a monstrous crime. As Katchanovski noted, the massacre “set the stage for the violent overthrow of the pro-Russian government in Ukraine and a new Cold War between Washington and Moscow.” He added:

“This was the best documented case of mass killing in history, broadcast live on TV and the internet, in presence of thousands of eyewitnesses. It was filmed by hundreds of journalists from major media in the West, Ukraine, Russia, and many other countries as well as by numerous social media users. Yet, to this day, no one has been brought to justice for this major and consequential crime.”

–*Consortium News*, 22 April 2019

Second, it dramatically showed the active complicity of the imperialist media in perpetrating the cover-up, in the interests of waging this Cold War which is now turning hot. And third, at the present time (six weeks into the Russia-Ukraine war) when fervor for war on Russia is being whipped up with a series of reports of alleged Russian atrocities (bombings of a Mariupol maternity hospital and a theater that had been a shelter, seemingly random killings in Bucha, rocket attack on the Kramatorsk train station), the logic of the situation (*cui bono*) and much evidence in each case point to “false flag” attacks by Ukrainian forces. Sound familiar?

The question inevitably arises: are these forces, and particularly the neo-Nazi and fascist militias integrated into the Ukrainian military, capable of cold-bloodedly attacking “their own people” in this horrific way? The answer to that question is yes, they already did it, in the 20 February 2014 Maidan massacre. And everything indicates they are now at it again. ■

Derrotar guerra...

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tica, un estado obrero multinacional.

La actual crisis en torno a Ucrania se ha construido durante años. En 2014, fascistas y ultranacionalistas ucranianos perpetraron un golpe de estado que derrocó al presidente electo de Ucrania, el prorruso Viktor Yanukovich. Éste fue el segundo intento, después de la llamada Revolución Naranja de 2004, una de las “revoluciones de color” para un “cambio de régimen” en los estados postsoviéticos. En 2014, la jefa de asuntos europeos del Departamento de Estado financió y se coordinó directamente con los fascistas nacionalistas y se codeó con ellos en la plaza Maidán en la capital de Ucrania.³ Los nacionalistas ucranianos marchaban portando retratos de Stepan Bandera, el infame colaborador con la invasión nazi a la URSS durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, quien ha sido oficialmente declarado “héroe de Ucrania”. Tras el golpe de febrero de 2014, sus organizadores iniciaron una guerra contra la parte oriental rusoparlante de Ucrania y perpetraron un pogromo en el sur, en el que quemaron vivas a decenas de personas en la sede de los sindicatos en Odesa.⁴ El uso del idioma ruso en las escuelas y el gobierno fue prohibido.

Cuando un levantamiento en contra de este asesino chovinismo nacionalista ucraniano estalló en la parte oriental de Ucrania, la junta de Kiev consideró que el ejército no era confiable y envió escuadrones fascistas para tratar de sofocar la revuelta. Sin embargo, las poblaciones de las óblast (divisiones provinciales) de Donetsk y Lugansk votaron abrumadoramente en el referéndum de mayo de 2014 a favor de independizarse del gobierno central. Después de batallas encarnizadas, los aspirantes a limpiadores étnicos antirrusos fracasaron. En Crimea, cuya capital Sebastopol ha sido durante siglos la sede de la flota rusa del Mar Negro, luego de la toma de la península por parte de tropas rusas sin disparar tiro en marzo de 2014, la inmensa mayoría étnicamente rusa de la población votó en un referéndum a favor de ejercer su autodeterminación al unirse a Rusia. La Liga por la IV Internacional llamó a apoyar el levantamiento en el oriente de Ucrania y a defender las repúblicas regionales que han resistido con tenacidad los ataques nacionalistas/fascistas ucranianos, así como a defender la elección democrática de Crimea de unirse a Rusia.

