

Not Bourgeois Nationalism But International Proletarian Revolution

Defeat the Imperialist War Drive and U.S./NATO Proxy Regime in Ukraine

Defend Russia, China Against War-Crazed U.S. Rulers

On October 15, the Executive Committee of the League for the Fourth International voted that “as quantity has turned into quality, it is now necessary to take a position of revolutionary defensism toward Russia and defeatism toward the U.S./NATO proxy Ukraine regime.”

OCTOBER 22 – The war between Russia and Ukraine has been waged with white-hot intensity for eight months, dominating world politics and economics, with no end in sight. In fact, there may be no end in the near future. There are no “peace negotiations,” as there is no outcome that both sides could live with. Washington and its allies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization vow to “make Russia’s war on Ukraine a strategic failure,”¹ insisting that Russia must be defeated and forced to withdraw from all of what used to be eastern Ukraine, including Crimea and the Donetsk and Lugansk “people’s republics” that broke from the fascist-infested Kiev coup regime in 2014. Many imperialist strategists want to go further and break up Russia, in order to destroy what they see as a geopolitical rival and to seize its resources.

For Moscow, this poses an existential threat, particularly now that the breakaway republics in the east and the southern regions of Zaporozhye and Kherson voted on September 23-27 by large majorities to join the Russian Federation. Contrary to Western propaganda about the

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¹ White House, *National Security Strategy* (October 2022).



HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) supplied to Ukraine by the Pentagon, firing at Russian forces on the southern front. U.S. officials precheck every missile strike, and can veto any target.

Adrienne Surprenant / MYOP for The Wall Street Journal

Brazil: “Broad Front” Blocks Workers Mobilization Against Militarist Threat

The following article is an expanded version of a supplement to Vanguarda Operária (30 September), published by the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil, section of the League for the Fourth International. In the first round of the Brazilian elections, on October 2, the “broad front” slate of ex-president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva won 48% of valid votes, while ultra-rightist Jair Bolsonaro got 42%. Since no candidate had a majority, this required a second-round runoff election on October 30, in which Lula won 51% to 49% for Bolsonaro. In this second, decisive round of voting, virtually the entire left called for a vote for the Lula-led “broad front,” which includes the main traditional conservative parties. On both rounds, the LQB called for a “no” vote against both of these bourgeois alternatives, and for working-class mobilization in the streets against the rightist militarist threat.

With his trademark gesture, thumb and forefinger cocked, fist clenched, imitating a pistol, hands at holster level, ex-captain, now-president Jair Bolsonaro, representing the far right wing of the former military dictatorship¹ is threatening to annul or refuse to heed the outcome of the October elections. Last year, the bonapartist president threatened that he would only leave the Palácio do Planalto (Brazil’s White House) either “dead, arrested or with victory.” For the “bastards” he added, “I will never be arrested” and “only God can get me out of Brasília,” Brazil’s capital. This September he softened his rhetoric a bit, even talking of “handing over the [presidential] sash and retiring” – of course, only “if it is God’s will.” But a few days after this pious declaration on an evangelical

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¹ Following a coup d’état in 1964, Brazil was governed by a military regime up to 1988.



AP

On orders of bonapartist president Bolsonaro, in 2019 soldiers marched in celebration of the 1964 coup d’état that ushered in 25 years of military dictatorship.

As Racist Courts Block Appeal for Hearing on New Evidence of Judicial Bias Portland Painters Call for Workers Action to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal

On October 26, a judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia rejected the request by Mumia Abu-Jamal for a new Post-Conviction Relief Act (PCRA) hearing on his case, based on new evidence of prosecution misconduct and bias from boxes of materials that had been hidden in the District Attorney's office until being discovered in 2018. Mumia is the most prominent class-war prisoner in the United States, imprisoned for over four decades, on death row for almost 30 years, on frame-up charges – of which he is entirely innocent – of killing a police officer in December 1981. He was targeted by the police and capitalist politicians as a former Black Panther and broadcast journalist whose stinging exposés of atrocities by the Philly cops had enraged local authorities, who run the reputed “city of brotherly love” as a racist police state.¹

A week before this latest outrage in court, on October 19, the Portland, Oregon, Local 10 of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) passed a resolution highlighting how Mumia Abu-Jamal was railroaded to jail, sentenced to death by a racist “hanging judge” at a rigged trial in 1982, and ever since prevented by the capitalist judicial system

¹ See “Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and All Black Panther and MOVE Prisoners!” *The Internationalist* No. 46, January-February 2017, and other articles available online at <http://www.internationalist.org/mumiatoc.html>.

from proving his innocence. The Local 10 resolution cites labor actions protesting the persecution of Mumia and demanding his freedom, notably a coordinated action in 1999 by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which shut down all U.S. West Coast ports, and a statewide work stoppage by teachers in Rio de Janeiro. In a march in San Francisco during that action, ILWU dock workers chanted “An injury to one, is an injury to all – Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!”

The denial by Judge Lucretia Clemons of the request by Mumia's lawyers for a hearing on evidence of exclusion of black jurors, and of prosecution witnesses paid for their testimony with promises of money and dropped charges, is one more proof: *There is no justice for the exploited and oppressed in the capitalist courts.*

In the face of the stonewalling of the courts, the Portland Painters resolution should be a clarion call to workers and defenders of black and labor rights, and of elementary democratic rights, around the globe to redouble efforts and take action NOW. To liberate Mumia from the monstrous racist injustice system of police, courts and prisons that serves and protects the interests of the bourgeois ruling class while destroying millions of lives of those it exploits and oppresses, what is urgently needed is workers action to free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Message from Mumia: Workers of the World, Unite!

After being informed by long-time fighter for Mumia's freedom Johanna Fernández of the resolution of the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) Local 10 in Portland, Oregon calling for workers action to demand his freedom, Mumia Abu-Jamal responded with a message, which we excerpt here, edited for publication:

That is so outstanding and so impressive. I am overjoyed and humbled that this union could make such a noble gesture and resolution. Thank you for sharing that with me, and thank the union for doing their work and calling for other brothers and sisters of the union movement to join with us in the struggle for freedom. I am moved and impressed....

It used to be that unions were among the most progressive sector of the population. And that's because they had what? Fundamentally a working-class consciousness. It is that very consciousness which unites people across boundaries of gender, boundaries of so-called race, boundaries across nationality.

I was talking to a brother the other day and I was telling him that when Marx and Engels got together, they formed the International Workingmen's Association.



Mumia Abu-Jamal

They were calling for workers of the world to unite, for workers across countries to unite, that labor has no country and that they must unite against capitalism and capitalist wars.

When World War I happened, of course, that shattered because Germans remembered that they were Germans and Frenchmen remembered that they were Frenchmen and they began to sacrifice their lives for the capitalists in these wars. That's always the case because nationalism has its hold. It's because people are conditioned to think as nationalists and not as internationalists, not about their class. So in times of war, in times of crisis, people forget their class and sign on to defend the rulers who during the war and after the war, treat that class like a subjugated class and treat them like shit.

When people get out of the army, they're outraged at what they went through. But that's what the army is there for. The army is not there to defend the nation. It is there to defend the rulers. We see that clearly in “third world” countries where the army only acts against the people. There are always foreign threats, but when the people begin demonstrating and people begin protesting, and the people begin marching for their freedom, the army and the police come out to attack them to defend the rulers, not the people. That's a global reality....

So that [the resolution of the Portland Painters union] is a beautiful thing. Their timing could not be better.

Johanna Fernández: Hooray for reviving this idea of class consciousness the world over!

Mumia: Hooray for the painters!

My friends, I thank you all for your noble gesture and resolution. It warms my heart and I hope it warms yours. There is a saying and we need to repeat it and make it reality: Workers of the world, unite! Thank you all, with love, not fear.

This is Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Resolution on Freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal

Local 10, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), Portland Oregon

Whereas, Mumia Abu-Jamal, the most prominent political prisoner in the United States, has been defended by the trade unions internationally; and

Whereas, Mumia Abu-Jamal, a former Black Panther, writer, and president of the Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists, is renowned around the world for standing in solidarity with workers in struggle while on death row, and for his critique of the ravages of capitalism and worker exploitation, racist repression, and imperialist war; and

Whereas, he is innocent of the charge of killing a police officer, and was framed

up and sentenced to death in 1982 by a racist judicial system, without any corroborating physical evidence on false testimony by coerced witnesses who said Mumia Abu-Jamal was not the shooter; and

Whereas, the courts have kept Mumia Abu-Jamal behind bars in spite of the sworn confession of another man, Arnold Beverly, that he, and not Mumia, shot the police officer; and

Whereas, Mumia Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial before a racist Judge Albert Sabo, known for sending more men to death row than any other judge in the United States, who stated during Abu-Jamal's trial that he was going “to help them fry the [N-word].”; and

Whereas, Mumia Abu-Jamal remained on death row for nearly 30 years, saved from execution in 1995 and 1999 by international mass protest supported by trade unions, including the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, with West Coast ports shut down and teachers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil participating in a statewide work stoppage; therefore

Be it resolved, that IUPAT Local 10 demands immediate freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal and calls for a policy of working-class struggle through agitation, publicity, protest, and continued coordinated workers action on a national and international scale to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. Painters Local 10 calls on workers of all countries to use their power to free our brother Mumia Abu-Jamal.

For Workers Action to FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!

Fight to free the U.S.' foremost class-war prisoner. To order buttons, go to www.internationalist.org and click on “Order Now” link. Cost: US\$2 per button, including mailing.

Visit the League for the Fourth International/
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Supreme Court Cancels Right to Abortion, Triggers Reactionaries

On June 24, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision which for almost 50 years was the basis for women's constitutional right to abortion. Conservatives have been chipping away at that right from the beginning, and now with a right-wing supermajority on the high court (six conservatives to three liberals) they went for the kill. Everyone knew it was coming: the die was cast with the appointments to the court of the rightist dissemblers Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and (on the eve of the 2020 elections) Amy Coney Barrett by the all-round reactionary president Donald Trump. The death knell was sounded on May 3, when the draft majority opinion by Samuel Alito overturning *Roe* was leaked. Yet even so, the impact of the cancellation of a constitutional right that had stood for half a century was huge.

That day there were large demonstrations, 30,000+ in New York City and thousands more around the country. Most protesters were young – until then, they and their mothers could decide to have a child or not, and suddenly in half the country that right was gone. Many protests were called by non-establishment groups: while mainstream feminists called to elect more “pro-choice candidates” (i.e., Democrats), opportunist left groups couched their strategy of pressuring the Democrats in calls to take to the streets. In contrast, the Internationalist Group/Revolutionary Internationalist Youth and fraternal class-struggle workers groups had contingents in NYC, Los Angeles and Portland, with banners and signs declaring “Free Abortion on Demand,” “Democrats: Faux Friends of Women,” “Bolshevik Revolution First Legalized Abortion on Demand” and “Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution.”

President Joe Biden declared that the ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* is “a tragic error by the Supreme Court.” But although they had months to prepare for this moment, the Democrats had no answer except to say vote for them in November: “This fall, *Roe* is on the ballot,” declared the president. Yet even if the Democrats somehow manage to hang on in the House of Representatives and get those fabled “two more Democratic senators,” it won't ensure that the (limited) abortion rights protection of the 1973 court ruling would now become the law of the land. The Democrats controlled both houses of Congress and the White House for a time under Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and now Joe Biden, and never passed a law legalizing abortion. And even if they did, the Supremes would likely knock it out.

This is so well-known that even mainstream TV newscasters point it out. The stark reality is that *voting for the Democratic Party will not do a damn thing to restore the right to abortion, much less win free abortion on demand, or defend women's rights generally.* This is also true of “women's marches” and other forms of “militant” lobbying of the Democrats. Under pressure from Democratic Party activists to do something – “*anything!*” – in response to the Supreme Court decision, Biden on July

Free Abortion on Demand – Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution



Internationalist Group and Class Struggle Workers – Portland at June 24 protest against Supreme Court canceling constitutional right to abortion. Soviet Russia following the Bolshevik Revolution was the first country to legalize abortion on demand.

8 issued an executive order, No. 14076, “Protecting Access to Reproductive Healthcare Services,” consisting of “identifying potential actions,” “identifying ways to increase outreach and education,” “promoting awareness” of contraception, etc. In other words, a big nothingburger.

As we have written, what induced the arch-reactionary Supreme Court to grant a right to abortion in 1973 was neither arcane legal reasoning nor simply the pressure politics of street protests. It was a concession wrung from the rulers as U.S. society was in turmoil, with ghettos and barrios aflame, workers occupying auto plants, a losing war in Indochina.¹ To win full abortion and reproductive rights, and just to restore the rights canceled by the conservative court, will require convulsive class struggle by millions of working and oppressed people,

¹ See “The Struggle for Full Abortion Rights, From Latin America to the U.S.,” *The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022.



Mass outrage over Supreme Court decision overturning *Roe v. Wade*. Over 20,000 protesters jammed into New York City's Washington Square Park on June 24, then marched for hours. Another 10,000 went to Union Square.

It's not only in the Deep South: of the 34 states between the Northeast and West Coast, only in four (Illinois, Minnesota, Colorado and New Mexico) are abortion rights intact. Meanwhile, the concurring opinion of Justice Clarence Thomas took aim at same-sex marriage and gender rights, which could soon be on the chopping block.

That's only the beginning: some state laws are also targeting the “morning after”/ Plan B birth control pills and FDA-approved drugs that result in medical abortions, trying to prevent women from getting them in the mail. Moreover, Texas' SB8 law outlawing abortion after six weeks was predicated on a clause that would put enforcement in the hands of vigilantes, who would get a \$10,000 reward for successfully winning a court suit to shut down a clinic. Now there is talk of bounty hunters following pregnant people seeking abortions across state lines, like slave catchers in the pre-Civil War South. Moreover, SB8 was then supplanted by an earlier law, previously ruled unconstitutional, outlawing abortion altogether. Now model legislation is being drafted by a right-wing legal group to replicate Texas' SB8 vigilante law in other states.

Meanwhile, the National Right to Life Committee is preparing racketeering laws to pursue abortion providers, including for publishing how to get an abortion out of state. More extreme “abortion abolitionists,” who claim that life begins at conception, want to prosecute women who have abortions for homicide. A bill to that effect recently went through the Louisiana legislature, and although it failed to make it to a final vote, similar measures have been put forward in a dozen or so states. The push to declare “fetal personhood” could have the same effect. This is already embodied in Arizona's abortion ban. Even under existing laws, some 1,300 women have been arrested or charged for homicide or child abuse for inducing abortion or having a miscarriage, according to National Advocates for Pregnant Women (*New York Times*, 1 July).

So things are looking pretty grim for anyone trying to get an abortion in about half the country. Around the U.S., women and liberals living in “blue” (or Democratic) islands in “red” (or Republican-governed) states, like Austin, Texas or Lincoln, Nebraska, are considering moving, while in “purple” states where the numbers of Democratic and Republican voters are close, often with Democratic governors and Republican-dominated legislatures (Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, North Carolina), all hell could break loose in the fall. Meanwhile, people considering terminating an unwanted pregnancy are rightly worried that Google may provide their computer browsing records or geolocation information to police agencies, or potentially to anti-abortion vigilantes who are effectively deputized (*Guardian*, 22 May).

The *New York Times* article cited above referred to the Supreme Court's abortion decision as a “nation-changing” event, and that is not incorrect. What it reflects is a coming apart of U.S. society, increasingly polarized between “red” and “blue” states, and between liberal urban and conservative

Internationalist photo

Paul Marinka / New York Post



Protest at Texas state capitol in Austin against SB8 law banning abortion after six weeks of pregnancy, September 2021. Since the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, an older law completely banning abortion went into effect.

rural areas, with the suburbs in play, with markedly different laws on a whole host of subjects. These “culture wars” have been going on for decades. They are also seen over gun control – where Marxists are in fundamental disagreement with the liberals, who want to have a disarmed populace, in which only the repressive forces (and the fascists) are armed – as well as over education, where we are deeply opposed to the conservative right, which wants to ban anti-racist teaching, and sharply disagree with the liberals pushing identity politics.²

A key factor in this polarization is the racial oppression that has characterized American capitalism since its colonial origins, and is deeply embedded in the fabric of U.S. society. This “systemic racism” continues to fester a century and a half after the Civil War put an end to chattel slavery and over half a century after the Civil Rights laws, which are now being steadily rolled back – not least by the reactionary Supreme Court that is canceling women’s rights. Although millions marched in the streets against racist police brutality in 2020, police continue to kill civilians at an undiminished pace. Under the Democrat Biden, police departments, far from being “defunded,” are receiving millions, including from pandemic relief funds. And as liberals falsely blame mass shootings on guns, they gloss over the fact that almost all involve deadly racism.

Various commentators have been talking about impending civil war, which is an exaggeration, but reflects widespread public perception.³ What is true is that there is sharpening polarization, mainly along bourgeois political lines. This reflects the deep crisis of U.S. imperialism, with declining living standards (real wages fall-

² As explained in the founding statement of the Revolutionary Internationalist Youth: “This form of bourgeois ideology feigns a fight against oppression through ‘check-your-privilege’ liberal idealism and is systematically imbued among university students, including many of those who see themselves as radical. It is used to deepen the wedge between different sectors of the workers and oppressed, claiming to unite those who share a sectorally defined identity, including members of the exploiting class” (*Revolution* No. 14, January 2018)

³ A recent study by the Violence Prevention Research Program at the University of California, Davis, reported that in a May 2022 nationwide opinion survey, carried out following mass shootings in Buffalo, New York and Uvalde, Texas, “Half (50.1%) agreed that ‘in the next few years, there will be civil war in the United States’” (medRxiv.org, 19 July).

ing sharply in the last year, runaway inflation, looming recession); over one million people dying of COVID in the U.S. alone; Congress stormed by a racist lynch mob out to overturn the results of the 2020 election; a humiliating U.S. defeat in Afghanistan after 20 years of occupation, and more. Anger growing out of this generalized crisis of a rotting social order is diverted into reactionary channels because of the absence of working-class leadership waging a revolutionary class struggle against capitalism.

Rightist Bigots on the Warpath – Democrats No Answer

In response to the Supreme Court ruling, the response of Biden, Congressional Democrats and mainstream abortion rights groups didn’t go beyond appeals for votes in the November midterm elections, and raising money – lots of it. The *New York Times* (25 June) summed it up: “party committees and state parties conferring on national messaging and mobilization plans”; “focus groups and polling to assess the issue”; “sprawling fund-raising efforts” by Planned Parenthood Action Fund, NARAL Pro-Choice America, et al.; launching a website and tapping social media “influencers.” Meanwhile, Biden’s health and human services secretary, Xavier Becerra, declared that the administration had “no magic bullet” to restore access to abortion. Rep. James Clyburn said the Court ruling was “anticlimactic.” In short, ho hum.

With frustration growing among Democratic Party activists, administration spokesmen “said that the president’s hands are largely tied in part because of the Hyde Amendment,” which prohibits federal money being spent for abortions – i.e., for poor women. Left unsaid was that Biden was a main supporter of the Hyde Amendment when it was first passed in the 1970s, and Democrats have voted to uphold it in budget after budget ever since. Restive “progressive” Democratic legislators like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Elizabeth Warren have pushed cockeyed schemes to perform abortion in facilities on federal land, like military bases and national parks. Meanwhile, they all voted for \$40 billion in arms to Ukraine to wage imperialist-backed war on Russia.

So eventually, House Democrats decided to vote on two bills, the “Women’s Health Protection Act” (H.R. 8296) and the “Ensuring Women’s Right to Reproductive Freedom Act” (H.R. 8297). Both were

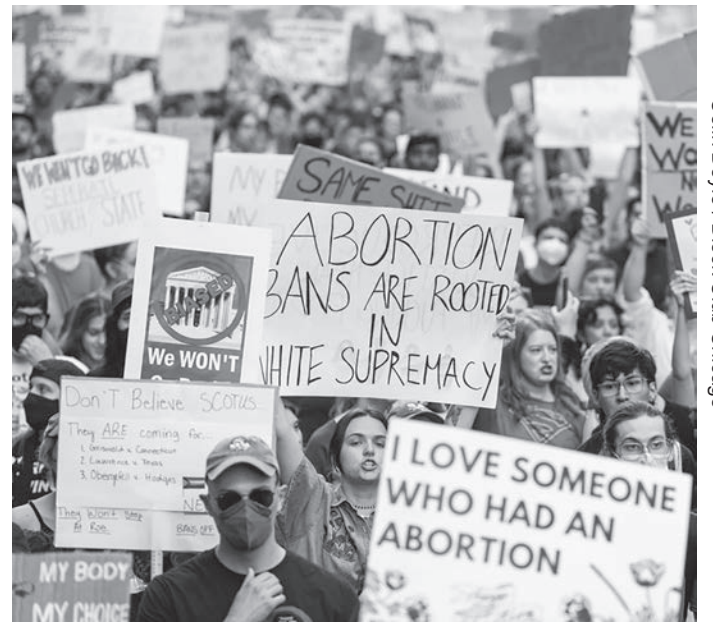
passed on July 15 in an almost straight party-line vote. The former prohibits state limits on abortion providers and the latter prohibits restrictions on interstate abortion services (like sending pills through the mail). In both cases the votes were purely symbolic, since they don’t have a chance of getting through the Senate, where the Democrats don’t have the 50 votes needed for a majority on this legislation, much less the 60 votes needed to overcome a filibuster, in which Republicans using the Senate’s arcane rules to prevent a vote on the bills. For all their bluster, the Dems are not about to abolish the filibuster.