El reconocimiento por parte de Rusia de las repúblicas de Donetsk y Lugansk pone fin a los Acuerdos de Minsk de 2015 entre Rusia y Ucrania a favor de la autonomía de las óblast orientales. Aunque los separatistas buscaban la independencia, Putin prefirió que el Donbass fuera una parte autónoma de una Ucrania neutral que pudiera servir como una zona de amortiguamiento entre Rusia y la OTAN. Pero el gobierno de Kiev nunca emprendió las reformas prometidas para conceder garantías de seguridad y participación de las regiones separatistas en la determinación de la política exterior. Recientemente, las prohibiciones del uso del ruso se han intensificado, a pesar de que es la lengua predominante en las ciudades del oriente y el sur,

³ Véase “¡Abajo el golpe fascista/nacionalista patrocinado por los imperialistas en Ucrania!” *Revolución Permanente* n° 4, mayo-junio de 2014.

⁴ Véase “Pogromo fascista en Odesa y sus secuelas” en *The Internationalist* No. 37.

y es ampliamente usado en la capital, en los negocios y en la cultura popular. Putin habla de un “genocidio” en contra de los rusos, lo que es una exageración, pero los rusoparlantes de la zona oriental sí están bajo amenaza de parte del ejército ucraniano y de los fascistas que han asediado la región durante ya ocho años. En lo que toca a los ahora difuntos Acuerdos de Minsk para la autonomía en Ucrania, siempre ha sido difícil entender cómo el gobierno central podría restablecer su control de la región sin un baño de sangre.

La escalada de provocaciones antirrusas por parte del gobierno ucraniano es resultado directo de la elección del demócrata Biden a la presidencia de EE.UU. Cuando el republicano Trump intentaba congraciarse con Putin y Rusia, los demócratas azuzaron el frenesí en torno al “Rusiagate”, culpando al Kremlin por la derrota de Hillary Clinton en las elecciones de 2016. Los demócratas han colaborado estrechamente con los nacionalistas antirrusos de Ucrania desde hace años: orquestaron los golpes de 2004 y 2014, participan en la junta directiva de una compañía gasera ucraniana, etc. Tan pronto como Biden tomó posesión, el gobierno ucraniano comenzó una serie de provocaciones, al anunciar una nueva estrategia militar en marzo de 2021 centrada en su integración a la OTAN y en buscar el apoyo de ésta en contra de Rusia. Estaciones de televisión en ruso han sido cerradas y el principal “oligarca” prorruso en Ucrania ha sido puesto en arresto domiciliario bajo la acusación de “traición”.

El gobierno ucraniano y los paramilitares nacionalistas iniciaron simultáneamente una escalada militar en la parte oriental de Ucrania, a la cual Moscú respondió fortaleciendo sus fuerzas en territorio ruso en su lado de la frontera. Luego en otoño, Rusia organizó nuevamente una serie de ejercicios militares, afirmando una y otra vez que no tenía la intención de invadir a Ucrania. El propósito de estos ejercicios era dejar en claro a los imperialistas occidentales que la eventual integración de Ucrania a la OTAN sería considerada como un acto de guerra, además de señalar cuál sería la consecuencia. Si Rusia quisiera, podría fácilmente tomar buena parte de Ucrania. Incluso la alta oficialidad del ejército ucraniano admitió que no durarían más que unos pocos días en contra del modernizado ejército ruso. De modo que lo que Putin quería decir se planteó con toda claridad. La respuesta de EE.UU. fue la frenética propaganda que describe al líder ruso como la encarnación del mal.

Para toda la febril campaña de denuncia en contra del militarismo de Moscú, es la OTAN la que ha intensificado la realización de agresivas operaciones militares cerca de Rusia. La “Coyuntura Tridente” de 2018 fue anunciada como “el mayor ejercicio desde el fin de la Guerra Fría”, enfocado en los países Bálticos, incluyendo un desembarco al estilo del Día D en Letonia. A esto siguió en mayo-julio de 2021 la operación “Defensor Europa 21”, un ejercicio conjunto que incluyó el despliegue de 28,000 soldados y un gigantesco desembarco de más de un millar de vehículos militares en Albania. Esta maniobra estuvo vinculada también con la operación “Sea Breeze”, un ejercicio naval en el Mar Negro, con naves de 32 países (incluido Japón), junto con ejercicios en tierra en Bulgaria, Hungría y Rumania. Ninguno de estos es jamás mencionado en

los medios imperialistas, y todos están dirigidos en contra de Rusia. Desde 1999, la OTAN se ha expandido para integrar a Estonia, Letonia, Lituania, Polonia, Hungría y Rumania, rodeando así a Rusia. Y ahora los imperialistas quieren apretar el nudo al rehusarse a descartar la entrada de Ucrania y Georgia, a quienes se dijo en 2008 que podrían integrarse a la OTAN si ponían sus casas en orden.

La Liga por la IV Internacional llama a defender el autogobierno en las regiones separatistas del sur y el oriente de ucrania y a derrotar la campaña de guerra en contra de Rusia y China. Nos oponemos tajantemente a las sanciones imperialistas, así como a la gritería en torno a las tropas rusas apuntalar a las asediadas repúblicas del Donbass, siendo la histérica expresión de frustrados guerrilleros y sus acólitos socialdemócratas. El conductor de esta gritería orquestada es el imperialismo norteamericano, con su récord de incontables invasiones sangrientas. Si los choques desembocan en una guerra en toda la línea entre Rusia y Ucrania, los trotskistas abogamos por una política de derrotismo revolucionario en ambas potencias regionales, llamando a los trabajadores a oponerse activamente al esfuerzo bélico de “sus” burguesías y a librar una intransigente lucha de clases en contra de los gobernantes capitalistas en Moscú y Kiev. Pero si resultara en una guerra de los patrocinadores imperialistas de Ucrania contra Rusia, sería un asunto totalmente distinto.

El Internationalist Group/U.S. ha advertido en repetidas ocasiones antes de las elecciones de 2020 que los demócratas estaban haciendo campaña como “los más consistentes guerrilleros en contra de China, Rusia y –por supuesto– Corea del Norte”.⁵ En una entrevista realizada durante la campaña electoral, Biden declaró que “la mayor amenaza contra Estados Unidos hoy en día ... es Rusia”, aunque “el mayor competidor es China” (60 Minutes, 25 de octubre de 2020). Cuando fue nombrada embajadora de Biden ante las Naciones Unidas, Linda Thomas-Greenfield llamó a China “un adversario estratégico” (AP, 37 de enero de 2021). Así pues, la declaración conjunta de Putin y del presidente chino y secretario general del Partido Comunista, Xi Jinping del 4 de febrero, en la que se proclama una amistad “sin límites” entre China y Rusia que explícitamente se opone a la expansión de la OTAN, causó gran consternación en Washington. Frente a la crecientes amenazas y peligros, hacemos un llamado a la clase obrera del mundo a defender a China y a los

⁵ “Democrat’s Pro-Cop Ticket Vies with Trump Over ‘Law and Order’”, *The Internationalist* no. 61, septiembre-octubre de 2020.

demás estados obreros burocráticamente deformados en contra del imperialismo y la contrarrevolución.

Hoy, el asunto de clase predominante es la lucha en contra de los agresivos guerrilleros imperialistas de EE.UU. y la OTAN y sus lacayos en Kiev, así como en contra de los fascistas y ultranacionalistas pogromistas que amenazan a la población del oriente de Ucrania. En ningún caso los marxistas daríamos el menor apoyo político a los dirigentes ucranianos ni al nacionalista ruso y anticomunista Vladimir Putin, cuyo discurso del 21 de febrero comenzó con una diatriba en contra de Lenin y los bolcheviques por haber creado a Ucrania. Una Ucrania soviética en una URSS multinacional podría haber superado las tensiones regionales y étnicas, pero la brutal centralización de Stalin lo impidió. Pero desde la independencia de 1991 como estado burgués, Ucrania ha sido un país profundamente dividido, gobernado por una oligarquía inveteradamente corrupta y preocupada exclusivamente por sus propias ganancias, que emplea tropas de choque ultranacionalistas y fascistas como ariete para imponer la “ucranización” de las regiones rusoparlantes del oriente y el sur.