Beyond the fact that these bills are empty grandstanding, there is the question of what rights they would actually protect. The second bill, H.R. 8297, would nullify any prohibition of abortion services “prior to fetal viability,” defined as the point in a pregnancy in which health care providers judge there is a “reasonable likelihood of sustained fetal survival outside the uterus with or without artificial support.” This is generally considered to be at 23 weeks. After that point, the health care professional would have to attest that abortion is necessary “for the preservation of the life or health of the person who is pregnant.” That is the central standard of *Roe v. Wade*, which the bill cites at its outset. It implicitly accepts a central argument of the anti-abortion crusaders, that a fetus is – from conception or after a certain point – an “unborn child.”

This is a theological, anti-scientific concept, and a dangerous one. Life begins at birth, not before. Period. *Roe* explicitly endorses “the State’s interest ... in protecting prenatal life,” arguing that “as long as at least potential life is involved, the State may assert interests beyond the protection of the pregnant woman alone.”⁴ As communists, as defenders of women’s rights, we insist that prior to birth, a fetus is a part of the pregnant person’s body, not a separate being with rights or the protection of the state – that is, the apparatus which with its courts, cops and jails defends the interests of the ruling class. Prior to birth, the decision about terminating a pregnancy, or not, is and must be the sole decision of the pregnant person: husbands, boyfriends, priests and pastors, parents and the state, *hands off!*

But even if a Democratic Congress miraculously passed a law embodying the *Roe v. Wade* standards for limited protection of the right to abortion, would it stand? Under the U.S. Constitution, the federal government can only legislate cer-

⁴ *Roe* held that “State regulation protective of fetal life after viability thus has both logical and biological justifications. If the State is interested in protecting fetal life after viability, it may go so far as to proscribe abortion during that period, except when it is necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother.” The *Dobbs* ruling that eliminated the limited constitutional right to abortion seized upon *Roe*’s reference to “fetal life” as a justification to deny that abortion could be covered by the 14th Amendment’s protection of “liberty.”



The anti-abortion crusade is racist to the core. Thousands marched in Chicago on June 24 to protest the Supreme Court ruling eliminating the constitutional right to abortion.

tain subjects, all others being relegated to the states. Thus, most criminal laws, laws about medical procedures, education and a host of other matters are state laws, unless they can be deemed (a) to affect interstate commerce, or (b) to be covered by Bill of Rights protections, such as the 14th Amendment’s clauses on due process and equal protection. The Civil Rights laws of the mid-1960s, for example, were upheld by an earlier Supreme Court on the grounds that segregated lunch counters, serving hamburgers, had to do with interstate commerce. Rightist advocates of “states’ rights” always rejected such laws.

The justification for a limited right to abortion in *Roe v. Wade*, and subsequently in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), based on the Fourteenth Amendment due process clause, was emphatically rejected by the majority opinion written by Samuel Alito in the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* ruling. Alito also rejected a broad 14th Amendment right to privacy not found in the Constitution, and he dismissed any justification of a right to abortion based on the Amendment’s equal protection clause, even though neither *Roe* nor *Casey* used this argument. So any law to enact a right to abortion based on the 14th Amendment is sure to be struck down by the current Court. As for the commerce clause as the basis for such a law, since the 1990s the conservative Supreme Court has been knocking down statutes based on a broad interpretation of that clause.

Anticipating the decision in *Dobbs*, the *Washington Post* (4 May) headlined an article, “Can Congress resurrect *Roe* if it’s overturned? Well, it could try.” It added in a subhead: “The Supreme Court might well strike that down, too.” It also noted: “If the Supreme Court rules that Congress has the power to protect abortion through legislation, Congress also would have the power to *prohibit* abortion through legislation.” House Republicans are already drafting such a bill, which could be enacted the next time they have a majority, which could come as soon as the November elections. An article in the *New Yorker* (28 June), “How the Supreme Court Could Approach Federal Laws Upholding – or Banning – Abortion,” underlined that this Court could well use the theory of “fetal personhood” to outlaw abortion

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To Win Abortion Rights Fight, Pro-Democrat Marches Are a Dead End

MAY 13 – Following the leaked Supreme Court majority draft opinion that would overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision granting women a right to abortion, there have been large protests around the country. Several thousand came out in New York City the next day, as well as in numerous other cities. Many were semi-spontaneous, but Democratic elected officials quickly grabbed the spotlight. The main speaker at the largest NYC protest in Foley Square on May 3 was New York state’s top cop, attorney general Letitia James. Anti-abortion conservatives may have may have engineered the leak, to nail down the anti-Roe vote of wavering justices, but for the Democrats it was a god-send. It means that they have six months to pound away at the theme that a Republican victory in the mid-term elections is a threat to every woman’s rights, an appeal that might even stave off near-certain Democratic defeat in November. But that will not secure women’s rights.

Now a nationwide series of marches has been called for Saturday, May 14 on the slogan “Bans Off Our Bodies.” The central demand of these marches is “that elected officials take action before the Court gets the chance to overturn abortion.” But on May 11, the U.S. Senate predictably blocked the Women’s Health Protection Act in an almost straight party-line procedural vote (49-51), with all Democrats for it (except W. Va. senator Manchin) and all Republicans against. This means that the legislation won’t be passed before the Court eliminates the right to abortion, if it ever is. The conclusion, said Democratic majority leader and NY senator Chuck Schumer: “Elect more pro-choice Democrats if you want to protect a woman’s freedom and right to choose.” That’s the actual aim of the May 14 protests, to get out the vote for Democrats.

Democrats are “faux” friends of women. This party of war and mass incarceration seeks women’s votes, but buries legislation to defend their rights. As Internationalist youth emphasized at recent speak-outs in New York and Los Angeles, *what’s needed is mass mobilization bringing out the power of the multiracial working class, fighting for the full and unrestricted right to abortion. For free abortion on demand!*

In many places, the protests are formally sponsored by Planned Parenthood, a provider of vital birth control and reproductive health services, including abortions. Yet in reality, much of the impetus, organization, finances and in most places sponsorship of the marches comes from Women’s March Inc., which is politically a subsidiary of the Democratic Party, “progressive” wing. Using the same logo as Planned Parenthood, Women’s March is the main force behind the central Washington, D.C. mobilization. In its *Annual Report 2021*, Women’s March Inc. writes that it is preparing a “major Women’s Convention in August 2022,” and that it aims to “consolidate an intersectional, interlocking base, and win in the 2022 midterm elections while building for 2024 and beyond.” In short, its aim is to elect “pro-choice Democrats.”

For decades, the Democratic Party has sought women’s votes by pointing to Republican opposition to abortion. Yet even



After May 2 leak of Supreme Court intention to cancel constitutional right to abortion, demonstrators called on the Democratic Party to “do something.”

when Democrats have controlled both houses of Congress and the White House early in the administrations of Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and now Joe Biden, they have never pushed through bills that would enact the (limited) abortion rights contained in the 1973 Supreme Court *Roe v. Wade* decision. This is despite the fact that in public opinion polls almost two-thirds (66%) of people surveyed say that *Roe v. Wade* should not be overturned and 59% support Congressional legislation to establish a nationwide right to abortion,¹ while 61% say abortion should be legal in all or most cases and 73% say abortion should be legal if a woman’s life or health is threatened.² So even though overwhelming majorities support the right to abortion, as has been the case for decades, nothing has been enacted to secure that right.

So much for vaunted “American democracy,” and for Democrats’ supposed commitment to women’s rights.

Democrats’ Bill Does Not Secure Abortion Rights

Moreover, contrary to the claims of Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, the bill in question (S. 4132) does not allow “abortion on demand.” Far from it. Like the current interpretation of *Roe*, it provides that after fetal “viability,”³ i.e., in the third trimester, abortion providers must assert that continuing a pregnancy endangers the person’s life or health. Even with this criterion, the bill still permits governmental interference in what should be a private decision between the pregnant person and their medical provider. Crucially, the bill does *not* establish a woman’s right to abortion, or protect her from criminal prosecution, but only refers in passing to “a person’s constitutional right to terminate a pregnancy.” If the Supreme Court cancels that right, this bill would not restore it. The bill is about abortion providers, not about securing women’s rights.

In addition, while addressing many of the ways in which state laws have sought to get around the constitutional right to abortion (counseling, extraneous building requirements for clinics, etc.) the bill explicitly does not touch “insurance or medical assistance coverage of abortion services” – i.e., it would

¹ CNN poll, May 3-5.

² Pew Research Center poll, March 7-13.

³ Potential viability is generally placed at after 24-26 weeks of pregnancy.

permit medical insurers to exclude abortion coverage – and does not repeal the Hyde Amendment, which bans federal aid that would enable low-income women to obtain an abortion. It should be remembered that for decades, then-senator Joe Biden upheld the Hyde Amendment, enacted with the support of Democratic president Jimmy Carter. (Though today Biden hopes people have forgotten, he was also one of the architects of the demise of school desegregation, leading the charge in Congress against “forced busing” to achieve integration.) And former Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton campaigned on the policy that abortion should be “rare.”

For all its election hype about defending women’s rights, the capitalist Democratic Party is decidedly *not* a defender of the full, unimpeded right to abortion. Several would-be socialist groups (Socialist Alternative, Freedom Socialist Party, Left Voice, and others) have announced that they are marching in the May 14 protests in “socialist-feminist contingents.” They criticize the Democrats, yet here they are *building a march whose very purpose is to garner votes for Democratic candidates*. What these pseudo-socialists are doing is just a “militant” form of lobbying. At a May 8 “open meeting” in New York City they made this explicit with chants of “Hey Democrats, talk is cheap – Build a movement in the streets!” and “Voting blue is not enough, Democrats we call your bluff!” These contingents are an opportunist propaganda bloc in the service of a de facto popular front of class collaboration with the Democrats.

Many of these opportunist leftists are also calling to support Ukraine in the war with Russia instigated by the U.S. and its imperialist allies of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Some even call to send arms to the fascist-infested nationalist Ukrainian government, thus joining the imperialist war drive against Russia. In Congress, the “Squad” of Democratic (Party) Socialists of America (DSA) and other “progressives” voted for a \$40 billion war budget to arm Ukraine to the teeth – proving that *they are all imperialist warmongers*. Against the “NATO socialists,” the League for the Fourth International (of which the Internationalist Group is the U.S. section) calls to *root out the Nazi/fascist threat in Ukraine* and – opposing

both sides in this reactionary nationalist war – calls for *workers revolution to oust the capitalist rulers in Kiev and Moscow*, while fighting to *defeat the U.S./NATO imperialist war drive* whose ultimate aim is counterrevolution to overthrow the bureaucratically deformed Chinese workers state.

The Internationalist Group has since its inception called for *free abortion on demand*, for the abolition of all abortion laws, including those that pretend to only regulate this fundamental right. The decision to give birth or not should be the woman’s alone, for she above all has to bear the consequences – boy-friends, husbands, priests or other religious authorities, and the capitalist state, hands off! We call for the workers movement to support abortion rights and to defend the clinics, including with effective means against the “god squad” bigots who, twistedly claiming their terror is for a “right to life,” have bombed abortion facilities and murdered the medical personnel that courageously provide this vital service. Key to unchaining and bringing to bear workers power in this fight is the call to break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties, to build a revolutionary workers party that champions the rights and interests of all the oppressed.

The assertion of governmental or religious control to prevent the termination of pregnancy is not only a fundamental attack on women’s democratic rights, the capitalist rulers uphold the nuclear family as the building block of bourgeois society. This family is at the root of the age-old oppression of women, and is also the cornerstone of the persecution of gay, lesbian and transgender people, whose rights are being viciously attacked today. Meanwhile, the crusade against abortion rights is racist to the core, seeking to produce more white babies while African American, Latina and immigrant women have been subject to forced sterilization. Revolutionary communists, from Marx and Engels on, call for superseding the family with social institutions – including free 24-hour childcare, low-cost restaurants, free high quality medical care for all – to free women from domestic servitude and help enable them to fully participate in social life.

Many people use the word feminism as a shorthand for support for women’s rights. Yet feminism, of all varieties, is a bourgeois ideology that treats women’s oppression as a sectoral issue, and ties them to their bourgeois rulers (in the U.S. to the Democrats). Genuine communists are the most intransigent fighters for the liberation of women through united class struggle. As we explained in the article, “The Struggle for Full Abortion Rights, From Latin America to the U.S.” in *The Internationalist* (No. 66, January-April 2022), unrestricted access to contraceptives and abortion will not be won by petitioning the reactionary courts, lobbying capitalist legislators or just marching in the streets. The limited right to abortion in the United States over the last half-century resulted – at a time when U.S. imperialism faced impending defeat by the heroic Vietnamese fighters – from an all-sided upheaval against social oppression, together with militant workers struggles and opposition to imperialist war. *It will take nothing less than socialist revolution to win the liberation of women.* ■

London Guardian

Ohio Cops Fired 90 Bullets at Unarmed Black Man Jayland Walker, Executed by Akron Police The Racist Killer Cops Never Stop Under Democrats or Republicans the Police Murder Machine Grinds On Only Revolution Can Bring Justice!

JULY 7 – On June 27, police in Akron, Ohio were in hot pursuit of a car driven by Jayland Walker, a 25-year-old black man who worked as a DoorDash delivery driver. The cops claim they wanted to stop him for equipment and traffic violations, which have yet to be specified. When Walker bolted, running for his life, eight police officers discharged a fusillade of 90+ shots from their semi-automatic pistols, 60 of them striking Walker, mere seconds after exiting their vehicles. On Sunday, July 3, the police finally released chilling body camera footage, ending with the cops standing in a circle like a firing squad around the lifeless body of their unarmed victim.¹ It was a summary execution by the police. When a crowd gathered outside city hall and police headquarters to protest Sunday evening, cops and state troopers drove them away with tear gas, arresting almost 50 protesters. The next day, July 4, police and troopers enforced a curfew with armored personnel carriers.

An execution for a traffic violation – such is the “justice” meted out by the racist police in capitalist America. Of course, the police make much of the apparent fact that Walker had a gun and a loaded magazine on the seat in the car. So what? That’s no crime. The cops don’t claim he ever shot at or even pointed the gun at them or anyone else, and the police chief explicitly admitted that Walker was unarmed when he was killed. Nor did Walker have a criminal record, outstanding warrants or any of the other usual excuses cited by police to justify their murderous actions. He ran from the police? That does not give the cops the right to use deadly force (*Tennessee v. Garner* [1985]). Jayland Walker was at the wrong place at the wrong time, and for what the

¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8HfS2jZ0RU>



Protest outside Akron City Hall and police headquarters over cop murder of Jayland Walker, July 3.

police described as a “routine” traffic stop, the trigger-happy murderers in uniform took his life. Yet none of the killer cops has been arrested, or (so far) even identified.

[As this article was being posted on the Internet, we learned that yesterday, July 7, Akron police arrested Jacob Blake Sr., father of Jacob Blake who was shot seven times by police in Kenosha, Wisconsin in August 2020, and Bianca Austin, the aunt of Breonna Taylor, who was murdered in her bed by Louisville, Kentucky police in March 2020. Blake Sr. and Austin were in Akron to show solidarity with the family of Jayland Walker. At a protest outside police headquarters, they got out of a van where they were seated when they saw a black man attacked by police and then repeatedly punched by a cop while his arms were pinned behind his back. When Blake protested this vicious cop assault he was then brutally arrested, while Austin was arrested for filming the attack.² *There should be a nationwide outcry demanding that they and everyone arrested in Akron protests be freed and all charges dropped.*]

In the summer of 2020, millions took to the streets to protest the racist police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Breonna Taylor in Louisville, and countless others. Yet the killer cops keep on killing. As signs of International-

² The video can be seen at <https://www.beaconjournal.com/videos/news/nation/2022/07/07/video-bianca-austin-films-jacob-blake-being-arrested-jayland-walker-protest/7828829001/>

³ The numbers provided by Mapping Police Violence, based on published accounts, are quite conservative, totaling somewhat over 1,100 every year. The figures from other sites tracking police homicides, such as killedbypolice.net and fatalencounters.org, were considerably higher, with the latter giving totals of 2,075 and 2,049 civilians killed in incidents involving police in 2021 and 2020 respectively. However, those sites have been discontinued or changed so that they have no comparable figures for 2022.

ist Group and Revolutionary Internationalist Youth demonstrators at a July 3 protest in New York City’s Union Square declared: “Jayland Walker, Murdered by Cops – 90 Shots, It Never Stops – We Remember Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, George Floyd and So Many More.” Amadou Diallo was shot on the doorstep of his home in the Bronx in 1999 by plainclothes NYPD police who fired 41 rounds at him as he reached for his wallet to show his ID. Sean Bell was gunned down on the morning before his wedding in 2006 in a hail of 50 bullets fired by undercover police in Queens. Wanton, racist police murder was rampant long before 2020, and it has continued unabated ever since.

The Akron Fraternal Order of Police, a fascistic promoter of racist cop terror which poses as a “union” of these enforcers of capitalist repression, issued a statement on the murder of Jayland Walker saying that the “decision to deploy lethal force as well as the number of shots fired is consistent with use of force protocols and officers’ training.” Police are in fact trained to be executioners and are given “protocols” for relentlessly carrying out their deadly “mission.” According to the website mappingpoliceviolence.us, as of June 24 some 569 civilians were killed by police in the U.S. so far in 2022. That compares to 563 by the same date in 2021, 583 in 2020, 575 in 2018, and so on – the numbers are nearly identical, year after year.³ In a perverse way it is almost as if the armed fist of the capitalist class has a yearly quota of people they need to kill, and in the racist capitalist U.S. of A.,

³ The numbers provided by Mapping Police Violence, based on published accounts, are quite conservative, totaling somewhat over 1,100 every year. The figures from other sites tracking police homicides, such as killedbypolice.net and fatalencounters.org, were considerably higher, with the latter giving totals of 2,075 and 2,049 civilians killed in incidents involving police in 2021 and 2020 respectively. However, those sites have been discontinued or changed so that they have no comparable figures for 2022.

the victims are disproportionately black.

Police murder of African American, Latino, Asian, Native American and white working people is not a matter of rogue cops, or training. It’s not a question of this or that policy but a system of murderous police repression. Yet compared to 2020, protests this year and last against the unending police murder have been few in number and small in size. Why? Because in 2020, the outrage over the wanton chokehold murder of George Floyd was fed by revulsion against Republican president Donald Trump who praised police shooting rioters. Now with Democrat Joe (shoot ‘em in the leg) Biden in the White House, who always proclaimed his support for the police, protests have dwindled while the police killing machine grinds on and on.

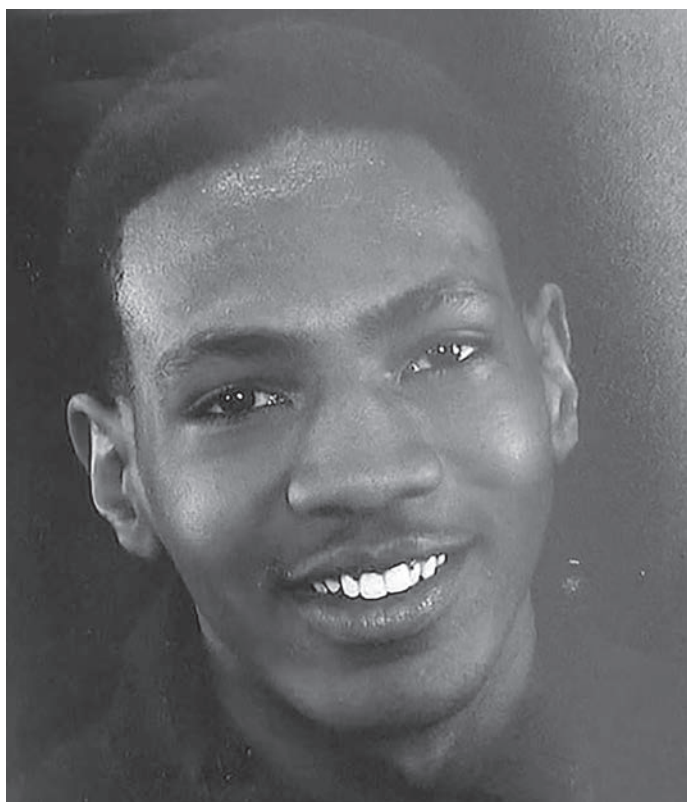
This time it was in Akron, Ohio, but it could be Anywhere, U.S.A. In April of this year, Patrick Lyoya, a 26-year-old refugee from Congo, was killed by a Grand Rapids, Michigan cop after a brief scuffle during a traffic stop. Officer Christopher Schurr shot Lyoya in the back of the head at close range while the latter was nearly prostrate with the cop on top of him. And in the early hours of February 2, a Minneapolis police SWAT team served a “no knock warrant,” coming across a dazed 22-year-old Amir Locke who had been sleeping on the couch. Locke was not the subject of the warrant or related in any way to the investigation which this raid was part of. For Amir Locke, too, being at the wrong place at the wrong time was a death warrant.

Walker, Lyoya and Locke were all young black men cut down by the police in wanton displays of how the racist “justice” system operates. African Americans are three times as likely to be killed by police as whites, Native Americans more than twice as likely, Latinos 1.5 times as likely.⁴ And the racial terror enacted daily by police in the U.S. is supplemented by the attacks carried out by racists and fascists on black people and anti-racist protesters. There was cop wannabe Kyle Rittenhouse’s murderous vigilantism against protests over the shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha in August 2020. Or neo-Nazi Dylan Roof’s June 2015 murder of nine black parishioners in the Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, SC, only two months after black worker Walter Scott was murdered by a cop in North Charleston in a traffic stop. These attacks are two sides to the same coin, an expression of the racial oppression embedded in the fabric of American capitalism.

In the summer of 2020, in the course of the protests against racist police brutality and murder, many on the reformist left raised the call to “Defund the Police,” or even “Abolish the Police,” often making this the centerpiece of their intervention. While sounding radical, this was and is an utterly reformist call, based on the illusion that capitalism can exist without

continued on page 9

⁴ Figures from mappingpoliceviolence.us.



Jayland Walker

Democrats Push Gun Control, Tool of Racist Capitalist Repression

Gun Bans Won't Stop Racist

Mass Shootings

For Worker/Black/Latino Mobilization Against Cop Terror and Racist Attacks

AUGUST 15 – Another year, another spate of grisly mass shootings in the not-so United States of America. The now-routine spectacle of mass murder followed by calls for far-reaching gun control legislation by the liberal capitalist media has become a fixture of American culture. *May 14*, Buffalo, New York – 10 people were shot to death at a supermarket in a predominantly black part of the city. *May 24*, Uvalde, Texas – 21 people, 19 of them children, were killed by a gunman at Robb Elementary School in this overwhelmingly Latino city. *July 4*, Highland Park, Illinois – 7 people were gunned down by a shooter during the predominantly Jewish suburb's annual Independence Day parade.

The chorus of bourgeois politicians calling for more gun control followed shortly thereafter. The Democratic Party, and those who peddle its wares, desperately seek to turn the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution into a dead letter. Mass shootings, liberals say, are due to the fact that there are more guns in the United States than there are people. According to them, only the “responsible” forces of the capitalist state (read: police and military) should have the “privilege” of carrying firearms. While professing concern for the deaths of black people in inner-city neighborhoods, liberals and reformist leftists¹ are actually pandering to racist fears of white suburbanites and demagogic appeals to militarize the ghettos and barrios. This leaves the population defenseless, while trigger-happy cops, criminals and fascists are all heavily armed.

The constitutional “right of the people to keep and bear arms” was the product of the American Revolution, against colonial rule. It was only a political revolution, to be sure, while U.S. capitalism was based on chattel slavery of African Americans and genocide of Native Americans. The Second Amendment is a fundamental democratic right which we strongly defend. It is doubly important to working people and the oppressed, who are beset by a well-armed ruling class and its professional enforcers. As we wrote after the horrific massacre at Sandy Hook School in Newtown, Connecticut and a shooting spree at a shopping center in Clackamas County, Oregon, both in December 2012:

“So-called ‘progressives’ want to further strengthen the repressive apparatus by disarming the population. All historical evidence shows that ‘gun control’ will not reduce violent crime or prevent rampages by deranged individuals. It will, however, embolden racist *police* rampages in impoverished African American, Latino, Asian and migrant areas. The police are there to ‘serve and protect’ the inter-



Hundreds came out in sweltering heat on July 10 in Uvalde, Texas, to protest the action of hundreds of “law enforcement” officials who stood by while shooter killed 19 students and 2 teachers at the “Mexican school.” The police response expressed deep-seated racism of the Anglo capitalist rulers.

ests of the capitalist rulers and to keep their victims down. That’s why they want a monopoly on violence. Gun control has *always* targeted exploited populations in order to undercut their ability to resist. In the United States, from colonial times to today, it is an incontrovertible fact that *gun control kills blacks.*”

–“Who Controls the Guns?” *The Internationalist* No. 34, March-April 2013

For their part, the Republicans and their ultra-racist flank explain the mass shootings as the seemingly random and inexplicable actions of madmen. If only these deeply disturbed souls had more mental health treatment . . . and less diversity training, they wail, all the while piously intoning that their “thoughts and prayers” are with the victims. Yet these right-wing “champions” of gun rights, too, want to “take guns off the street” – just not from white people. They hail the actions of killer cops who regularly cut down civilians at a rate that rose to over 2,000 a year in 2020-21. The victims are overwhelmingly black, Latino, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders and poor white people.

But the mass shootings were neither random nor inexplicable. In all three recent instances – Buffalo, Uvalde, Highland Park – racism and other social pathologies fueled the homicides. In Buffalo, the shooter put out a huge manifesto dripping with repugnant racist bile about so-called immigrant invaders out to “replace” white people. In Uvalde, the refusal of the police to come to the aid of students and teachers under fire reflects a local power structure of Anglo segregationists ruling over a four-fifths Latino town. In Highland Park, the assailant was an avid Trump supporter prominent in harassing Black Lives Matter protests, and an anti-Semite. Yet except for Buffalo, none of this is highlighted in the bourgeois press. Instead, there has been a

torrent of propaganda – and legislative proposals – for more gun control.

So two years after millions took to the streets to protest racist cop murder, many calling to “defund” and even “abolish” the police – an impossibility under capitalism – in this summer of 2022, mass shootings and hysteria over a supposed “post-pandemic crime wave” have united liberals and conservatives in calling for more police repression. Liberals want to go after the guns, conservatives want to go after black people, in practice it often amounts to the same thing – and all wings of the bourgeoisie call to beef up and “empower” the cops. Although stymied by the June 23 Supreme Court decision striking down New York’s flatly unconstitutional law restricting permits to carry handguns to those on good terms with the police, the Democratic Party is pushing for more laws to enforce a capitalist state monopoly of deadly force.

So in the name of “crime prevention,” the result will be more black and Latino men slain by kill-crazy cops in the name of controlling guns. Proletarian revolutionaries and class-conscious workers *defend the democratic right to “keep and bear arms”* and *oppose gun control*; we uphold the *right of black armed self-defense*, and call for *worker/black/Latino mobilization against police terror and racist attacks.*

Racism Breeds Slaughter

When 18-year-old Payton Gendron walked into the Tops Friendly Markets supermarket in Buffalo on the afternoon of May 14, he had his racist assault planned out. According to a trove of online messages published by the *Washington Post* (16 May), Gendron had “decided in February to target Buffalo’s Tops grocery store based on its local African American popu-

lation.... Having identified the supermarket as ‘attack area 1,’ Gendron detailed two additional Buffalo locations as areas at which to ‘shoot all blacks’....” Within the span of six minutes, the racist assassin shot 13 people. Like Dylann Roof, the white supremacist who shot and killed 9 black people in the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015, Gendron was taken into police custody alive – unthinkable had his skin been any darker.

The 180-page screed Gendron put online prior to his murder spree laid out a racist worldview shared by many recent mass shooters, including Roof, and especially Brenton Tarrant, who killed 44 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019. In fact, more than a quarter of Gendron’s rant was lifted from Tarrant. Calling himself an “ethno-nationalist eco-fascist national socialist,” the Buffalo shooter wrote that black and Latino people were “replacing” white Americans, carrying out a “white genocide” under the direction of a global Jewish cabal. This so-called “replacement theory” has roots going back to tsarist Russia, with the 1903 publication of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fabricated text purporting to be plans for global Jewish domination. It was used to fuel the bloody anti-Semitic pogroms on the eve of Russia’s 1905 Revolution and later to smear the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

More recently, “replacement theory” has been popularized by French writer Renaud Camus, who claims that European Union elites are funneling migrants and refugees from Africa and the Middle East to replace white Christian Europeans. In the United States, this racist garbage has gained wide circulation through the likes of Fox News host Tucker Carlson, whose nightly primetime show frequently vituperates against “coastal elites” and Democrats flooding Latin American migrants into the United States in order to replace “classic” Americans and win votes (*New York Times*, 15 May). Camus’ and Carlson’s sanitized versions don’t explicitly name a Jewish conspiracy as being behind this plot, but the anti-Semitism is thinly veiled, as “globalists” and “elites” are frequently used as synonyms for Jews by racists and conspiracy theorists.

Ten days after the mass murder in Buffalo, 18-year-old Salvador Ramos decided he was going to kill his grandmother. After shooting her in the face, he took her car and drove to Robb Elementary School, where he broke into a classroom and murdered two teachers and 19 students. Ramos had a history of threatening to kidnap, rape and kill young women and girls he met online. The aggrieved sexism is reminiscent of other mass shootings and spree killings, such as the 2014 Isla Vista, California, murder of six people by 22-year-old Elliot Rodger, who hated women for his inability to get

Callaghan O'Hare for The New York Times

¹ See “Democrats Exploit School Shooting to Push Racist Gun Control,” in *The Internationalist* No. 51, March-April 2018; and “Socialists’ Chase After Anti-Gun Movement,” in *The Internationalist* No. 55, Winter 2019.

dates and went on a murderous rampage as a result, targeting a sorority house and deli. But the racism underlying the Uvalde massacre was not what Ramos believed and espoused, it was the response of the police.

For 78 minutes, an army of police stood by, allowing Ramos to gun down 21 people, one by one, while the cops did nothing. “In total, 376 law enforcement officers – a force larger than the garrison that defended the Alamo – descended upon the school in a chaotic, uncoordinated scene that lasted for more than an hour” (*Texas Tribune*, 17 July). Most of the “explanations” in the mainstream media for this excruciating spectacle come down to the statement that there were “systemic failures” by “law enforcement,” as an investigation by the Republican-controlled Texas legislature declared. But while hundreds of cops grotesquely stood by as the killing went on, the police did not “fail” at their job, which is not to “serve and protect” the population but to enforce the interests of the ruling class.²

Much of the blame has been placed on Uvalde school district police chief Pete Arredondo. However, there were 150 U.S. Border Patrol agents and 91 state police officers, as well as cops from other departments, on the scene. And they not only *let these children and their teachers be slaughtered*, they prevented parents from rescuing them. When Angeli Gomez, a Robb Elementary parent and local farm worker, arrived at the school after hearing the news, she was handcuffed by a police officer for trying to enter the building and save her kids. Other parents who tried to intervene were tackled to the ground. Gomez eventually made it into the building and saved an entire classroom of children and their teachers, including her own kids. Her reward? Harassment and intimidation by the local police department (*Jezebel*, 29 June).

The bigger story is of an 82% Hispanic city ruled over by an arrogant Anglo Republican elite. An article by a writer from Uvalde spelled it out: “Most of Uvalde’s political leadership and the heads of the largest employers are White. At the center of town on the courthouse grounds, you’ll find a monument to Jefferson Davis, the Confederate president — installed when the Ku Klux Klan dominated Uvalde politics.”³ An effort in the summer of 2020 to remove the statue of the head of the slavocracy was defeated by the Republican-led city council. Meanwhile, school district police chief Arredondo is also a politician, who was elected to the city council earlier in May, allied with Republican mayor Don McLaughlin, who administered the oath of office in private a week after the massacre.

Moreover, Robb Elementary School was central to the “struggle in Uvalde over the past half-century to desegregate its schools,” the *Washington Post* article noted. Although the school opened in 1954, the year of the *Brown v. Board of Education*

² See “Uvalde Police Didn’t Move to Save Lives Because That’s Not What Police Do,” *The Intercept*, 27 May. In fact, the behavior of the police, which was criminal by any standard of humanity, was explicitly not a crime according to bourgeois law and the capitalist courts. After the 2018 shooting at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, a federal judge, basing herself on Supreme Court decisions, “ruled that the two agencies [police and school district] had no constitutional duty to protect students” under attack (*South Florida Sun Sentinel*, 17 December 2018).

³ “I’m from Uvalde. I’m not surprised this happened,” *Washington Post* (29 May)

Supreme Court decision mandating public school desegregation, Uvalde’s Mexican American students were sent to Robb or Anthon schools in the city’s heavily Hispanic southwest quarter, while most white children attended the “better-resourced” Dalton Elementary. In 1970, Dalton students walked out over the firing of one of the few Mexican American teachers in the district, staying out for six weeks in one of the longest school boycotts in U.S. history. And in 1975, in the case of *Morales v. Shannon*, Latino education activists won a federal court ruling that the city had maintained de facto segregation, imposing federal court-ordered monitoring of the school district that lasted for the next 40 years.

Today, Uvalde remains deeply segregated politically, economically and ethnically, with the Anglo Republican country club set running a city with a largely poor, overwhelmingly Hispanic population, many of them immigrants. Outrage among parents over the police response during the shooting, and the “lack of transparency” by city and state officials, has boiled over in city council and school board meetings. It turns out that Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) officers arrived on the scene barely 2-1/2 minutes after the gunman entered the school, and students were calling 911 begging to be rescued as the cops did nothing. A July 10 “Unheard Voices March and Rally” drew hundreds in the 104° heat. Marchers held the “Uvalde police, the DPS ... and all the departments who were there that day” responsible for the slaughter.

At the march there were calls for the resignation or firing of chief Arredondo and his five school police at the scene, yet the 370 other “law enforcement” personnel there were just as culpable. The media portray the Border Patrol as heroes, because a BORTAC paramilitary unit finally took out the shooter. But these professional immigrant-catchers, who are everywhere in Uvalde, also did nothing for over an hour. An academic who studies immigrant communities tweeted that he prayed for “parents fearing that their kids are dead and debating whether or not they’ll be arrested if they go to find out.”⁴ The CBP (Customs and Border Protection) together with I.C.E. (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) cops are the biggest police force in the U.S., part of the CBP Del Rio district whose agents infamously horsewhipped Haitian immigrants last year.

Much of the protest over the Uvalde massacre has been channeled into calls for gun control. This demand has been championed in particular by Beto O’Rourke, the liberal Democratic candidate for governor running against arch-reactionary Republican Greg Abbott. In the past O’Rourke has called for seizing AR-15 and AK-47 semi-automatic rifles. Yet if the population were disarmed – a virtual impossibility in Texas – it would leave the guns in the hands of the cops. Uvalde shows the folly of relying on the police, of whatever jurisdiction, to protect against mass shootings. O’Rourke cites the example of the horrendous 2019 El Paso shooting, when an ultra-rightist racist youth killed 23 people, specifically targeting Mexicans. Yet in that same year, 184 civilians were killed by police in Texas.⁵

The police response in Uvalde was not a matter of training or tactics – it was

⁴ See “Border Patrol Agents Killed the Uvalde School Shooter. But Why Were They on the Scene?” *Texas Monthly*, 26 May.

⁵ From the database, Fatal Encounters.



Congressional Democrats on Capitol steps sing “God Bless America” celebrating passage of gun control bill, while across the street, defenders of abortion rights were angrily protesting Supreme Court overturn of *Roe v. Wade*.

deep-seated racism, in a state that was stolen from Mexico in 1836 as a means of reinforcing the power of the Southern slavocracy. It was also the last state in the U.S. in which the abolition of slavery was announced and enforced, by the victorious Union Army, on 19 June 1865, giving rise to the Juneteenth holiday that was the high point of the 2020 nationwide protests against racist police murder.

A little over one month after the mass shooting in Uvalde, on July 4, Robert Crimo III opened fire on an Independence Day parade in Highland Park, a well-off, heavily Jewish suburb of Chicago. He killed 7 people, five of whom were Jewish or part of Jewish families. The shooter was a hardcore Trumper, who frequented “Blue Lives Matter” rallies, harassing and assaulting leftist counter-demonstrators, and referring to Black Lives Matter protesters as “monkeys.” He ran an online Discord server (a popular chat application) called “SS” where he decried “commies.” He sported clothing with far-right cartoon mascot Pepe the Frog. Recently, his posts included genocidal rantings like “i say we just get rid of the blacks all together” (June 28) and that Asian people “should be gassed and then washed” (July 2). Crimo had visited a local synagogue during Passover in an apparent attempt to “size it up,” according to the rabbi (*Forward*, 5 July).

Who Controls the Guns?

All three of these recent mass shootings were fueled by racism in different ways, yet all three have been used as excuses to push racist gun control. In early June, the Democratic-led House of Representatives (with the support of a few Republicans) passed a bill that would “allow guns to be temporarily confiscated from people deemed by a federal court to be dangers” (*New York Times*, 9 June). So who do you think federal courts would consider a danger? Two weeks later, on June 24, the Senate passed its version of the bill, signed into the law by President Joe Biden. Congressional liberals stood on the steps of the Capitol that day singing “God Bless America,” while across the street abortion activists protested the Supreme Court ruling canceling the constitutional right to abortion. The law earmarks \$15 billion to help states enact their own “red-flag” laws and expand background checks for buyers under 21 years old. On July 29, the House passed along party lines a ban on the sale, manufacture, transfer, possession or import of semi-automatic weapons, which

stands zero chance of passing the evenly divided Senate.

Amid all the hoopla over gun control legislation, on June 23, the Supreme Court ruled on *New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen*, that New York’s century-old Sullivan Law on concealed carry of pistols is unconstitutional, which it clearly is, as it allowed the New York Police Department to issue permits at its own discretion. (In the 1970s, as the *New York Times* was furiously campaigning for stringent gun control, its publisher, C.L. Sulzberger, notoriously had a pistol permit, virtually unobtainable for most people, plus private armed guards.) The Court’s decision upholding the Second Amendment struck down the limitation of legal ownership of handguns to well-connected friends of the NYPD. But this is the same arch-reactionary court that the next day overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

Today the nation’s highest court acts as a blatantly rightist cudgel in the “culture wars” of the feuding ruling parties of U.S. capitalism. The upshot to the July 23 decision was that a week later New York State passed, with lightning speed, new restrictions to the state’s gun laws. These include barring the carrying of handguns in many public settings, and declaring them off-limits on private property unless allowed by the property owner. They spell out that gun buyers must be “of good moral character,” requiring that applicants provide contact information for four character witnesses and turn over “former and current social media accounts ... from the past three years.” This scramble to erode Second Amendment protections, which guarantees the *right* to keep and bear arms for the purpose of organized self-defense, is partly an attempt by the Democratic Party to “do something” in the run-up to the 2022 midterm elections.

Beyond the short-term electoral calculus, Democrats have always been for gun control, attempting multiple times in the last two decades to reimpose the federal ban on semi-automatic arms (falsely labeled “assault weapons”) that expired in 2004. That ban was originally part of the racist Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which threw mass incarceration of black and Latino men into overdrive, escalated the militarization of police forces across the country and put 100,000 more police on the streets. This law was passed under the administration of Democrat Bill Clinton (and supported by Democratic “socialist” Bernie Sanders)

to show that the Democrats were just as “tough on crime” as Republicans.

The desire by U.S. rulers to disarm the population stems from their deeply held fear of armed rebellion by the workers and oppressed, whose increasingly tenuous economic situation coupled with the ceaseless drumbeat of racist police harassment and killings makes for a social powder keg. As we have written in the past:

“In the United States, racism is behind gun control laws going back to slavery. Not only were slaves generally prohibited from having weapons, so increasingly were free blacks as fear of slave revolts grew. Following Nat Turner’s Rebellion (1831), Virginia made it illegal for free blacks ‘to keep or carry any firelock of any kind, any military weapon, or any powder or lead.’ Tennessee changed its constitutional clause from ‘freemen ... have a right to keep and to bear arms’ to ‘free white men.’ The Supreme Court’s infamous Dred Scott decision (1857), holding that black people had ‘had no rights which the white man was bound to respect,’ laid out the connection between gun control and democratic rights.”

–“Who Controls the Guns?”

The right of armed self-defense has always posed a threat to the ruling class’s ability to maintain its racist “law and order.” In the 1950s and ’60s, black neighborhoods organized armed self-defense groups, such as the Deacons for Defense and Justice, to protect themselves against the Ku Klux Klan and other good ole boy would-be lynchers. The Black Panther Party for Self Defense started as an armed self-defense group to protect black motorists in Oakland from the city’s notoriously violent and racist police department. In fact, it was the Panthers’ 1967 march on the California State House, brandishing long arms in defense of their Second Amendment rights, that led then-governor Ronald Reagan to push for gun control laws in California.

Today, liberals see the epidemic of mass shootings in the U.S. as a simple equation of “more guns = more shootings.” This ignores the basic fact that the capitalist state, which carries out the daily violence of repression against black people, Latinos, workers and all the oppressed, claims a monopoly on violence. The repressive forces of that state – the military, police, security guards and their adjuncts – are armed to the teeth with increasingly heavy weaponry. At a time when the threat of fascist terror from the likes of Proud Boys and Patriot Front racists, acting in tandem with the cops, is becoming acute, *the working class needs to organize workers defense guards to protect themselves and all the oppressed.*

This state power of the capitalist exploiters and oppressors asserts its supposed right to decide who is worthy of owning and carrying firearms. Striking workers? Nope. Black neighborhood groups? Think again. Oath Keepers and other far-right militias? Bingo. So-called “red flag” laws would serve to target leftists and other anti-racist agitators. Bans on “assault weapons” (the oft-deployed term serves only to stoke fear of guns in the general public) will only serve to ensure that workers and oppressed people are outgunned by their enemies, who would subdue and murder them.