Los trotskistas defendemos los derechos democráticos, nacionales y lingüísticos de todos los sectores de la población, buscando unir a los trabajadores rusos y ucranianos en lucha común junto con los trabajadores de Europa Occidental y Oriental. En tanto que los imperialistas siguen azuzando la fiebre de guerra e imponen sanciones cada vez más severas que en último punto apunta hacia una guerra mundial, los que enarbolan el programa internacionalista de los bolcheviques de Lenin y Trotsky luchan por la revolución socialista mundial en contra de todas las burguesías gobernantes. ■

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**Fascistas y nacionalistas ucranianos: ¡saquen las manos del Donbass!
¡Por la defensa del autogobierno en el suroriente de Ucrania!**

¡Derrotar la campaña de guerra y las sanciones de EE.UU. y la OTAN contra Rusia!

La siguiente declaración fue emitida por el Comité Ejecutivo de la Liga por la IV Internacional el 23 de febrero, antes del inicio de la invasión rusa a Ucrania. Para nuestro análisis de la guerra, leer “Detrás de la guerra: campaña de guerra de EE.UU. y la OTAN contra Rusia y China”, disponible en nuestro sitio del Internet, www.internationalist.org.

El 21 de febrero, tras semanas de propaganda de guerra imperialista cada vez más histórica y de ataques diarios cada vez más fuertes por parte del gobierno ucraniano y de fuerzas fascistas/nacionalistas en contra de las regiones separatistas rusoparlantes de Donetsk y Lugansk en el oriente de Ucrania, el presidente ruso Vladimir Putin formalmente reconoció la independencia de estas autodenominadas repúblicas populares bajo asedio y envió tropas a la región. Estados Unidos, la Organización del Tratado del Atlántico Norte (OTAN) y la Unión Europea condenaron de inmediato a Rusia por esta acción defensiva y anunciaron que le impondrán severas sanciones económicas. **Los trabajadores con conciencia de clase y todos los que se oponen al imperialismo deben oponerse a la campaña de guerra imperialista de EE.UU. y la OTAN, que levanta el espectro de una guerra mundial. Los imperialistas buscan aislar, provocar y satanizar a Rusia,** que a pesar de las ambiciones imperiales de Putin es una potencia capitalista regional intermedia.¹ **Sin embargo, el objetivo último de los imperialistas consiste en desencadenar la contrarrevolución en**

¹ Véase “El espantajo del ‘imperialismo ruso’”, suplemento de *El Internacionalista*, mayo de 2014.



Foto: The Internationalist

El Grupo Internacionalista en una manifestación en Nueva York en contra de una guerra contra Rusia, el 5 de marzo. Pancarta dice: “No a la guerra nacionalista entre Rusia y Ucrania - Guerra de clases contra el imperialismo de EE.UU. y la OTAN.”

China, Cuba y Corea del Norte.²

Un día después, el presidente norteamericano Joe Biden aprovechó la acción de Rusia al declarar que era “el comienzo de la invasión rusa de Ucrania” para imponer sanciones económicas en contra de Rusia, como se anticipó. (Véase nuestro artículo

² “Oppose G7/NATO Imperialist War Drive Against China, Russia” en *The Internationalist* No. 63, abril-junio de 2021.

“Frustrar las provocaciones y amenazas de guerra de EE.UU. y la OTAN contra Rusia!” *Revolución Permanente*, 20 de febrero de 2022.) El presidente ucraniano Volodymyr Zelensky, sin embargo, todavía tiene dificultades para seguir la línea imperialista y declaró que “No habrá guerra” con Rusia. Las sanciones anunciadas por EE.UU., que Biden llamó la “primera rebanada”, con más por venir, pretenden impedir que los inversores rusos consigan préstamos en Occidente, lo que es algo que de todas maneras Putin ha intentado limitar desde hace varios años. El gobierno alemán declaró que pondrá en pausa la certificación del gasoducto Nord Stream 2, que transportaría gas natural ruso hacia Europa, para llevar a cabo una nueva revisión de seguridad.