Meanwhile, in Democrat-controlled cities across the country, mayors and the police departments they preside over are revving up a law-and-order crackdown on guns. In New York City, Democratic mayor Eric

Adams is cynically using the uptick in gun violence to bring back “stop and frisk” – the racist practice of randomly pulling young black and Latino men off the street, and searching them for weapons. At the height of this practice under billionaire mayor Michael Bloomberg, half a million stops were recorded every year, and tens of thousands of people were funneled into the prison system. Meanwhile, their neighborhoods were terrorized by a de facto occupation force of racist “jump out boys” – plainclothes cops in unmarked vehicles. Now ex-police officer Adams is waging a “fear city” campaign to turn New York into “cop city.”

The consequences of being an armed African American, Latino or Native American can be deadly, under this racist system that seeks to deny the oppressed this fundamental right. On the streets and highways of the U.S., the Second Amendment doesn’t exist for the oppressed. Look no further than the case of 32-year-old Philando Castile, shot to death in his car in front of his girlfriend and daughter in suburban St. Paul, Minnesota in 2016 during a traffic stop, when he told the officer pulling him over that he had a legal weapon.⁶ The police killing machine is automated, as in the case of 13-year-old Adam Toledo, murdered by Chicago Police Department cops in March 2021 after a sensor in the heavily Latino Little Village barrio registered what was interpreted as gunfire. Cops cruising the area were immediately notified, and 2 minutes and 40 seconds later, Adam, with his hands in the air, was shot dead.⁷

So liberal Democrats want “gun control.” They are joined by conservative Republicans in demanding “guns off the streets.” Here’s what that looks like in reality. First, the fascists, racists and right-wing militias will not be disarmed, or have their arsenals seized. They are auxiliaries of the forces of capitalist repression, as has been shown over and over, from Portland, Oregon to Kenosha, Wisconsin. There are an estimated 434 million firearms in civilian possession in the United States. You think police are going to seize all those? Think again. Second, all a cop has to do is yell “gun!” and seconds later another black or brown young man will be lying in the street, cut down in a hail of police bullets. And third, aside from rare exceptions, the killer cops will get off free.

The gruesome violence endemic to U.S. capitalism in its advanced decay is a symptom of a fraying social fabric. Like other forms of crime and sociopathic behavior, there is no solution under capitalism, which treats working people, the poor and oppressed as disposable in its frenzied quest for profits. Only a society with a rationally planned economy, where production is to meet human needs, not squeeze out profits, in which rampant poverty and all-sided oppression has been abolished, can begin to address the severe social pathologies underlying mass shootings. The racism that animates so many of these shootings can only be addressed by a workers government dedicated to the full emancipation of black people – and all the oppressed – from the yoke of racist capitalist oppression. To get there, we need a socialist revolution. The prime task at hand is to build a Leninist-Trotskyist workers party, a “tribune of the people,” to lead it. ■

⁶ “Black America Under the Gun,” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

⁷ See “Chicago Cops’ Killing Machine Grinds On,” *The Internationalist* No. 63, April-June 2021.

Akron PD...

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police repression. This directly contradicts the Marxist analysis, centrally by V.I. Lenin (in *State and Revolution*, written on the eve of the 1917 Bolshevik October Revolution), of how the capitalist state is based on “special bodies of armed men” (police, army, etc.) and their adjuncts (courts, prisons) and cannot be reformed. And it is contradicted by historical experience in the U.S., where professional police forces have always been instruments of racist repression, originating in the slave patrols of the antebellum (pre-Civil War) South. The capitalist state will never “abolish” itself; it needs to be smashed by proletarian revolution that establishes a workers state.

In the mass protests of 2020 and again in the July 3 NYC Union Square demonstration denouncing the cop murder of Jayland Walker, Internationalists carried signs warning that there will be “No Justice in the Capitalist Courts.” Against liberal calls for gun control, which gives the police a green light for their murderous repression, we proclaimed: “No to Racist Gun Control – For the Right of Armed Black Self-Defense.” In response to the reformist illusions in “defunding”/abolishing police under capitalism, we stated the fundamental truth, that “Police Cannot Be ‘Reformed’” and called for “Black Liberation through Socialist Revolution.” And while many protesters chant “No Justice, No Peace,” our signs said, “Only Revolution Can Bring Justice.” We also called for workers action against racist police terror.

Liberal initiatives for “Diversity, Equity and Inclusion” training will change nothing in the nature and actions of the police, an integral and constituent component of the capitalist state. Nor will appeals to vote for Democrats, including Biden, who promptly budgeted hundreds of millions of dollars more for police. At the local level, as Internationalist signs proclaimed, “Democrats Are the Bosses of the Racist Killer Cops.” Very concretely, the cities of Akron, OH, Grand Rapids, MI, and Minneapolis, MN, all have Democratic mayors, which hasn’t stopped the police murder machine. If anything, the opposite is often the case, as the capitalist rulers go along with alleged “progressive” or black Democratic mayors so long as the police are unimpeded in carrying out their racist repression.

Reliance on the Democrats, or vainly attempting to push them to “do the right thing” is a dead end. Police reforms, such as body cameras, “community policing,” or more “training” do not change the fundamental role of the cops. Calls to defund them (even to zero as some leftists called for) would not alter their social role, and more often than not police funding has increased in the wake of 2020. In the rare instances where police are “abolished,” as was the case in Camden, NJ, they don’t cease to exist but are simply reorganized along different jurisdictional lines. Instead, the working class and oppressed need powerful workers action against racist police terror. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) gave a taste of this power when it shut down all West Coast ports on Juneteenth 2020 in opposition



Racial oppression is embedded in U.S. capitalism. Only revolution can bring justice!

to police brutality and systemic racism.

Capitalism is based on exploitation of the working class, fortified by brutally keeping down its most oppressed sectors, black, Latino, women and immigrant workers in particular. Over decades, the gains working people have won in the past have been ground down or eliminated, so that large sections are condemned to minimum-wage jobs with no security, such as the delivery work Jayland Walker was doing. This decaying system is in crisis, highlighted by the deadly COVID pandemic which has taken close to a million lives in the U.S. alone due to the chaotic, racially discriminatory and criminally inadequate system of medical care. This underlines that *capitalism kills*. And today, as black workers make up a large part of key industrial sectors, with a higher rate of unionization than white workers, the program of fighting racist repression with class struggle is urgently needed and eminently possible. The key question is leadership.

Akron, Ohio, along with being the home town of basketball star LeBron James is also the former “rubber capital” of the United States, home to the Goodrich, Goodyear, Firestone and General Tire companies that were key to the rise of the automotive industry. (Jayland Walker was executed in a Goodyear factory parking lot.) Grand Rapids is an important auto parts center, Minneapolis is a transportation and grain milling hub. In addition, all three cities have thousands of health care and education union members. In response to police terror, labor should use its power to *shut the city down!* But with the unions chained by a sellout labor bureaucracy to the Democratic Party of imperialist war, poverty and racist repression, this potential power is hamstrung. That underscores the Internationalists’ call to oust the bureaucrats, break with the Democrats and build a revolutionary workers party.

Racist police killings will not cease so long as capitalism endures, but undertaking a fight, *now*, to mobilize black, immigrant, labor action against racist police terror points the way forward. Black liberation can only be achieved through socialist revolution and it will take workers revolution to avenge Jayland Walker and the thousands who have fallen victim to the capitalist system of racist police murder. ■

Peter Woolston (“Wooly”)

1943-2021

Longtime revolutionary activist and union militant Peter Woolston died on 25 August 2021 at the age of 78. Known to family and comrades as “Wooly,” he was a friend of the Internationalist Group and companion of our comrade Loretta, who is a founding member of the IG.

Wooly was born in Lynn, Massachusetts in 1943, to parents who were hard-working liberal New Englanders. Modesty and a certain traditional reserve combined in his character with a “humorous, curious and open-minded” outlook, as a comrade who worked with him closely wrote in remembrance. At Cornell and then the University of Cincinnati, he majored in sociology and anthropology, while becoming increasingly involved in radical activism (In later years, he would correct people who assumed – perhaps because of his great gray-and-white beard – that he had been a hippie. Instead, he insisted, he always considered himself part of the “Beat” generation.)

As opposition to U.S. imperialism’s war on Vietnam grew massive, in October 1967 Wooly participated in the famous march on the Pentagon, where demonstrators were attacked and tear-gassed by military police and troops. (At the insistence of Democratic president Lyndon Johnson, these included elite paratroopers from the U.S. Army’s 82nd Airborne Division, who were specially flown in from Fort Bragg.)

The next year, Wooly went on an extended trip to Europe with his best friend, Steve. In May ’68 they were in Paris, amidst the mass upheaval in which millions of workers occupied the factories and raised the red flag of revolution. At one enormous demonstration, truncheon-wielding riot police began beating the living daylight out of the marchers, among them his friend – the cops had Steve on the ground and were mercilessly clubbing him. Fearing that the skinny young man was about to be killed, Wooly threw himself over him; Steve said this saved his life. Wooly had to get medical treatment; the doctors said the beating he had received from the cops was one of the worst they had seen. On many future

occasions, the courage of his convictions, together with his sheer physical size, put Wooly in the front ranks of defending the rights and safety of his comrades.

In 1968, once recovered from the police assault, Wooly’s travels took him to Iran, India and Afghanistan, while his friend headed to Czechoslovakia to see what was happening in the “Prague Spring.”¹ Eventually returning to his native Massachusetts, Wooly worked with the Cambridge Tenants Organizing Committee.

The early 1970s were a period in which many activists tried to draw the lessons of the failure and break-up of the New Left. A considerable number were drawn to Maoism, whose bankruptcy was starkly exposed in 1972, when – as Nixon and Kissinger carpet-bombed Vietnam – Mao Zedong sealed an open alliance with U.S. imperialism. Wooly’s seriousness and orientation to the working class led him in a very different direction: seeking to deepen his understanding of Marxist ideas, he won to the consistent revolutionary program of Trotskyism, which at that time was upheld by the Spartacist League (SL).

Moving to the San Francisco Bay Area, in 1973 Wooly became a member of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 6 in the East Bay. Over the course of the next 17 years he worked as a warehouseman, sometimes in freezing cold facilities and always as a union activist committed to the program of class struggle. It was on this basis that he became a union steward at the Thrifty’s company, where – as a member of the Militant Caucus of the ILWU – he fought for the union to organize sit-down strikes to stop the company’s

¹ In 1968, Alexander Dubček, liberal-Stalinist head of the Communist Party government of Czechoslovakia (then part of the Soviet bloc), pledged to implement “socialism with a human face” through a process of reforms in the bureaucratically deformed workers state. Fearful that the events might spark an incipient political revolution by the working class, as in Hungary in 1956, the Soviet bureaucracy under Leonid Brezhnev sent tanks to oust Dubček and put an end to the “Prague Spring.”

closure of its warehouses in the late ’70s. Subsequently a hiring-hall steward, he was elected to the local’s General Executive Board, again on the basis of a class-struggle program, notably the call to break from the Democrats and build a workers party to fight for a workers government.

In the fall of 1982, with the anti-Soviet war drive of racist union-buster Ronald Reagan in full swing, the Ku Klux Klan announced it was going to march in Washington, D.C. Against this deadly dangerous provocation, Wooly was part of the hard core of experienced trade-union activists that played a key role in building the November 27 Labor/Black Mobilization to “Stop the KKK.” Busloads of activists rolled into town to join with thousands of black D.C. residents in the militant mass action that successfully stopped the Klan terrorists from marching. Wooly led a bus made up largely of black shipyard and dock workers from the Virginia Tidewater area that pulled into D.C. with a sign: “Nat Turner Brigade.” Interviewed by the SL’s newspaper (*Workers Vanguard*, 10 December 1982), he evoked Nat Turner’s uprising, which began in that area, as well as the spirit of Frederick Douglass’s comrade, the revolutionary abolitionist John Brown.

It was in that same spirit that on 15 April 1984, Wooly burned the Confederate flag after Richard Bradley, a black former auto worker and fellow SL supporter, scaled a 50-foot flagpole at San Francisco’s Civic Center and tore down the flag of slavery that the city’s Democratic mayor, present-day U.S. senator Dianne Feinstein, had flying there. Richie and Wooly were both arrested. Wooly fully expected to be put on trial with his comrade. But Feinstein, then seeking support from racist Southern Democrats for her bid to become the party’s vice-presidential candidate in 1984, sought to make a par-

ticular example out of the black man who had climbed the flagpole and torn down the vile banner. In a dramatic five-day trial, Bradley turned the tables on the prosecution and the system of capitalist racism behind it, and the charges wound up being dropped.

Wooly played another key role in this series of events. After the flag of the slaveholders’ rebellion was torn down the first time, it was replaced – and torn down again. And then the Feinstein city administration put up yet another Confederate banner – and this time not only the flag but the flag pole were cut down. A team of union militants carried out this operation in the early morning hours. An anonymous letter giving some details of the operation explained that an acetylene cutting torch had been used to cut through the flagpole and interior reinforcing pipe, after “union assistants made sure the area was clear of passers-by and overnight residents,” ensuring nobody was hurt (*Workers Vanguard*, 20 July 1984). Wooly was part of that team, which first practiced carefully in a shed with the acetylene torch, so, as the letter put it, they could successfully “donate our skills and determination to strike a blow against the historic symbol of slavery and KKK race terror.”

That same year, he was part of a group of class-struggle unionists who traveled from California to Clifton and Morenci, Arizona. They went to bring solidarity and help report on the bitter strike by the mainly Mexi-

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In April 1984, Richie Bradley climbed a flagpole to tear down the Confederate flag of slavery at San Francisco City Hall and Wooly burned it. When Democratic mayor (now senator) Dianne Feinstein insisted on raising it again, they tore it down again. And when she put up another Confederate flag, the team of skilled union workers safely toppled the 50-foot flag pole.



Wooly in a car caravan on Juneteenth (June 19) 2020 when the ILWU shut down all West Coast ports to protest police brutality and systemic racism.

Workers Vanguard

Internationalist photo

U.S. Opening the Road to World War III

We Meet Dr. Strangelove Again in Washington

“We’ll meet again, don’t know where, don’t know when...”

By Charles Brover

“And with increasing frequency, the Russians are reminding the world of the size and power of their nuclear arsenal, an unobvious warning that if President Vladimir V. Putin’s conventional forces face any more humiliating losses, he has other options. American and European officials say they see no evidence the Russians are mobilizing their battlefield nuclear forces, but behind the scenes, the officials are already gaming out how they might react...”

—*New York Times*, April 28, 2022

The U.S. is hurtling and stumbling irrationally toward world war, possibly nuclear war. With the imperialist North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the U.S. is sending increasingly heavy offensive weaponry to the fascist-infested Ukrainian military. But the U.S. has set its broader sights on Russian downfall as a dramatic example of U.S./NATO military prowess and an implied threat to China. The U.S. vows to defeat Russia and degrade its military so it will be “weakened” for years to come as Pentagon chief General Lloyd Austin has said. The compliant and war-addled liberal press functions as a 24-hour-a-day martial band for Ukrainian fascist “freedom fighters.” (How soon the media forget their propaganda campaign leading to the Iraq invasion.) The press and a crowd of militarist talking heads chime in calling for Ukrainian military victory and a no-fly zone.

While economically a minor power, Russia still holds a formidable nuclear arsenal established during the Soviet era. So the U.S. war machine “games out” nuclear war plans while publicly dismissing as strategic fancy the possibility of nuclear war. This is not new, U.S. intelligence regularly poo-pooes its adversaries’ warnings of perceived existential threat. Most famously, during the early months of the Korean War, China said that it would enter the war if the U.S. advanced north to the banks of the North Korean/Chinese border on the Yalu River. “Just bluffing,” said U.S. intelligence. General MacArthur promised President Truman in 1950 that the war would be over by Thanksgiving and the troops home by Christmas. So when the U.S. troops reached the banks of the Yalu, they were utterly surprised as more than 300,000 Chinese troops routed the U.S. Eighth Army and drove them far to the south.

In the face of capitalism’s relentless irrational drive to war, and thus ultimately to human annihilation, one might expect robust protests in the streets. But in the absence of authoritative revolutionary leadership, we find instead wall-to-wall support for widening war aimed at nuclear-armed Russia. Can the war in Ukraine lead to a species-destroying nuclear world war? Will the right-wing nuts and crazed liberal warmongers who run this country really do it? It is as if our current political reality meets again the Cold War parody prophecies of the 1964 movie, *Dr. Strangelove, Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*.

The brilliant antiwar satire by Stanley Kubrick and Terry Southern, written in the shadow of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, features Dr. Strangelove, the president’s wheelchair-bound scientific advisor and “former” German Nazi. This fictional figure was an amalgam of Werner von Braun, who developed the V-2 rocket for Hitler in World War II and then built rockets for the U.S.; the warmongering Dr. Edward Teller who developed the H-bomb; and Herman Kahn, the Rand Corporation “theorist” and author of the infamous 1962 *Naval War Review* article “Thinking About the Unthinkable,” who using game theory argued that some people would survive a nuclear war.

In the movie, the stage is set as an air force base commander Brig. Gen. Jack D. Ripper dispatches B-52 bombers armed with hydrogen bombs to strike targets in the Soviet Union. The head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Buck Turgidson, briefs President Merkin Muffley in the Pentagon War Room. Turgidson “games out” the pending nuclear first strike by the U.S., advocating letting the attack go forward and even expanding it. According to an unofficial study, he says, this would only result in “modest and acceptable civilian casualties” from a “badly damaged and uncoordinated” Soviet military. “*I’m not saying we wouldn’t get our hair mussed, but I do say no more than 10 to 20 million killed, tops,*” the Pentagon chief chillingly remarks.

Fiction? In the early years of the Cold War, the U.S. Strategic Air Command had elaborate plans to kill many times that number of people in Soviet bloc countries. And today, the Pentagon think tank “theorists” are again “thinking the unthinkable,” this time toying with threatening a first strike against China’s defenses. Is today’s Gen. Austin channeling his fictional predecessor Gen. Turgidson as the U.S. blithely seeks to “degrade” the nuclear-armed Russian military?

Here are some edited excerpts from the film:¹

GENERAL BUCK TURGIDSON: Mr. President, if I may speak freely, the Russkie talks big, but frankly, we think he’s short of know how. I mean, you just can’t expect a bunch of ignorant peons to understand a machine like some of our boys. And that’s not meant as an insult, Mr. Ambassador, I mean, you take your average Russkie, we all know how much guts he’s got. Hell, look at all them Nazis killed them off, and they still wouldn’t quit....

As you may recall, sir, one of the provisions of Plan R provides that once the go code is received ... CRM 114 [a fictional radio device on board the B-52 aircraft] is designed not to receive at all.

PRESIDENT MUFFLEY: You mean to tell me, General Turgidson, that you will be unable to recall the aircraft?

¹ The full text of the script for *Dr. Strangelove* can be found online at: <http://scifiscripts.com/scripts/strangelove.txt>

TURGIDSON: That’s about the size of it... I don’t think it’s quite fair to condemn the whole program because of a single slip up, sir....

Turgidson proceeds to outline his arguments for escalating the nuclear first strike.

One, our hopes for recalling the 843rd Bomb Wing are quickly being reduced to a very low order of probability. Two, in less than fifteen minutes from now the Russkies will be making radar contact with the planes. Three, when they do, they are going to go absolutely ape, and they’re gonna strike back with everything they’ve got. Four, if prior to this time, we have done nothing further to suppress their retaliatory capabilities, we will suffer virtual annihilation. Now, five, if on the other hand, we were to immediately launch an all-out and coordinated attack on all their airfields and missile bases we’d stand a damn good chance of catching them with their pants down. Hell, we got a five to one missile superiority as it is. We could easily assign three missiles to every target, and still have a very effective reserve force for any other contingency. Now, six, an unofficial study which we undertook of this eventuality indicated that we would destroy ninety percent of their nuclear capabilities. We would therefore prevail, and suffer only modest and acceptable civilian casualties from their remaining force which would be badly damaged and uncoordinated.

PRESIDENT MUFFLEY: General, it is the avowed policy of our country never to strike first with nuclear weapons.

TURGIDSON: Well, Mr. President, I would say that General Ripper has already invalidated that policy. (*Laughs*)

MUFFLEY: That was not an act of national policy and there are still alternatives left open to us.

TURGIDSON: Mr. President, we are rapidly approaching a moment of truth both for ourselves as human beings and for the life of our nation. Now, the truth is not always a pleasant thing, but it is necessary to now make a choice, to choose between two admittedly regrettable, but nevertheless, distinguishable post-war environments: one where you got twenty million people killed, and the other where you got a hundred and fifty million people killed.

MUFFLEY: You’re talking about mass murder, General, not war.

TURGIDSON: Mr. President, I’m not saying we wouldn’t get our hair mussed. But I do say... no more than ten to twenty million killed, tops. Uh... depends on the breaks.

MUFFLEY: I will not go down in history as the greatest mass murderer since Adolph Hitler!

TURGIDSON: Perhaps it might be better, Mr. President, if you were more concerned with the American people than



Peter Sellers as Dr. Strangelove

with your image in the history books....

When it is revealed in the film that the Soviets have created a doomsday machine as a nuclear deterrent, set to automatically detonate in the case of a nuclear attack on the USSR, the figure of Dr. Strangelove appears.

DR. STRANGELOVE: (*Considering the Doomsday Machine*) Mr. President, I would not rule out the chance to preserve a nucleus of human specimens. It would be quite easy ... heh, heh ... at the bottom of ah ... some of our deeper mineshafts. The radioactivity would never penetrate a mine some thousands of feet deep. And in a matter of weeks, sufficient improvements in dwelling space could easily be provided.

MUFFLEY: How long would you have to stay down there?

STRANGELOVE: Well let’s see now ah, (*searches within his lapel*) cobalt thorium G. (*notices circular slide rule in his gloved hand*) aa ... nn ... Radioactive half-life of uh ... hmm ... I would think that uh ... possibly uh ... one hundred years.

MUFFLEY: You mean, people could actually stay down there for a hundred years?

STRANGELOVE: It would not be difficult *mein Führer!* Nuclear reactors could, heh... I’m sorry. Mr. President. Nuclear reactors could provide power almost indefinitely. Greenhouses could maintain plant life. Animals could be bred and *slaughtered*...dwelling space for several hundred thousands of our people could easily be provided.

MUFFLEY: Well I... I would hate to have to decide ... who stays up and ... who goes down.

STRANGELOVE: Well, that would not be necessary Mr. President. It could easily be accomplished with a computer....

MUFFLEY: But look here doctor, wouldn’t this nucleus of survivors be so grief stricken and anguished that they’d, well, envy the dead and not want to go on living?

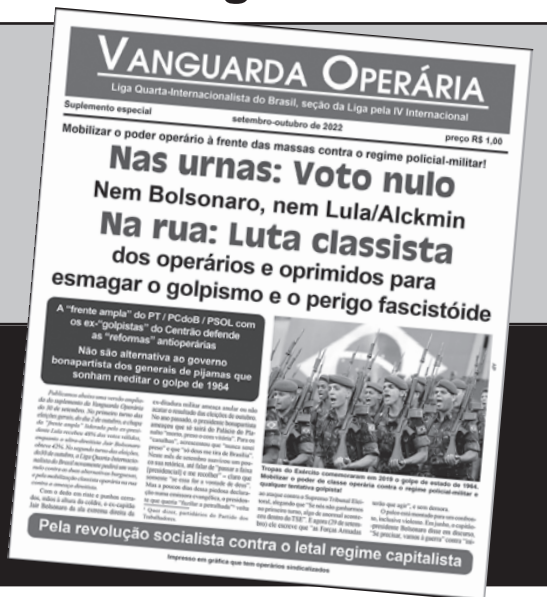
STRANGELOVE: No sir... the prevailing emotion will be one of nostalgia for those left behind, combined with a spirit of bold curiosity for the adventure ahead! Ahh-hh! (*Right arm reflexes into Nazi salute. He pulls it back into his lap and beats it again. Gloved hand attempts to strangle him.*)....

TURGIDSON: I think we should look
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Mobilize Workers Power Leading the Masses Against the Police-Military Regime!

**In the Elections: Vote No
Neither Bolsonaro, Nor Lula/Alckmin
In the Streets: Class Struggle
of the Workers and Oppressed to Crush
the Coup Danger and Fascistic forces**

**The “Broad Front” of the Reformist Left
with the Conservative Rightists Who Ousted
Them Is No Alternative to the Bonapartist
Government of “Generals in Pajamas” Who
Dream of Repeating the Coup d’État of 1964**



On the Eve of Confrontation

On the eve of the first round of the general elections, Lula’s presidential candidacy has a wide lead in the opinion polls with 48% (and 50% of “valid” votes), against 33% for Bolsonaro.⁴ The margin would be insurmountable even if the polls underestimate the Bolsonaro vote; but even so, Lula winning an absolute majority in the first round is uncertain. Hence the pressure from Lulistas to cast a “useful vote” on October 2, and the insistence of Bolsonaro & Co. in questioning the legitimacy of the electoral system. Thus we can see the outlines of a post-election confrontation in which the enraged losers reject the outcome of the vote.

There should be no illusions about the numbers or reactionary nature of the hardcore Bolsonaroistas. On September 7, the celebration of the bicentenary of Brazil’s independence turned into huge gatherings of supporters of the bonapartist president, who aspires to a military and police regime, with half a million in Brasília and hundreds of thousands more in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The ultra-rightist hordes carried banners with slogans (many in English) such as “We Demand Military Intervention with Bolsonaro in Power and Criminalization of Communism in Brazil Now!!!” Also, “We Need to Purge the STF, TSE and Congress!” and “We Call on the Armed Forces to Take Over the Government of Brazil!” The first lady, Michelle Bolsonaro, shouted to the crowd that “this nation belongs to the Lord Jesus” and “the enemy shall not win!”

But there was no corresponding massive national response on the other side – at most regional demonstrations celebrating that “*Lulinha paz e amor está de volta*” (Little Lula of peace and love is back), as the PT leader introduced himself at a dinner with prominent businessmen on September 27. Key sectors of the Brazilian bourgeoisie are alarmed about the future direction of the country. They consider Bolsonaro a factor of instability that could provoke an explosion. They are well aware that Brazil not only has the second highest number of deaths from COVID in the world (after the United States) – with 685,000 dead due to the pandemic – but that the standard of living for workers has fallen drastically in recent years. In 2021, inflation skyrocketed to 12% while wages dropped by more than 8%. In the face of this disaster, the major capitalists are hoping to contain popular anger with electoral illusions in Lula.

Another strand of the response from traditional sectors of the Brazilian bourgeoisie is to turn to Uncle Sam to beg for protection. U.S. rulers are making a show of taking a stand against an attempted Bolsonaro “self-coup” to keep himself in office.⁵ On June 9, at the “Summit of the Americas,” U.S. president Joe Biden was

⁴ Datafolha poll, published in *Folha de S. Paulo*, September 23.

⁵ In 1992 Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori dissolved Congress in order to stay in power. Historical examples of such “self coups” include the 1937 proclamation of a state of war by Brazilian president Getúlio Vargas, who instituted a corporatist *Estado Novo* (New State) regime; and the coup d’état by French president Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte in France, proclaiming himself emperor.

Ailton de Freitas / Agência O Globo



President Bolsonaro threatened to shoot PT supporters and “if needs be, we will go to war” against “internal enemies.”

Brazil Elections...

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radio station, the president who wanted to “shoot the *petralhada*”² is back to attacking the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE), claiming that “If we don’t win in the first round, something abnormal happened inside the TSE.” Now (September 29) he writes that “the Armed Forces will have to act,” and without delay.

The stage is set for a confrontation, quite possibly a violent clash. In June, the captain-president Bolsonaro said in a speech, “If needs be, we will go to war” against “internal enemies.” Now the moment of truth has arrived. What is to be done? Key sectors of capital and the reformist left are calling to vote for the presidential candidacy of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of the Workers Party (PT) at the head of a “broad front” of ten parties. But this bourgeois mega-coalition promises to keep the anti-worker “reforms” enacted by Bolsonaro and his predecessor, Michel Temer, after the impeachment of the PT president, Dilma Rousseff in 2016.³ It appeals to the TSE and the Supreme

² Meaning supporters of the PT (Workers Party).

³ These include a 2017 “labor reform” enacted by Temer after the ouster of Dilma which legalized slave labor in rural areas (ruling that workers would not have to be paid wages, just food and housing in barracks), and authorized employee contracts overriding federal safety and hours laws. See our article, “Brazil: “Bolsonaro Out” Is Not Enough – Fight for a Workers and Peasants Government!” *The Internationalist* No. 63, April-June 2021.

Court (STF) to save them. But this STF endorsed Lula’s arrest in 2018 to prevent him from winning the last election, and now it has agreed to the military conducting a parallel vote count – a recipe for disaster.

In fact, the Lula leadership, by subordinating the workers and the oppressed to sectors of the class enemy through its ever-broader coalitions, is *preventing* a powerful struggle to

crush the coup plotters, thereby preparing what could be a bloody defeat.

We Trotskyists of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil (Fourth Internationalist League of Brazil) say *no to class collaboration*. In the elections we call to *cast a “no” ballot (voto nulo)* rejecting all the candidates while at the same time calling to *mobilize working-class power in the streets to crush the coup threat and its fascistic supporters*. We have already had 13 years of popular-front PT governments that protected capitalist interests in exchange for a few crumbs of welfare programs. The result:



Half a million supporters of Bolsonaro in a gigantic election rally on the esplanade outside government ministries in Brasília on September 7, in the commemoration of the bicentennial of Brazil’s independence.



By chaining working people to sectors of the bourgeoisie, the Lula leadership blocks powerful class struggle to crush the coup plotters.

a bonapartist (police/military) government, the growth of the murderous ultra-right and the elimination of countless rights and gains of working people. We then went through two years of the COVID pandemic with a toll of hundreds of thousands of deaths due to the sabotage of the public health system. The show-down has now arrived, and reformism is bankrupt. A *revolutionary workers party* must be forged in struggle for *a workers and peasants government and international socialist revolution* to overthrow putrefying capitalism.

For Socialist Revolution Against Deadly Capitalist Rule

assured by Bolsonaro that he would not interfere in the October elections.⁶ When the Brazilian president gathered foreign ambassadors at the Planalto Palace on July 20 to claim that the country's voting system could be rigged, the next day U.S. State Department spokesman Ned Price declared that "Elections in Brazil are a model," as the website Poder 360 headlined. On July 24, a delegation of 19 Brazilian NGOs traveled to lobby in the corridors of power in Washington.

That the U.S. claims to oppose a coup d'état would be something new, given that in this 21st century alone it has already supported coups or attempted coups in Bolivia, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. But in any case, it is not clear that such verbal gestures would have the effect of preventing one. The day after Bolsonaro's meeting with Biden in June, Brazilian defense minister General Paulo Sergio Nogueira complained to the national press that the TSE was not addressing the military's complaints about the electoral system. And when on September 29 the U.S. Senate passed a resolution urging the White House to "immediately recognize the result of the election in Brazil" and for "reconsideration of relations" with any Brazilian government resulting from "anti-democratic methods," that same day a document from Bolsonaro's Liberal Party recycled 24 accusations that the October elections will be rigged.

At the same time, acts of violence by Bolsonaro partisans against opponents are multiplying. In July a PT candidate for vice-mayor of Foz do Iguaçu was executed at his birthday party by a Bolsonaroist prison guard. Soon after the rallies of September 7, a Lula supporter in Mato Grosso was murdered by a Bolsonaro supporter who tried to behead him with an axe. On September 24, a Bolsonaro supporter entered a bar in Ceará, asked "who here is a Lula voter" and stabbed to death a man who replied "I am." And on the 27th, a PT election captain in Manaus was beaten in the head with an iron bar by a Bolsonaro supporter. Overall, UNIRIO's Electoral Research Group reported 214 politicized assaults in the first half of 2022 (Reuters, 27 September).

Capitalist "Democracy" Under Police and Military Supervision

In other words, the stage is set for a showdown. So, if Bolsonaro should lose, will there be a putsch, a classic coup d'état? The consensus among the traditional bourgeois right and the institutional reformist left (PT, PCdoB, PCB, PSOL,⁷ etc.), and even part of the misnamed far left, is that the conditions are not there for a military takeover. They reason as follows: in the 1964 coup, the branches of the military were united against the government of João Goulart; the bulk of the bourgeoisie supported the generals who rose up; the great majority of the press did so also, and the US embassy was up to its neck in the prep-

⁶ The "summit" was boycotted by the presidents of Mexico and the Central American countries because of the U.S. refusal to invite Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Biden did not convince a single country in the hemisphere to join in sanctions against Russia in retaliation for the war with Ukraine instigated by the U.S./NATO imperialists.

⁷ Abbreviations correspond, in order, to the Workers Party, Communist Party of Brazil, Brazilian Communist Party, Party of Socialism and Freedom.



Dado Galdieri for the New York Times

Demonstration by supporters of Lula and the PT on September 25. Appealing for calm, the leaders of the "broad front" didn't try to counter Bolsonaro's independence day rallies with a big national mobilization, but only held regional demonstrations.

arations. Today, they argue, the military top brass doesn't want a coup, the Centrão (coalition of the traditional conservative right wing) is in coalition with Lula, his former arch-enemy *O Globo* is acting like a PT election agency, and the U.S. is against it. Conclusion: scenario dismissed.

Right now there is an offensive of reassurances on the subject: the media are publishing in unison that the military "guarantees ... that there will not be a single tank on the street, regardless of the outcome of the elections" (*Agência Pública*, September 28); that "in a meeting at Headquarters, the Army High Command sealed its position of supporting the results of the presidential elections" (*Estadão*, September 30), and that "the phrase ... spread among the troops since the first week of August" is "Whoever wins, takes it" (*Rede Brasil Atual*, September 30). Maybe, or maybe not. Let's not forget that in their coverage of September 7 in the capital, while these media were stressing that "Bolsonaro embarrasses the country on the Bicentennial" with his electoral mega-rally, they hardly mentioned the huge "civic-military" parade that lasted two and a half hours, with the participation of all the armed bodies, police and military, together with Bolsonaroist sectors.

But the film doesn't end there. Socio-political-military research institutes charged with anticipating, analyzing and formulating responses for the imperialists about upcoming clashes agree that, as the International Crisis Group writes, "The highest risk of violence around the election at present seems to rest on the possible reaction of Bolsonaro devotees in the event of an adverse electoral result" and that a "more realistic" scenario would be "that the military and police might not respond if called upon to contain violence or even an attempted uprising by Bolsonaro loyalists, perhaps including members of these forces." The same analysis quotes a former police officer who notes, "Bolsonaro, and later his sons, knew how to exploit" the "feeling of abandonment of the police, notably the military [police]." It concludes that:

"even if the elections end peacefully, and without major trauma, the currents reinforced by Bolsonaro's government

may not be so easy to dampen. The increasing number of groups professing a hard-right ideology, with easy access to guns and a pointed sense of grievance, could pose a continuing threat of unrest.... Sympathies for these beliefs among military and police personnel complicate matters further."⁸

Faced with this very real possibility of an attempt to overturn the results of the election, the traditional conservative bourgeois elite and the reformist left agree in the first instance to turn to the capitalist courts, in particular the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) and the Federal Supreme Court (STF). But it was these bourgeois courts that, in the middle of the 2018 election campaign, ordered the arrest of Lula, at the time the presidential candidate with the most support, on absurd corruption charges. It was not only the rightist judge Sergio Moro and his Lava-Jato (Car Wash) investigation task force that sought to criminalize the PT. The STF approved the use of illegal wiretaps by the federal police of conversations between former president Lula and then-president Dilma Rousseff, to jail Lula and thus prevent him from being elected.⁹

But when in 2021 the bourgeoisie decided it needed the services of the PT leader in order to dump the erratic Bolsonaro with his disastrous administration of the COVID pandemic, the STF did a U-turn and annulled the trumped-up charges and released Lula after a year and a half of illegal imprisonment. (It also released the assets of the former metal workers union leader, estimated at R\$ 27 million [over US\$ 5 million]!) And now, after a year of theatrical accusations by President Bolsonaro against the STF justice and current TSE chief Alexandre de Moraes, the latter has negotiated behind closed doors a deal with defense minister Nogueira according to which the military can audit up to 64 electronic voting machines, including use of voters' biometric data, and that the Army's Cyber Defense Command would do a parallel count to the TSE's tallying of votes in 385

⁸ ICG, "Brazil's True Believers: Bolsonaro and the Risks of an Election Year" (Crisis Group Latin America Briefing No. 47, 16 June 2022).

⁹ See "Brazil Elections: For Workers Action Against the Election Fraud and the Militarist Danger," *The Internationalist* No. 53, September-October 2018.

**No to the Deadly Dictatorship of Capital –
For the Liberating Dictatorship of the Proletariat**

voting stations!

Already last year, the Superior Electoral Court, made a dangerous concession to Bolsonaro's campaign of accusations without evidence of voter fraud, agreeing to include the armed forces among the entities overseeing the electoral process, along with the 32 parties and 15 other organizations, including the Federal Police and the National Confederation of Industry! In the "best" case, this military participation in the vote count would be a means to involve the armed services in endorsing the outcome of the vote. Otherwise, as *Folha de S. Paulo* (September 12) warned, it could be "used by President Jair Bolsonaro (PL) to spread distrust in the electronic voting machines and further contest the outcome of the election." In any case, this violates the supposed apolitical character of the armed forces and their subordination to civilian control, and formalizes a "supervised democracy" under the guard of the military, police and capitalists.

No to the Rule of Generals or Judges

At bottom, the "strategy" of the "center-right" and the reformist left consists of seeking the support of Yankee imperialism. Take a look. Five days after the State Department spokesman praised Brazil's electoral system on July 21, a "Carta as Brasileiras e aos Brasileiros em Defesa do Estado Democrático de Direito" (Letter to Brazilians in Defense of the Democratic Rule of Law) was released.¹⁰ This initiative of the law faculty of the University of São Paulo (USP) received about "3,000 signatures from among bankers, businessmen, jurists, unionists, politicians, actors, and various other personalities," said the USP newspaper. Soon the number of signatories was over a million. Appealing to Biden, the Carta compared the 6 January 2021 storming of the U.S. Capitol to the threat of Bolsonaro's mobs in Brazil today:

"We have recently witnessed authoritarian rants that have jeopardized secular American democracy. There, attempts to destabilize democracy and the people's confidence in the fairness of the elections were unsuccessful. Here, they won't be either."

That remains to be seen.

Among the first signers of the Carta was the FIESP, the Federation of Industries of São Paulo, one of the leading lobbies of Brazilian capitalists and a prime mover of the 2016 ouster of PT president Dilma and the 2018 jailing of PT ex-president Lula. The FIESP is also a backer of the "broad front" headed by Lula and conceived at a lunch with another former president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, of the PSDB,¹¹ in May 2021, when a Datafolha poll showed Lula as the most likely candidate to defeat Bolsonaro. The *tucano* (PSDB) leader and the former union leader, now a millionaire, have been allies off and on since when in the 1970s Lula supported FHC's senatorial candidacy for the Brazilian Democratic Movement, the bourgeois opposition authorized by the military dictatorship.

In fact, despite the epithets of "communist" hurled by the Bolsonaroists against Lula, the PT leader is nothing of the sort, having modeled himself on the figure of Lech

¹⁰ See "Carta às Brasileiras e aos Brasileiros em defesa do Estado Democrático de Direito!" Faculdade de Direito, Universidade de São Paulo (26 July).

¹¹ Social-Democratic Party of Brazil, the bourgeois conservative party that is the linchpin of the "center-right" Centrão.

Walesa, the anti-communist trade unionist who played a key role in the counter-revolution in Poland in the late 1980s. But now the question is posed starkly, can the class-collaborationist “broad front” in favor of Lula’s candidacy for president, with PSDB leader Geraldo Alckmin as his vice-president and with implicit backing from Washington, block the militarist Bolsonaro regime and its cheering squads of fascistic fanatics?

Lula has always sought to ally with imperialism. Under the Republican administration of George Bush II, he offered his services as sheriff of the Caribbean, occupying Haiti under the label of the United Nations. In the black republic, Brazilian occupation forces in U.N. blue helmets tested counter-insurgency tactics that they then used in the slums of Rio de Janeiro and the outskirts of São Paulo. Rio is the capital of police killings and the local Military Police has become an agency for industrial-scale murder.¹² Militias of former military police officers and firemen, such as those who assassinated Marielle Franco, emerged under the patronage of the Bolsonaro family.¹³ Sure, U.S. president Barack Obama cheered Lula as “the most popular politician in the world,” adding “I love this guy.” But as the bloody imperialist strategist Henry Kissinger said, “Being an enemy of the United States can be difficult, being a friend is fatal.”

Verbal support from the U.S. does not ensure victory in a stand-off with hard-nosed reactionary forces. As has been universally noted, behind the current Brazilian election crisis is the specter of the attack on the U.S. Congress on 6 January 2021 instigated by Donald Trump, who, after being defeated at the polls, tried to cling to power. Bolsonaro himself has questioned the legitimacy of Biden’s election and on many issues (COVID vaccines, gay and transgender people’s rights, etc.) has acted as a faithful Trump acolyte. But Trump lacked the support of the military high command, while in the Brazilian case which way the armed forces will go is an open question. If, despite Democrats’ howls of a failed “insurrection,” January 6 in Washington was an *opera buffa* (comic opera) of an imitation military coup, the outcome in Brazil may be quite different.