Desde hace años, Putin se ha quejado del creciente asedio de la OTAN y de sus amenazantes acciones militares en contra de Rusia, sin conseguir nada. Hace dos meses, Moscú entregó a Estados Unidos un borrador de tratado protocolando garantías de seguridad. Para darle énfasis, movilizó sus fuerzas armadas a lo largo de la frontera con Ucrania para realizar maniobras militares. Los medios imperialistas adoptaron un tono de histeria antirrusa, recordando las imágenes de la Guerra Fría del oso ruso haciéndose de Europa. Su incesante propaganda para azuzar miedo en torno a una supuesta inminente invasión rusa de Ucrania, hizo recordar también la propaganda

de guerra en torno a las inexistentes “armas de destrucción masiva” en el Irak de Saddam Hussein. Las potencias occidentales respondieron a Putin con cháchara hueca sobre control de armas, y se rehusaron de plano a descartar la expansión de la OTAN. Con sus más de 2,000 kilómetros de frontera con Rusia, la integración de Ucrania a la alianza militar occidental sería un acto de guerra. Al declarar que cualquier limitación a la expansión de la OTAN hacia el oriente es “inaceptable”, Biden y sus aliados europeos están declarando que la alianza imperialista se está preparando para librar, tarde o temprano, una guerra contra Rusia.

Biden bate los tambores de guerra contra Rusia en un intento desesperado de aparentar fuerza después de la humillante derrota y huida del imperialismo norteamericano de Afganistán, donde dos décadas de invasión y ocupación de EE.UU. y la OTAN no lograron impedir que su gobierno títere se colapsara. El actual ocupante de la Casa Blanca intenta resucitar un “Nuevo Orden Mundial” unipolar que proclamó EE.UU. con la destrucción contrarrevolucionaria de la Unión Soviética hace tres décadas. Pero Washington ya no tiene la fuerza militar ni económica para imponer su hegemonía global, y por eso tiene que apoyarse en sus aliados de Europa y Asia. En buena medida, la insistencia de EE.UU. en aislar y atacar Rusia con medidas de guerra económica se explica por la determinación de mantener a raya a Alemania, su aliada y rival imperialista, insistiendo en particular en la cancelación del gasoducto Nord Stream 2.

En su discurso para anunciar el reconocimiento de las dos repúblicas separatistas, Putin señaló que, en las negociaciones con respecto a la reunificación de Alemania en 1990, EE.UU. aseguró a los dirigentes soviéticos que la OTAN no se expandiría hacia el oriente. La existencia de este compromiso, que ahora EE.UU. finge que nunca se hizo, es confirmada por el acta de las discusiones en febrero de 1990 en el que el secretario de estado de EE.UU., James Baker, prometió a Mijaíl Gorbachov que “ni una pulgada de la actual jurisdicción militar de la OTAN se extenderá en dirección al oriente”, así como en un documento reservado del gobierno alemán recientemente filtrado por la revista *Der Spiegel*. Sin embargo, la *Drang nach Osten* (marcha hacia el oriente) de la OTAN sigue imperturbable. Y aunque Putin celebra la “contribución de Rusia a la superación del legado de la Guerra Fría”, nosotros trotskistas luchamos a la época con uñas y dientes en contra de la reunificación capitalista de Alemania, y contra la contrarrevolución que destruyó a la Unión Soviética.

sigue en la página 31



Batallón Azov marcha en Kiev. Entre los símbolos de sus banderas está el Wolfsangel (en negro, al frente), usado por las SS nazis, que participaron en batallas con tanques en Járkov, Ucrania. El Batallón Azov incluye algunos conocidos nazifascistas, pero ha sido financiado por el gobierno norteamericano y fue incorporado a la Guardia Nacional Ucraniana.