Reformist parties like the PT, its spin-off PSOL, the former Stalinists-become-social democrats of the PCdoB and PCB, and even smaller currents of the (not so) far left like PCO (Partido da Causa Operária), are counting on Lula and the bourgeois broad front as the remedy to preserve “democracy” and exorcise the demon Bolsonaro. Judging by the polls, one might think that Bolsonarism is already defeated. But if so, why was Rousseff impeached in 2016 at the height of her popularity, and why did Lula himself languish for 580 days in prison? In reality, neither he nor the PT nor the left as a whole seriously fought that election ban, because they all bow down to the “democratic rule of law.” For the same reason they cannot fight Bolsonarism.

A leadership seeking to resist a military takeover – or one by fascistic forces backed by sectors of the officer corps of the army, navy and military police – would *organize*

worker-peasant defense groups, to protect demonstrations and union and leftist headquarters. It would unleash a powerful *general strike and strikes of key sectors*, paralyzing industry and transportation in a show of proletarian power, able to defeat the forces of the capitalist state. Nothing of the sort has happened, because the leaders accept the rules of the “democratic” capitalist state and depend on its repressive apparatus (military, police, courts and judges). It is up to authentic communist revolutionaries to fight to initiate such elementary measures of struggle against the class enemy, even on a limited scale and local basis.

The Only Road – Struggle for International Socialist Revolution

In the October 2022 elections, most of the left is calling to vote for the Workers Party and its presidential candidate Lula. These include several of the multiple currents of the PSOL, but also smaller groups that falsely claim the heritage of Trotskyism, including the International Marxist Tendency. Other pseudo-Trotskyists are supporting a “Socialist and Revolutionary Pole” led by the PSTU (Socialist Party of Unified Workers), which has offered its ballot slot to other leftist groups. The PSTU, which is running its member Vera Lucia for president, is an anti-communist group that aligns itself with Yankee imperialism over Syria, Venezuela, Cuba and currently supports Ukraine in the war with Russia instigated by U.S. and NATO imperialists. In 2016, the PSTU effectively supported the impeachment of PT president Rousseff, and in 2018 it welcomed the imprisonment of former president Lula. This year, the PSTU says it will support Lula if there is a runoff second round of the election.

We of the Liga Quarta-Internacionalista, the Brazilian section of the League for the Fourth International, have insisted since the 2002 elections when Lula ran as a candidate on a ticket with José Alencar of the right-wing Liberal Party, that “the LQB is the only organization of the Brazilian left that has defended the authentically Trotskyist policy of not giving any vote to any candidate or party of a popular front,”¹⁴ which ties the working masses to sectors of the bourgeois ruling class. In this we draw on Trotsky’s writings on the betrayed Spanish Revolution of the 1930s. In a letter he wrote just as the Civil War was breaking out, the Bolshevik leader and founder of the Fourth International commented:

“The question of questions at present is the People’s Front. The left centrists seek to present this question as a tactical or even as a technical maneuver, so as to be able to peddle their wares in the shadow of the People’s Front. In reality, the People’s Front is the *main question of proletarian class strategy* for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism.”

–Leon Trotsky, “The Dutch Section and the International,” 15-16 July 1936

This is precisely what the Socialist and Revolutionary Pole is doing in Brazil today, peddling its wares in the shadow of the popular front.

In July, in a lively event of more than 100 people, a teacher from Rio de Janeiro, Carolina Cacao, who is affiliated to the

¹⁴ See our article “Break with Lula’s Popular Front, For a Revolutionary Workers Party! PT/PL Government: Fireman for the IMF” [in Portuguese], *Vanguarda Operária* No. 7, January 2003.

Revolutionary Workers Movement (MRT, the Brazilian section of the international tendency Trotskyist Fraction), launched her candidacy for the Socialist and Revolutionary Pole. Besides the PSTU and the MRT, another tendency making use of the Pole is the Socialist Workers’ Current (CST) of the PSOL. The candidates include different ethnic and gender identities, with many women and dozens of indigenous people. But the “program” is far from resolving the problems that have soaked this country in blood. Thus it talks about “agrarian reform,” as if we were still in the era of bourgeois democratic revolutions.¹⁵ But the existence of slave labor in the countryside two centuries after independence and 134 years after its pseudo-abolition is a product of the *decay* of capitalism and demands a socialist revolution.

It is true that there are enormous latifundia, some of them the size of the state of Maranhão. There are some that are owned by gigantic mining companies like Vale do Rio Doce. We must not forget that this company, far from protecting the Brazilian fauna and flora, is criminally responsible (while enjoying impunity) for one of the biggest tragedies in Brazil, drowning the population of an entire city and region of Minas Gerais in iron ore sludge. But these latifundia are *capitalist* enterprises, and extreme poverty in the countryside will not be eliminated by distributing some plots to poor peasants. This will only be achieved by expropriating the bourgeoisie through an *agrarian revolution* that establishes collective and socialized farms. In this imperialist era, there is no room for agrarian reform in Brazil.

Racism persists, even deadly racism. In the depths of the Brazilian interior, the continual massacre of peasants and indigenous people is among the largest in Latin America, a fact confirmed by the famous Figueiredo Report of 1967, which recounts the genocide and killing of more than 5,000 indigenous people during the military dictatorship. These killings did not stop, but increased during all the governments of the New Republic,¹⁶ including the governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the PT. Updating this data with the prominence given to it by Bolsonaro’s bonapartist/militarist regime, the newspaper *Brasil de Fato* (2 August), using data from the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT), informs us that: “In 2020, 20 people were victims of territorial disputes. According to the CPT, between 2016 and 2022, 98 landless workers, 58 indigenous people, 28 squatters, 25 quilombolas,¹⁷ 25 settlers and seven rural workers were murdered, as well as 36 other people, including small landowners, river people, environmentalists, etc.” No reform would solve this.

The components of the Pole have debated about a more extensive common program for the campaign. The MRT in its contribution called for “collective mass self-defense against a Bolsonaro coup and ultra-rightist groups, based on the unions....”¹⁸ There are also incanta-

¹⁵ The Manifesto of the Socialist and Revolutionary Pole calls for “an agrarian reform that secures land and conditions of production for poor peasants.”

¹⁶ The New Republic designates the period of Brazilian history since the enactment of the “democratic” constitution of 1988, and more generally since the end of the military dictatorship in 1985.

¹⁷ Quilombolas are Afro-Brazilian residents of the *quilombos*, settlements of escaped slaves going back to the 1500s.

¹⁸ “Conheça os eixos de campanha, programa, método e debates do Polo Socialista Revolucionário,” *Esquerda Diário*, 23 de junho.

tions of “End genocide of black youth in poor neighborhoods by the police.” But how? There is nothing about the creation of *union-based workers defense groups* to stop the slaughter black youth in the slums and favelas, and of indigenous people and peasants. Why not? Because that would pose point-blank the issue of the police, and the PM in particular, and the other components (PSTU, CST) of this rotten *propaganda bloc* support the military police when they go on “strike.” Not for nothing do the bourgeois human rights monitors of the United Nations say of these special bodies of armed men, “Brazilian police kill more than anywhere else in the world.”

The MRT proposals for the program of the Pole call “For a government of the working people without bosses!” Even if it tacks on “opening the road to a socialist society” sometime in the future, this mushy formulation is to the right even of the PSTU, which on paper calls for “a socialist government of the working people, ruling through popular councils....” (*Opinião Socialista*, 22 September). In either case, these are just deceptive words to hide the fact that they are calling for governments of *the capitalist state*. Since 1990 the PT, which characterizes its regimes as “governments of the working people,” has invariably made a popular front with some sector of the bourgeoisie, and always Lula and Dilma only managed the capitalist business. Now the PSTU-Polo promises, if there is a second round of the election, to vote for the Lula-Alckmin ticket, i.e., for a government with the bosses.

Conclusion: in the face of Bolsonaro’s coup threat of a military dictatorship, like the one that for a quarter of a century made life hell for the population and the left in Brazil, and on the other hand, Lula’s “alternative” of a broad front encompassing virtually all wings of the Brazilian bourgeoisie – two variants of the dictatorship of capital – it is necessary to fight for a *workers and peasants government that expropriates the entire bourgeoisie through international socialist revolution*, led by a *revolutionary workers party* built in the struggle to forge an authentically Trotskyist Fourth International. ■

Strangelove...

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at this from the military point of view. I mean, supposing the Russkies stash away some big bomb, see. When they come out in a hundred years they could take over!... In fact, they might even try an immediate sneak attack so they could take over our mineshaft space. I think it would be extremely naive of us, Mr. President, to imagine that these new developments are going to cause any change in Soviet expansionist policy. I mean, we must be increasingly on the alert to prevent them from taking over other mineshaft space, in order to breed more prodigiously than we do, thus knocking us out in superior numbers when we emerge! Mr. President, we must not allow... a mineshaft gap!

STRANGELOVE:...sir! (*Stands up out of his wheelchair*) I have a plan. Heh. (*Pauses, realizing that he is standing*) *Mein Führer*, I can walk!

The movie ends with the B-52 commander, Major T.J. “King” Kong, riding a nuclear bomb, hooting and waving his cowboy hat as the song “We’ll Meet Again” plays, until the bomb detonates over its target.

THE END

¹² A study by the Rede de Observatórios da Segurança reported that in the year from August 2021 to July 2022, police in the state of Rio de Janeiro killed 306 civilians, more than the next six states combined (R7 Notícias, 6 October).

¹³ See “Racist Execution in Rio,” *The Internationalist* No. 51, March-April 2021. Militias now control 10% of the area of Greater Rio de Janeiro, exceeding that under the control of drug-trafficking gangs, with a population of 1.7 million people.



Voting in Lugansk on referendum on incorporation into the Russian Federation, September 24. A “sham referendum”? Hardly. Over 4.75 million voted to join Russia in the two eastern breakaway republics and the two southern regions, with turnout rates of over 90%, far higher than in any Western election. This was a legitimate exercise of the right to self-determination, which must be upheld by all defenders of democratic rights.

Defend Russia...

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population being forced to vote “at gunpoint,” support was massive and often celebratory, with many voters saying “we have waited for eight years for this.” The only reason they didn’t join Russia in 2014 was that President Vladimir Putin sought an impossible regional “autonomy” within Ukraine in the Minsk I and II agreements. The referendums exercised the right to self-determination, which the imperialists deny and now seek to undo, and their joining the Russian Federation must be upheld by class-conscious workers and defenders of democratic rights everywhere.

From the beginning of the Russian military operation in Ukraine, the League for the Fourth International declared that the war was provoked by the imperialists, and called for revolutionary defeatism on both sides in the reactionary nationalist conflict, as part of the overall struggle to defeat the U.S./NATO war drive against Russia and

China. We continued to defend self-rule in the breakaway republics, calling for the right of self-determination in Russian-speaking eastern and southern Ukraine, and to permanently stop the Ukrainian fascists and smash their program of ethnic cleansing. At the same time, our February 23 LFI statement prior to the start of the war noted that “if it turned into a war by Ukraine’s imperialist backers against Russia that would be a very different matter.”² If the Ukrainian army became in reality an extension of NATO, it would be no longer be just a Russia-Ukraine war but a war with NATO via its client regime in Kiev.

That has now happened. While this process has been under way for months, it has reached the point where quantity turns into quality. The transition was marked by Ukraine’s lightning *offensive in the north-eastern Kharkov region* in early September, which from planning to weaponry and

² “Defeat U.S./NATO War Drive and Sanctions Against Russia!” *The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022.



Bloodbath in Donetsk, March 14: 23 civilians were killed in the center of the capital of the pro-Russia Donetsk People’s Republic by a Ukrainian Tochka-U missile. There was virtually no coverage in the Western media, and the few mentions repeated the Kiev government’s absurd claim that it was a Russian rocket. In the eight years of Ukraine’s war, spearheaded by fascists, against the Donbass republics, over 14,000 were killed.

command was *a U.S./NATO operation throughout*. The conflict has been turned into an *imperialist “proxy war”* in which the Ukrainian government and army are essentially acting on behalf of and under the control of the NATO imperialists. U.S. imperialism has long fostered such wars, notably in Afghanistan in the 1980s where it sponsored, armed and directed the Islamist *mujahedin* (holy warriors) against Soviet forces that the U.S. provoked into intervening in support of the embattled Afghan reform government allied with the USSR.³

In response to the Kharkov blitz, Russian president Putin ordered a partial mobilization of military reserves, noting (accurately) that Russia is now “fighting not only against neo-Nazi units but actually the entire military machine of the collective West.” In recognition of the cumulative and now qualitative change in the character of the war, the League for the Fourth International states that in the present situation, proletarian revolutionaries’ call to *defeat the imperialists’ war drive against Russia and China* (a bureaucratically deformed workers state) means standing for the *defeat of the U.S./NATO proxy regime in Ukraine*, and for *military defense of Russia* (a regional capitalist power) while giving no political support to, and calling for workers struggle against, the reactionary bourgeois nationalist Putin government.

The changed nature of the conflict is expressed in many areas. The vast amounts of more-or-less sophisticated weapons and munitions being poured into Ukraine from the United States and other Western countries (and East European client states) have reached unprecedented levels: at least \$65 billion authorized by the U.S. alone, just in 2022. (In comparison, the total amount of U.S. military aid to Taiwan over the last 45 years is \$90 bil-

³ At the time, the authentic Trotskyists of the then-revolutionary international Spartacist tendency called to “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” while much of the left echoed the imperialist hue and cry about “Soviet imperialism” and, directly or indirectly, supported the Islamist cutthroat gangs who murdered communist teachers for educating girls. Other examples of imperialist-sponsored “proxy wars” include the war of the U.S.-created “contra” terrorists against Sandinista Nicaragua and the war of the U.S.-financed and trained Salvadoran military against leftist guerrillas, in both cases with weakening the Soviet Union and Cuba being a central purpose.

lion.) With that has come control. Not only are the U.S. and its allies deeply involved in training, planning and executing Ukrainian military strikes, not only is Ukraine crawling with CIA operatives and commandos of “retired” and currently serving special forces, plus several thousand foreign “volunteers” (mercenaries) in fascist-led Ukrainian units, U.S. officials precheck every strike by HIMARS rockets.

Questioned by the London *Telegraph* (1 August) as to how these systems “have so precisely targeted Russian fuel and ammunition depots, as well as battlefield headquarters in eastern Ukraine,” the acting head of Ukraine’s military intelligence, Major General Vadym Skibitsky, replied that “we use real-time information.” He added, “I can’t tell you whether [we are directly tasking] British and American satellites, but we have very good satellite imagery.” The account continued: “he suggested there was a level of consultation between intelligence officials of both countries prior to launching missiles that would allow Washington to stop any potential attacks if they were unhappy with the intended target.” That means that the U.S. has effectively signed off on their use against civilians in Donetsk and against the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant.

This degree of control was institutionalized at October 12-13 NATO meetings in Brussels. Ukraine’s air defense system is being integrated into a German-led “Joint Air Defense Initiative” coordinating the air defense systems of 14 NATO countries. On October 1, Ukraine asked for NATO membership on an expedited “fast track,” and on October 12 Ukraine’s defense minister Oleksii Reznikov tweeted from Brussels thanking NATO general secretary Jens Stoltenberg, saying “we” (Ukraine) “have de facto joined the Alliance.” Meanwhile, President Joe Biden has declared (September 19) that the U.S. will keep pumping in military supplies to Ukraine “as long as it takes.” Stoltenberg chimed in (October 13), “as long as it takes,” adding that “Russia’s victory in the war against Ukraine will be a defeat of NATO.” As we say in Berlin, *alles klar* (got it).

Today, Ukraine’s weaponry is being supplied by the U.S. and NATO, including munitions for its Soviet- and Russian-style arms. Major Ukrainian offensives are conceived, discussed and war gamed by the Pentagon with Ukrainian officials. U.S. of-

Excerpt from 23 February 2022 LFI Statement

On the eve of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, on February 23, the League for the Fourth International’s statement, headlined “Defeat U.S./NATO War Drive and Sanctions Against Russia!” declared:

“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 in-

termediate, regional capitalist power. *Yet the imperialists’ ultimate aim is to spark counterrevolution in China, Cuba and North Korea.*”

We further spelled out:

“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 warmongers and their social-democratic acolytes. The conductor of this orchestrated uproar is U.S. imperialism, with its record of countless bloody invasions. 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 struggle against the capitalist rulers in Moscow and Kiev. But if it turned into a war by Ukraine’s imperialist backers against Russia that would be a very different matter.”



Ukraine defense minister Oleksii Reznikov (left) thanks NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg for support and says that Ukraine has “de facto joined the alliance.”

Officials precheck every use of the sophisticated rocket systems that have turned the tide in the fighting. Ukrainian officers receive “real-time” geolocation information on Russian forces from U.S. satellites, on tablets supplied by the Pentagon via Elon Musk’s Starlink system, of which 20,000 devices have been sent to Ukraine. The Ukrainian military is increasingly integrated into NATO machinery, more so than many NATO member countries, with a degree of U.S./NATO operational control that exceeds that in most other countries of this imperialist military alliance. In short, the Kiev regime and its army have become the operatives of “a war by Ukraine’s imperialist backers against Russia.”

Meanwhile, the imperialists’ determination to “punish Putin” for refusing to abide by the “rules-based” U.S.-dominated “New World Order” (proclaimed upon the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union) led them to impose brutal sanctions that amount to all-out economic war on Russia. This backfired, as cutting off Russian oil and natural gas exports sent world prices skyrocketing, bringing in more money to Moscow than ever before. European capitalist governments have ordered drastic cuts in energy use that mean that people will be freezing this winter, while around the globe the rising cost of food means that millions are already starving. And European imperialist rulers have gone along with this program which would lead to the destruction of key sections of their economy, beginning with the steel industry.

Adding it up, the rapidly escalating war drive against Russia and China is hurtling toward a thermonuclear World War III – unless the imperialists are stopped by workers revolution.

The Evolution of the War in Ukraine

The Ukraine war actually began in 2014, when a coup d’état by Ukrainian fascists and ultra-nationalists – instigated, financed and advised by European and particularly U.S. imperialists – overthrew the elected government in Kiev and instituted a virulently Russophobic regime.⁴

⁴ See “Down with the Imperialist-Backed Fascist/Nationalist Coup in Ukraine!” and “Fascist Pogrom in Odessa, and the Aftermath,” in *The Internationalist* No. 37, April-May 2014.

In the years since, fascist-led forces incorporated into Ukraine’s military and police waged a relentless war against the Russian-speaking east that killed over 14,000.⁵ Meanwhile, NATO expanded to Russia’s borders, incorporating 13 former Soviet-bloc countries, despite the U.S.’ 1990 promise not to spread NATO “one inch” eastwards. NATO has held ever-larger annual war games with dozens of countries, hundreds of aircraft and ships and thousands of military personnel, all practicing war with Russia. Then, with the election of Democratic

U.S. president Joe Biden, starting in early 2021 Ukraine began a new anti-Russian offensive, on the Donbass border and internally.⁶

In the face of this escalating threat, Putin ordered large-scale maneuvers by the Russian military and demanded security guarantees from the U.S. and NATO. When Western leaders flatly and repeatedly refused to rule out Ukrainian membership in NATO, the Russian president launched his “special military operation” (SMO), which he is now calling a “preemptive” strike. In the weeks before Moscow’s move, Ukrainian attacks on the Donbass multiplied manyfold, and in the early days of the war, Russian forces found and published documents from the command of Ukraine’s National Guard detailing plans for a full-scale attack on breakaway republics beginning March 8. Biden & Co. constantly refer to “Russia’s unprovoked war,” but **it was clearly instigated and provoked by the U.S./NATO imperialists and their Ukrainian client.**

In a February 21 speech Putin recognized the independence of the two breakaway republics and focused on their defense. But on February 24 he launched the “special military operation” which, contrary to our expectations and those of many others, quickly became a full-blown war with Ukraine. In a February 28 article⁷ we

⁵ See the report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Conflict-related casualties in Ukraine” (22 January), which cites 14,200-14,400 killed and 37,000-39,000 injured, more than 80% of them in the areas of the Donetsk and Lugansk republics. Other estimates put the number of killed at 18,000 and wounded/injured at over 50,000.

⁶ From late January to March 2021, in addition to stepped-up shelling of the Donetsk and Lugansk republics and adoption of a new “Military Security Strategy of Ukraine” aimed at reconquering those regions “with the assistance of the international community on favorable terms for Ukraine,” the Zelensky government charged two pro-Russian members of parliament with treason, shut down all three Russian-language TV channels and implemented a law requiring the exclusive use of Ukrainian (i.e., banning Russian) in schools, government offices and commercial businesses.

⁷ “Behind the War: U.S./NATO War Drive Against Russia, China” (28 February), *The Internationalist* No. 66, (January-April 2022).

called “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.” Unlike the fake-leftists who sided with the imperialist-backed Ukrainian coup regime and condemned the Russian invasion, we called to “Oppose Imperialist-Provoked Russia-Ukraine War” and headlined: “Behind the War: U.S./NATO War Drive Against Russia, China.”

In April, we detailed how fascists such as the Azov Brigade permeate Ukraine’s repressive apparatus, its command and shock troops, and the ties of these neo-Nazis to U.S. imperialism.⁸ In May we noted that, “Together with its allies in the imperialist North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Washington is sending increasingly heavy offensive weaponry to the fascist-infested Ukrainian military. But the U.S. has set its broader sights on Russian downfall as a dramatic example of U.S./NATO military prowess and an implied threat to China. The U.S. vows to defeat Russia and degrade its military so it will be ‘weakened’ for years to come.”⁹ The threat to China has been made increasingly explicit over the past period.

Since then, Pentagon and NATO “aid” to Ukraine has increased exponentially, particularly with the provision of highly accurate satellite-guided missiles and other more advanced equipment. It was known long before the war broke out, as we have documented, that ever since 2014 the U.S. and NATO imperialists were working with Ukraine’s military forces, and particularly its fascist and ultra-nationalist components. Despite the talk of Western military trainers pulling out of the country on the outbreak of the war, the presence of U.S. and NATO military and intelligence personnel in the Ukrainian forces became so notorious that the media felt compelled to mention it, albeit briefly and buried under their mountains of obscenely pro-Ukraine, anti-Russia war propaganda and outright lies.

The *New York Times* (26 June) published an article, “Allied Commandos in Ukraine Secretly Funnel Aid to Troops,” confirm-

⁸ “The Truth About Ukraine’s Fascist Infestation” (4 April), *The Internationalist* No. 66.

⁹ “We Meet Dr. Strangelove Again in Washington” (May 22) on page 11 of this issue.



U.S. ex-Marine training Ukrainian soldiers near front line in Soledar, in the Donbass. As the battlefield has been transformed into a U.S./NATO “proxy war” against Russia, Ukraine is awash in imperialist military trainers, advisers, CIA operatives, NATO commandos, mercenaries, foreign “volunteers” for fascist-led forces, and others.

ing that “C.I.A. personnel have continued to operate in the country secretly,” particularly “directing much of the vast amounts of intelligence the United States is sharing with Ukrainian forces.” It noted that “commandos from other NATO countries, including Britain, France, Canada and Lithuania, also have been working inside Ukraine,” and that the U.S. Army’s 10th Special Forces Group had set up a cell, “modeled after a structure used in Afghanistan” against Soviet forces, that is part of a “broader set of operational and intelligence coordination cells run by the Pentagon’s European Command,” while “a U.S. Air Force and Air National Guard team called Grey Wolf” provides “support” to the Ukrainian air force.

A month later, articles appeared about the elaborate military supply chain funneling vast quantities of weapons and munitions to Ukraine via a “little known group,” the International Donor Coordination Center, located in U.S. European Command headquarters in Ramstein, Germany (“Special Military Cell Flows Weapons and Equipment into Ukraine,” *New York Times*, 28 July). This outfit works closely with the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, “a Pentagon-led coalition of about 50 nations” providing aid to the Kiev military. In addition, tens of billions of dollars in economic support have been supplied to prop up the Kiev regime, from the U.S., NATO, World Bank, European Union and other sources. This goes beyond simple military aid: by this point almost the entirety of Ukrainian weapons and munition come from the West. Without that, Ukraine would have been defeated months ago.

U.S./NATO Imperialists Take Control

Now, escalating in recent weeks, the conflict has become a war by the Western imperialist powers themselves, acting through their proxy regime in Kiev, against Russia. The U.S. has increasingly taken control of military operations in Ukraine, particularly in the offensive beginning September 6 that forced Russia to withdraw from the entire Kharkov region.

According to a *New York Times* (14 September) account, “The strategy behind Ukraine’s rapid military gains in recent days began to take shape months ago dur-



U.S. defense secretary Lloyd Austin and secretary of state Antony Blinken meet with the head of the NATO proxy regime, Volodymyr Zelensky, in Kiev on April 24. The former actor, now in the role of Ukraine president, grabs the media spotlight, but his imperialist sponsors ultimately call the shots.

ing a series of intense conversations between Ukrainian and U.S. officials about the way forward in the war against Russia.” The account, “based on interviews with multiple senior American officials” and others in the know, said Ukrainian military leaders, under orders from the puppet president Zelensky, had planned a broad offensive in the south. But a U.S. war game indicated that it would fail, while intelligence feeds indicated that Moscow was overstretched in the north. As the U.S. military attaché “began having daily sessions with Ukraine’s top officers,” “Britain, the United States and Ukraine conducted an assessment of the new plan,” for an offensive near Kharkov, “trying to war game it once more.” The plan, said a top officer in Kiev, “depended entirely on the size and pace of additional military aid from the United States.” So the U.S. sent HIMARS, satellite-guided rockets and the rest. *From planning to weaponry and command, the Kharkov offensive was a U.S./NATO operation.*

On September 26, big explosions ripped holes in the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines in the Baltic Sea, with multiple indications of involvement of the U.S. and NATO. Whoever did it wanted the pipelines carrying natural gas from Russia to Germany stopped for good. Imperialist media and politicians have tried to float the absurd claim that Russia might have blown up the pipelines, which makes no sense as (a) they are the property of the Russian state-owned energy company Gazprom, (b) the flow of natural gas in the Nordstream I pipeline had already been stopped for repairs, (c) the German government (under pressure from the U.S.) had indefinitely shelved Nordstream II, and (d) the pipelines would be key to eventually resuming economic relations with European Union (EU) countries.

When, however, one asks *cui bono*, who benefits, the immediate answers are: (1) the Polish government, which opposed both pipelines from the beginning and was about to open a pipeline bringing Norwegian natural gas to Poland; and (2) Washington, which likewise opposed the Nordstream pipelines, and stands to gain from the cutoff of Russian gas, forcing Europeans to buy more expensive U.S. liquid natural gas. In February, U.S. president Biden vowed that if Russia invaded, “there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2,” adding, “We will bring an end to it.” After the leaks, U.S. secretary of state Antony Blink-

en declared that “this is also a tremendous opportunity.” And (3) the Ukrainian regime would, of course, benefit.

As for evidence, flight radar data show U.S. helicopters from September 22 to 25 spending hours over the area off the Danish island of Bornholm where the September 26 explosions occurred. The day after the explosions, the former Polish defense minister tweeted “Thank you, USA” next to a photo of the bubbling water from the leak. When Columbia University professor Jeffrey Sachs opined in a TV interview with the Bloomberg business site that he “would bet that this [the explosion] was a U.S. action, perhaps U.S. and Poland,” he was yanked off the air. To be clear, Sachs is no friend of Russia, having designed the economic “shock therapy” program that impoverished millions of Russians after the counterrevolution that destroyed the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, the October 8 bomb attack on the bridge connecting Crimea with the rest of Russia came after months of planning by NATO operatives to destroy that vital corridor. An exposé by *The Grayzone* (10 October) investigative journalism internet site reported that, while the operation was overseen by the Ukrainian political police, the SBU, “Before Ukraine blew up Kerch Bridge, British spies plotted it.” An April 2022 presentation drafted at the request of a senior British intelligence operative (and high-level NATO advisor) laid out an elaborate plan with detailed diagrams on how to blow the bridge. The actual operation differed from that plan (instead involving a truck bomb) and the Russians were able to resume rail and car traffic the same afternoon. But the extensive planning for this operation that threatened to disrupt Russia’s resupply of its forces in the south highlights the intimate involvement of the Western imperialists in Ukrainian military operations.

In short, in weaponry, munitions, planning and control, the war in Ukraine has become a war between Russia and a regime that is not only a client of and proxy for the Western powers but in many operational aspects is directly subordinated to the U.S. and NATO imperialists.

Inter-Imperialist Conflicts Brewing

Although they are currently marching more or less in lockstep, serious tensions are brewing among the Western imperialist rul-

ers. From the outset, Germany and France have been less than enthusiastic in calling for Ukrainian “victory” in the war, preferring to talk of “peace” and an end to the fighting. There are objective reasons behind this. While in the U.S., the sanctions against Russia have produced windfall profits for American energy giants (through higher oil and gas prices) and no serious shortages, in Europe the sanctions are causing sharp price hikes for fuel and utility rates. This will mean severe cutbacks in electricity usage and heating in the approaching winter, and could bankrupt key sectors of industry. Germany’s economic success has depended on cheap Russian energy supplies. While the U.S. is booming, the European economy is teetering.

Remarkably, the European imperialist bourgeoisies have gone along with this program that could cripple their economies.¹⁰ How long they can keep this up is an open question, as popular discontent is growing, and the political consequences will not be long in coming. In early September and again at the end of the month, tens of thousands swelled protests called by right-wingers in the Czech capital of Prague against high energy costs, NATO and the European Union. In Germany, fascist ultra-rightists and outright fascists held pro-Russian demonstrations calling to open Nordstream 2 immediately to lower fuel and electricity prices. In France, President Emmanuel Macron has used executive powers to order oil refinery workers striking for higher wages back to work, sparking a general strike on October 18.

Across Europe, as people are being told to sacrifice for Ukraine, protests over

¹⁰ The imperialist European Union rulers have plenty of reasons to participate in the drive to pull Ukraine away from Russia. After all, what triggered the 2014 Kiev coup was when the elected government of Viktor Yanukovich backed off from signing an association treaty with the European Union. That treaty contains a series of clauses for privatizing state-owned industry, prohibiting government subsidies of companies and guaranteeing protection of foreign investors, allowing EU multinational giants to snap up Ukrainian industries (and farmland), which they have been eagerly doing since the treaty went into effect in 2017. See “Ukraine and Its Phony Friends” (in French), *Le Monde Diplomatique*, October 2022. However, the anti-Russian sanctions are another matter altogether.

economic hardship have largely benefited right-wing parties. The mainstream social-democratic and bourgeois “left” parties are so bound up with the capitalist state and NATO that they cannot lead any kind of popular revolt (even if they desired to, which of course they do not). The far-right immigrant-bashing Sweden Democrats saw their vote in the September elections increase to 20% of the total, making them the second-largest party in parliament. Two weeks later, the fascist Fratelli d’Italia (Fd’I, Brothers of Italy) party took first place with 26% of the vote, and is now on the verge of leading the Italian government, 100 years after fascist dictator Benito Mussolini’s October 1922 March on Rome. (The Fd’I is pro-Ukraine, voting for arms to Ukraine, while its main ideology has repeatedly praised the fascist Azov Battalion.)

Proletarian revolutionaries calling to defend Russia against the imperialist war and to defeat the U.S./NATO proxy regime in Ukraine will directly confront capitalist governments, bourgeois liberals, social democrats in and out of office, and “NATO socialists” on the supposed “far left.” They must sharply politically oppose “peace” movements that are in fact appendages of the imperialist war drive, whether explicitly or implicitly pro-Ukraine. And they cannot, of course, make common cause with pro-Russia rightists, who are some of the most virulent – and deadly – anti-communists around. At the present time, class-struggle opposition seeking to defeat the imperialists “at home” will be largely through workers actions linking protests against the high cost of living and anti-labor attacks to the imperialist war and sanctions.

The current imperialist proxy war to defeat, destroy and dismember Russia is a direct consequence of the counterrevolution that brought down the Soviet Union and the Soviet-bloc deformed workers states in 1989-92. Ever since, the would-be masters of the world in Washington and Wall Street have sought to nail down their global hegemony, even as their economic power has declined, particularly during the decade-long economic depression after the financial crash of 2007-08, and more recently in the COVID pandemic which killed more people in the United States than any other coun-



On October 8, a truck bomb exploded on the bridge over the Kerch Strait connecting Crimea with mainland Russia, collapsing one lane of the roadway and setting some oil tank cars aflame. While the terrorist action was clearly carried out by the Ukrainians, British intelligence operatives had been working for months on a detailed plan to blow up the bridge, a vital link for resupply of Russian forces in the south. Russian engineers and emergency repair crews were able to resume passenger car and rail traffic by the afternoon.

try. Today, the overriding aim of the U.S./NATO war drive is to bring about capitalist counterrevolution in the People's Republic of China, against which the U.S. imperialists are already waging economic war. This was underscored in the U.S. National Defense Strategy issued by the Biden White House in October 2022, which declared:

“Russia poses an immediate threat to the free and open international system, recklessly flouting the basic laws of the international order today.... The PRC, by contrast, is the only competitor with both the intent to reshape the international order and, increasingly, the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to advance that objective.”¹¹

The same perspective was put forward in the “Strategic Concept” adopted by the NATO summit at the end of June, where, as we have written, “the U.S. was able to strong-arm its European allies into denouncing Chinese actions as ‘malicious’ and declaring that the PRC’s ‘stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values’.”¹² But, we added, “any practical application of NATO’s ‘strategic concept’ will be hard for European imperialists to swallow,” as leading EU companies derive a large part of their profits from the Chinese market. The Biden “Strategy” document more or less admits this, stating that “allies and partners may have distinct perspectives on the PRC” and that a key to “competing” with China is to “align our efforts with our network of allies and partners.”

The League for the Fourth International has uniquely insisted on the centrality of defending China – as well as the other deformed workers states, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam – against the imperialist war drive, in Ukraine and elsewhere. Most of the left has bought the bourgeois lie that China is capitalist – even “imperialist” – and refuses to defend it against counterrevolution pushed by the real imperialists. Yet even as the Stalinist bureaucracy undermines the gains of the Chinese Revolution with huge capitalist inroads, it was able to contain the COVID pandemic because of the socialized planned economy, with a little over 5,000 deaths compared to 6.5 million in the capitalist world. This enrages U.S. rulers, who are constantly denouncing China’s “zero

¹¹ “In Long View, Biden Strategy Aims at China,” *New York Times*, 13 October.

¹² See “U.S. Anti-China War Provocations Over Taiwan,” *The Internationalist*, September 2022.

COVID” policy, a complaint echoed by many leftist camp followers of imperialism.

Likewise, the bulk of the left has chimed in on the imperialist refrain denouncing “Russian imperialism,” a convenient justification for backing Ukraine in the present war. For some, heirs of the anti-Trotskyist renegades Tony Cliff and Max Shachtman, this continues their smears of “Soviet imperialism” during the anti-Soviet Cold War. Even among those uncomfortable with defending the fascist-ridden coup regime in Kiev, several tendencies have been squirming to explain that Russian “imperialism” is not like U.S. and NATO imperialism, etc. Already in 2014, the LFI explained in a detailed analysis¹³ that, based on the criteria in V.I. Lenin’s fundamental work, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), despite Putin’s imperial ambitions, post-Soviet Russia is not imperialist but an intermediate capitalist power (as is Ukraine).

Putin’s Russian Nationalism Undermines Struggle Against U.S./NATO Imperialists

The bottom line is that a genuinely communist opposition to the imperialist “proxy war” on Russia is only possible on the basis of Trotskyism, notably Trotsky’s analysis of the Stalinist betrayal of the revolution. That betrayal paved the way to the counterrevolution, led by the imperialists, that destroyed the Soviet Union, and thus to today’s imperialist proxy war against capitalist Russia. Trotsky stood for defense of the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state against imperialism and counterrevolution. Yet among the various social democrats who today talk of “Russian imperialism,” to justify capitulation to their “own” imperialist rulers, there are a number who falsely lay claim to the heritage of Trotskyism and refused to defend the Soviet Union against imperialism in the CIA “proxy war” in Afghanistan, against CIA-financed counterrevolution led by the nationalist Solidarność in Poland, against capitalist reunification in Germany in 1989-90, or at the time of the Yeltsin-Bush counter-coup in Moscow in August 1991.

Without the understanding that, contrary to Stalin’s anti-Marxist dogma, building “socialism in one country” is not possi-

¹³ See “The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism’” (May 2014), reprinted in *The Internationalist* No. 40, Summer 2015.



European imperialists are not necessarily all on the same page as Joe Biden. Travelling on the night train to Kiev in mid-June: from left, Italy’s then-premier Mario Draghi, French president Emmanuel Macron and German chancellor Olaf Scholz. Draghi is now out, Macron and Scholz face brewing social unrest as NATO/EU imperialist sanctions against Russia begin to bite on the home front.



In Prague, 70,000 came out on September 4 to rightist-led demonstration protesting high energy costs, NATO and the European Union.

ble, as all Bolsheviks – Lenin, Trotsky, even Stalin – held at the time of the 1917 October Revolution, many people on both sides of the class divide put the blame or credit for the destruction of the Soviet Union simply on the pro-capitalist *perestroika* economic reforms of Mikhail Gorbachev, as many have done in recent retrospective analyses of the counterrevolution. Putin repudiates the entire basis of the former Soviet Union, but it is not possible on the basis of Russian nationalism to defeat U.S./NATO imperialism and its merciless drive to dominate every part of the planet. That requires an international struggle for socialist revolution through the joint efforts of the proletariat of Russia, Ukraine and the entire world.

As we noted on the eve of the war, Putin wants to undo the legacy of the Bolsheviks, whom he blames for “inventing” Ukraine.¹⁴ As a Great Russian chauvinist, he launched a nationalist war against Ukraine, whose ultranationalist rulers – admirers of the Nazi collaborator Stepan Bandera – have, since seizing power in 2014, have been waging a racist war against the Russian-speaking population of what was eastern and southern Ukraine. Even as the reactionary nationalist Russia-Ukraine war has been transformed into a war by the U.S./NATO imperialists threatening Russia’s survival, Putin wages it on a nationalist basis, corresponding to the class nature of his regime, making “traditional values” his battle flag and quoting the tsarist ideologue Ivan Ilyin hailing the “spiritual strength” of the Russians.

As a bourgeois nationalist, Putin is incapable of a real struggle against imperialism. Rather, he has long sought cooperation with the imperialists, in vain. This was summed up in his suggestion to U.S. president Bill Clinton in 2000 that Russia might like to join NATO. It was behind Putin’s support for the Minsk Accords, brokered by France and Germany, for illusory regional autonomy of the Donbass region within Ukraine. It was expressed in illusions that the imperialists might actually agree to and abide by security guarantees against Ukraine joining NATO which the Russian president demanded in December 2021. And contrary to Western claims that he was out to seize Kiev, his clear aim at the outset of the war was to pressure Ukraine into agreeing to such guarantees. None of this saw fruition, because the unregenerate Cold Warriors in Washington and Brussels vetoed it.

¹⁴ See “Russian Nationalist Putin vs. Bolshevik Internationalist Lenin,” in *The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022.

Putin has evidently inherited from Stalin the illusion of achieving “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism.¹⁵ This was behind major miscalculations in the “special military operation” (SMO). The plan to carry out a military campaign with limited forces misjudged the response of the Ukrainian nationalists – and above all of their imperialist overlords, bent on destroying Russia. Underlying Russia’s forced withdrawal in the face of the Ukrainian blitz in the Kharkov region in September is the fact that its forces were greatly overextended. While some Russian hard-liners ascribe this to particular commanders, it was inherent in the nature of the SMO. Only around 200,000 Russian troops were deployed (plus 35,000 from the Donbass republics) to cover a front line extending for 1,500 kilometers. Those force levels were not increased until now.

Imperialist war propaganda today is surpassing even the invented stories of Saddam Hussein ordering Kuwaiti babies to be thrown out of incubators in the first Iraq war, and of amassing weapons of mass destruction in the second. Along with the relentless barrage of atrocity stories (one after another of which have been shown to be invented) the media portray Russian forces as losing every day in every way, right up until they take another key city (Mariupol, Severodonetsk, Lisichansk). In fact, militarily Russia succeeded in occupying (and now incorporating) most of the Russian-speaking areas in the east and south of pre-2014 Ukraine and establishing a land bridge to Crimea. Politically and geopolitically, however, the balance sheet is quite different. The goals of the SMO were declared to be the “demilitarization” and “denazification” of Ukraine. Yet Ukraine is far more militarized today than in February 2022, and functionally integrated into NATO, while the fascists are portrayed as national heroes. And then Putin exchanged fascist Azov Battalion leaders for a pro-Russian Ukrainian oligarch!

Calling for military defense of Russia against the U.S./NATO imperialist onslaught in no way implies one iota of po-

¹⁵ In the case of Stalin’s talk of peacefully coexisting with imperialism, this was impossible due to the fundamental incompatibility between capitalism and the very existence of the Soviet workers state. In the case of Putin’s Russia, it is due to the relative weakness of Russian capitalism and the frenzy of the U.S./NATO imperialists, who cannot tolerate a challenge to their global hegemony as the economic base of their world domination erodes.

litical support to the country's bourgeois government. In the lead-up to the imperialist World War II, the Trotskyists defended Ethiopia, ruled over by the slave-owning emperor Haile Selassie, against Italian imperialism which sought to turn the only independent African country into a colony. In 1939, Trotsky called on Chinese communists to defend China, ruled over by Chiang Kai-shek, the butcher of Shanghai, against Japanese imperialism. And of course, Trotsky's Fourth International defended the Soviet Union, the first workers state in history, despite the betrayals and crimes of Stalin, including murdering the Trotskyists (and eventually Trotsky himself). In short, the Fourth Internationalists, upholding the program of the Bolshevik Revolution, have always been the most resolute fighters against imperialism.

Throughout the present war, the LFI has, uniquely, called to defeat the imperialist war drive against Russia and China with internationalist class struggle leading to proletarian revolution. Even as the nationalist Russia-Ukraine war has been transformed into an imperialist proxy war against Russia, and our policy has shifted accordingly from revolutionary defeatism on both sides to revolutionary defensism of Russia, we have called and continue to call for revolutionary struggle against the capitalist rulers in Moscow and Kiev.

The Fight for International Proletarian Revolution

Accompanying the escalation of the war in Ukraine, the imperialist rulers and their proxies in Kiev are making use of this "tremendous opportunity" to intensify the attacks on working people, from Ukraine to Europe and beyond. Ukrainian workers are used as cannon fodder, the European masses are impoverished with runaway inflation, deprived of heat and fuel as the energy monopolies rake in record profits – once again, it's "dividends rising, proletarians falling," as the German-Polish communist Rosa Luxemburg wrote of World War I. The anti-worker attacks also lay the basis for powerful class struggle against the exploiters who would make the exploited bear the brunt of the war. But to wage that struggle requires a leadership forged on a *revolutionary internationalist program*, like the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky.

Provoked by the U.S. and NATO into taking military action against Ukraine, the Russian nationalist Putin naturally waged a



Russian president Vladimir Putin at exhibition celebrating the 350th anniversary of the birth of Peter the Great. In a speech there, Putin compared the former eastern and southern Ukraine regions joining the Russian Federation to the tsar's retaking of lands occupied by Sweden.

nationalist war – cutting off the possibility of common struggle between Russian and Ukrainian workers against the nationalist and fascist rulers of Ukraine. Yet there was and is a real basis for united class struggle: in 2018 the (Russian-speaking) steel workers in Kryvyi Rih in central Ukraine struck the giant mill owned by the German subsidiary of ArcelorMittal, demanding EU-level pay. Now the free-market government in Kiev has used the war as an excuse to ram through laws letting employers rip up labor contracts, increase the workweek to 60 hours, fire union workers at will and ignore workplace safety laws. Russian-speaking workers in the Donbass could have joined in protesting these attacks.

There is also a basis for *international workers action* against the capitalist union-busters and imperialist warmongers. On September 2, ArcelorMittal announced it was closing plants and departments in Spain and Germany, and may shut down the Kryvyi Rih plant entirely, as all are now deemed "uncompetitive" producers due to the high price of natural gas. The huge increases in the cost of fuel are, of course, a direct result of the sanctions imposed on Russia by the U.S., NATO and EU imperialists. Class-conscious militants could call for *worker occupation of the plants* (and not just those slated for closure) and for *expropriation of the profit-gouging energy monopolies* while unions and plant committees

impose *workers control of production*. But that will not be successful unless the struggle directly opposes the imperialist war.

Currently, protests and strikes are spreading around Europe, but so far confined by the pro-capitalist labor and left leaders to economic demands. In France, a strike by refinery workers demanding wage increases to keep pace with the rising cost of living and for a share of the wind-fall profits of the energy giants led to closure of many gas stations for lack of fuel. On October 16, tens of thousands marched in Paris to protest the high cost of living, and on October 18, there was a "general strike" demanding wage increases on a par with inflation and defending the right to strike. This is "the kind of unrest [NATO government] leaders fear as they struggle to keep a united front against Russia," says the *New York Times* (15 October). Yet the protests have avoided opposing the sanctions and war on Russia that are behind the economic crisis, and are being diverted into a "popular front" around the bourgeois populist Jean-Luc Mélenchon.

In the early months of the war there were some isolated workers actions, in Italy and northern Greece, seeking to block the transport of weapons, tanks, munitions and other war materiel to Ukraine. Such actions should be generalized and explicitly directed against the imperialist war on Russia. In the U.S. on October 3 an open

letter by members and retirees of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) criticizing the union's pro-Ukraine, anti-Russia stand was published under the title, "ILWU Must Stand in Opposition to the U.S./NATO Provoked War!" The letter appealed for port actions, calling on the International Dockworkers Council and International Transport Workers Federation to lead dockworkers around the world to "refuse to handle military cargo."

Any such actions would likely be against military materiel to Ukraine, but in not explicitly opposing transport of *NATO war cargo*, this dodges the key issue of which side are you on. Many mainstream union federations in Italy, Germany, Britain, U.S. and elsewhere openly and emphatically support the imperialist war drive. To effectively combat them requires taking on the all-encompassing hysterical pro-Ukraine war propaganda. Pacifist appeals of "No to war" and "stop the war" would in practice likely be used by those waving the blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flag to call for a stop to the *Russian war*. And while some leftists try to disguise their support to Ukraine by tacking on a call to "stop NATO expansion to the east" (it's a little late for that), to "break with/leave NATO" or even to "vote on NATO" (!), what's needed is a struggle to *defeat NATO and smash imperialism through socialist revolution*.

There is much talk of a "hot autumn" of workers struggle and a "winter of discontent" across the continent. Inflation in Europe is already at the highest levels in decades – 10.9% annual price rise in September, even higher for food (16%) and energy (40%) – and increasing. Capitalist governments are "shuddering" at the prospect of "a period of social and labor unrest not seen since at least the 1970s" (*New York Times*, 21 October). The middle class is worried about their savings evaporating, while poor and working people struggle to feed their families. In France, bourgeois politicians recall that the high cost of bread sparked the French Revolution of 1789 ... and the Russian Revolution of 1917. Once the reality of electricity and fuel shortages hits and the population is ordered to shiver and freeze for Ukraine, there could be hell to pay.

But, again, that requires a revolutionary leadership fighting on the program of class war against the imperialists and their war. Limiting demands to eco-



Armored column of the militia of the People's Republic of Donetsk (DNR, from its initials in Russian) in Mariupol, April 2022. The brunt of the fighting in Mariupol was borne by DNR forces. The League for the Fourth International has called for defense of self-rule in Donetsk and Lugansk against the genocidal Ukrainian fascists and ultra-nationalists since 2014, and has continued to do so throughout the present war.



Leaders of the Azov Battalion, taken prisoner at the Azovstal plant in Mariupol, were released by Putin in a prisoner exchange on September 22. They are genocidal terrorists who should have been tried by a court of their victims, the people of Donetsk, who for eight years were subjected to a murderous siege by Azov and other fascist military units. Their freeing was a betrayal of those whom Putin claimed to defend.

Reuters

Ministry of the Interior of Ukraine



Workers of the ArcelorMittal steel plant in Kryvyi Rih on strike in May 2018. The possibility of united class struggle of Ukrainian and Donbass workers was undercut by nationalist war. Yet attacks on labor rights by capitalist bosses continue, and class-struggle union militants would respond by fighting for international workers solidarity.

economic issues or calling for a generic “anti-war” movement while papering over fundamental differences over the nature of the war only covers for the parliamentary and “moderate” left, which has overwhelmingly joined the “stand with Ukraine” war party, openly or tacitly. It would be misleading the masses, since in reality there is no solution to the privations besetting working people unless the imperialist war and anti-Russia sanctions – which these “social-imperialists” support and which have caused and exacerbated the economic crisis – are defeated as part of the struggle for workers revolution.

A *transitional program* addressing the desperate situation of working people would include: Against escalating inflation, union militants should fight for indexation of wages (automatic cost of living adjustment) – a *sliding scale wages*, including huge increases in the minimum wage – and form *labor-led committees to control prices and supplies*. Against unemployment, demand a sharp *reduction in the workweek with no loss in pay*, to provide jobs for all. Against xenophobic attacks and the fascist threat, build *workers defense groups* and demand *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. These issues will not be resolved in the bourgeois parliaments, but by workers action on the streets and in the plants. Above all, this requires a fight to overthrow the capitalist order itself, for a *workers government* and *Socialist United States of Europe, based on workers councils*.

As Lenin wrote during the first imperialist world war:

“This revolutionary mass struggle of the proletariat for socialism will arise out of the struggle of the masses against the misfortunes and burdens brought about by the epoch of imperialism and against increased prices, unemployment, increased burdens of taxation, colonial adventures, and national oppression.... All these types of struggle will unite into one strong current of struggle for political power, a struggle for socialism and for the unification of socialist peoples.”

–V. I. Lenin, “Social Democracy and the Question of Peace” (June 1916)

Wars can be the mother of revolution, and with imperialist war the “choice” is between socialist revolution or descent into barbarism. As Lenin insisted, all talk of “peace” without mass revolutionary struggle is hoodwinking the masses, as the decaying capitalist system – imperialism – generates endless war. That has been demonstrated anew over the three decades since the destruction of the Soviet Union, as the so-called “New World Order” has produced one war after another. As soon as the U.S. and NATO flee Kabul, defeated in their 20-year war in Afghanistan, they provoke a new war with Russia. To halt the imperialists’ mad rush toward WWII aiming at counterrevolution in China, revolutionaries, class-conscious workers and all defenders of the oppressed must fight to *defeat the present U.S./NATO proxy war on Russia*.

In their all-sided propaganda war



For bread and revolution! Women workers and soldiers’ wives marched on International Women’s Day during World War I, igniting the 1917 Russian Revolution. Demonstrators chanted, “Down with high prices! Down with hunger! Bread for the workers!” Wars can be the mother of revolutions, but that requires a genuinely revolutionary communist leadership.

against the Russian bogeyman, the imperialist rulers and media spinmeisters claim that “Putin is isolated from the world,” that the Kremlin leader is universally despised, that Russia has become a pariah state. Really? Let’s look. A grand total of 45 countries have imposed sanctions on Russia – including Liechtenstein, Monaco and Montenegro. Yet not one country in Latin America has joined the boycott. Not one country in Africa has signed onto sanctions. In Asia, only Japan, Singapore and South Korea have joined the anti-Russia campaign. In Brazil, both contenders in the upcoming second-round election, Lula and Bolsonaro, court Russia and China, the former for supplying fertilizer imports, the latter as a major buyer of Brazilian exports, while both countries have supplied anti-COVID vaccines to Brazil. So who, exactly, is isolated?

The latest scaremongering ploy is to accuse Putin of threatening nuclear war. How? By declaring that if the territorial integrity of Russia is threatened “we will certainly make use of all weapon systems available to us.”¹⁶ Biden said that this raises “the prospect of Armageddon,” the final battle between good and evil, while the media debate will be (Putin) or won’t he use tactical nuclear weapons. U.S. spy sources say Russia’s nuclear posture is unchanged, and using tactical nukes makes no sense in the Ukraine war.¹⁷ Meanwhile, NATO is right now (October 17-30) holding a huge nuclear exercise in Europe, Operation Steadfast Noon, including flying strategic bombers from North Dakota to the North Sea, simulating a nuclear bomb run. Have you read anything about it in the media? No you haven’t. So who is actually threatening whom? *Kto kogo* – who, whom – as Lenin put it.

In its demonology, the West portrays the Russian president as a satanic mad man, the latest in a long line of Russian villains – “Vlad the bad” as the reincarnation of Rasputin and Ivan the Terrible. Feeding a public that they are determined to keep “informed” only of “what [they decide] you need to know,” the media portray the war as a Manichean battle of good vs. evil. Figuring that, by now, their brainwashed audience will swallow anything cooked up by the Ukrainian fascists’ Big Lie

¹⁶ “Address by the President of the Russian Federation,” 21 September, at kremlin.ru.

¹⁷ It is important to note that the United States was planning to use tactical nuclear weapons in Europe, in the late 1960s. See “NATO Approves Rules for Defensive Use of Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” *New York Times* (4 December 1969).



At March 5 NYC “No War on Russia” protest. The Democratic Party has been pushing the anti-Russia war drive leading to world war.

machine, no matter how illogical, they say maybe the Russians have been shelling the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant that they already control. The U.S. says it wants to find out where the Kremlin leader’s “red lines” are, and then keeps escalating. Many war hawks would even welcome Putin using tactical nuclear weapons, as the Pentagon has certainly war-gamed using its own submarine-launched W76-2 “low-yield” nuclear warheads against Chinese atolls in the South China Sea.

The imperialists have their think tanks, tasked with “thinking the unthinkable” as they spin out their scenarios for counterrevolution in China.¹⁸ The job of genuine communists is to build a revolutionary workers party, based on the Bolshevik program of Lenin and Trotsky, to provide leadership for the working masses, the poor and oppressed in their struggles for survival, and to chart the way forward to sweep away the exploiters and oppressors who would turn the planet into a radioactive wasteland. On the eve of the military operations, the LFI laid out the possible course of the war, and the corresponding program for workers action. Today the nationalist Russia-Ukraine war has become a U.S./NATO proxy war against Russia, part of the war drive for imperialist world domination and a lead-up to a counterrevolutionary war on China. That drive, careening toward a thermonuclear World War III, can only be defeated by international proletarian revolution, led by a reformed, authentically Trotskyist Fourth International. ■

¹⁸ See “The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming,” particularly the section on “Nuclear Armageddon Made in USA,” and a box on “Mad Bombers on the Loose (in the White House): A Glimpse at the Record” in *Revolution* No. 19, September 2022.



Dock workers in the harbor city of Le Havre, France, march in October 18 “general strike.” For port workers action to stop military cargo for NATO’s imperialist war on Russia!

Taiwan and Hong Kong Are Part of China – Imperialists Hands Off!

Mil3010 video

U.S. Anti-China War Provocations Over Taiwan



Defend China Against Imperialist Drive for Counterrevolution! For Revolutionary Reunification of China – Expropriate the Capitalists

Target: China. U.S., Japanese and Australian warships heading for Rim of the Pacific 2022 war games on June 29. Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan on August 2-3. The military exercise ended on August 4. Despite the timing, there was almost no mention in the media of RIMPAC, the world's largest live-fire naval maneuvers. Yet, "Everything this exercise does has China in its sights," reported the liberal warmongers at Defense One.

Late in the night of August 2, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi and her Congressional entourage flew on U.S. military aircraft into the Chinese territory of Taiwan, explicitly flouting numerous warnings by the Chinese government against this dangerous stunt. Despite decades of Washington formally upholding a "one China policy," affirming that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is "the sole legal Government of China" and "acknowledging" that "Taiwan is part of China," the official visit by the third highest official of the U.S. government¹ was a blatant provocation. During her stay, Pelosi all but advocated Taiwanese independence, referring to the island as a "country."

¹ According to the official line of succession, upon the death, resignation, removal from office or incapacity of an elected U.S. president, the office of president would pass to the vice president, and next in line is the speaker of the House of Representatives.

The U.S. government is fully aware that such talk points to war with China, which has insisted for 70 years that reunification with Taiwan is imperative. The fact that the island is a separate entity from the mainland is the result of the dismemberment of China by imperialism going back to the mid-19th century, and the imperialists' continued use of Taiwan as a spearhead to restore capitalist rule in China. That is the *only* reason Taiwan isn't already part of the PRC.

In the face of this outrageous provocation, China's foreign ministry responded with justified fury, releasing a statement saying that Pelosi's visit is a "violation of the one-China principle" and "seriously infringes upon China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." It added that, "these moves, like playing with fire, are extremely dangerous. Those who play with fire will perish by it." Three days later, to underline the gravity of the matter, on August 5, China's foreign ministry announced a series of countermeasures, including cancelling all China-U.S. military talks, suspending China-U.S. talks on climate change and suspending cooperation on immigration, counternarcotics and criminal matters. But Beijing did not limit itself to diplomatic measures.

In the following days, China carried out a series of military exercises around Taiwan, demonstrating that the PRC is prepared to defend itself against anything the imperialists can throw at it. The maneuvers included firing 11 missiles into areas bracketing the island, landing to the north, northeast, east, southeast and southwest, including two

directly overflying Taiwan. On the west, ten warships and 100 fighter planes of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) held maneuvers in the Taiwan Strait between the island and mainland China, while 22 PLA aircraft flew past the median line in the strait.² China showed that it could encircle the island, while the combined maneuvers simulated and amounted to a trial run of a blockade.

China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state, is fully justified in responding forcefully to the aggressive war threats by the U.S., including Pelosi's highly publicized visit, escalating arms sales to Taiwan, official U.S. declarations calling China a "threat," and bipartisan legislation budgeting over a trillion dollars to gearing up for a military showdown with China. While for two decades (1972-92) U.S. rulers formed an alliance with Beijing against the Soviet Union, later seeking to pursue the restoration of capitalism by including China in the World Trade Organization, the Chinese Revolution has always represented a threat to the U.S.-dominated world order, no matter how much

² "With Missiles, China Sends Warning on Taiwan," *New York Times*, 5 August.

Beijing bureaucrats pursued the illusion of peacefully coexisting with imperialism.

Today, as the U.S. and its NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) allies are escalating their war drive against Russia, instigating the reactionary nationalist Russia-Ukraine war, the imperialists have ostentatiously and explicitly targeted China as well. (This crucial point, deliberately ignored by most of the "left," has been underlined by the League for the Fourth International and its U.S. section, the Internationalist Group.) The NATO summit in June issued a first-ever "Strategic Concept" which labeled the PRC a "strategic challenge," "competitor" and "potential adversary" which seeks to "subvert the rules-based international order" – i.e., the unipolar, U.S.-dominated "New World Order" that plays by Washington rules. The conclave also declared "the Indo-Pacific" important to NATO, and for the first time invited the heads of state and government from Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea to the summit.

In the lead-up to Pelosi's Taiwan adventure, much was made of supposed differences within the Democratic administration of Joe Biden, who remarked that the Pentagon thought the trip was "not a good idea." This is eyewash, part of the U.S.' "strategic ambiguity" on Taiwan that the Cold Warriors in Washington are using as a cover for their build-up to war. The recklessness of Biden, Pelosi & Co. has alarmed even prominent mouthpieces of the bourgeoisie. Notorious mass murderer Henry Kissinger noted that "we [the U.S.] are at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created, without any concept of how this is going to end or what it's supposed to lead to."³ And *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman termed Pelosi's trip "utterly reckless, dangerous and irresponsible,"⁴ even as he called to arm Taiwan to the hilt.

Underlining that Pelosi's trip is part of an "escalation cycle" to provoke China, three more groups of U.S. officials visited the island in August, including a Congressional delegation on August 14 led by Massachusetts Democratic senator Ed Markey, as well as a bevy of Japanese lawmakers of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. At the end of the month, the U.S. sent two guided missile cruisers to violate China's

³ "Henry Kissinger Is Worried About 'Disequilibrium'," *Wall Street Journal*, 12 July.

⁴ *New York Times*, 2 August.

Xinhua News Agency, Google maps



China During August 4-7, in response to Nancy Pelosi's provocative visit to Taiwan, China's People's Liberation Army carried out missile drills in six areas bracketing the island (shaded blocks), and live-fire naval exercises in the Taiwan Strait.



Demonstrator rips U.S. flag during protest in Taipei, Taiwan, against provocation visit by U.S. House of Representatives speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Reuters



Defeat U.S./NATO war drive – Defend China against imperialism and counterrevolution! Internationalist contingent in New York City May Day 2022 march.

territorial waters in what it called “a routine Taiwan Strait transit.” After a similar exercise in “gunboat diplomacy” in April, it was reported that the Navy has been sending ships on such “routine transits” about once a month for the last two years.⁵ And on September 3, the Biden administration approved a billion-dollar arms sale to Taiwan, including air-to-air and anti-ship missiles like those recently provided to Ukraine.

Ever since the 1949 Chinese Revolution established the PRC, it has been seen as a major obstacle to U.S. domination for having escaped the stranglehold of capitalist rule. Following the counterrevolutionary wave of 1989-92 that destroyed the Soviet Union and the East European deformed workers states, China has been the No. 1 target on the U.S. imperialists’ hit list. *In the event of war with the U.S. – over Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang, the South China Sea or whatever – the League for the Fourth International stands squarely on the side of China.* While most of the left lines up with the imperialist warmongers in China-bashing, we call on all class-conscious workers *to defend China against imperialist provocations*, exposing the lies and slanders aimed at promoting capitalist counterrevolution in the world’s largest remaining workers state.

Taiwan Used as a Launchpad for Imperialist Anti-China Operations

Taiwan has been part of China since the late 1600s under the Qing dynasty, and today its population is 97% Han Chinese.⁶ Beginning with the Opium Wars by Britain in 1839-42 and 1856-60, the imperialists sought to carve up China into spheres of influence. In 1884, France invaded Taiwan, but was forced to withdraw, and in 1895 Japan seized Taiwan in the First Sino-Japanese War, turning it into a colony. Ever since, the island has been a platform for imperialist attacks on China. This has included Japan’s 1931 takeover of Manchuria and its murderous invasion of eastern China in the Second Sino-Japanese War beginning in 1937, including the infamous Nanjing massacre in which an estimated 200,000 people were slaughtered.

⁵ “China protests another ‘routine’ US Navy transit through Taiwan Strait,” *Stars and Stripes*, 27 April.

⁶ The Han people, native to China, are the world’s largest ethnic group.

In 1949, the Communist Party of China led by Mao Zedong, at the head of a peasant army, defeated the Chinese Nationalist Party (GMD, for Guomindang)⁷ of the U.S.-backed dictator Chiang Kai-shek, signaling the victory of the Chinese Revolution. The remnants of Chiang’s army fled to Taiwan, where its “Republic of China” (ROC) acted as a U.S. neo-colony against the victorious People’s Republic. On the mainland, capitalism would be replaced by a collectivized planned economy, which despite Stalinist bureaucratic mismanagement brought enormous gains for workers, peasants, women and ethnic minorities. On Taiwan reactionary anti-communist forces maintained a brutal and repressive capitalist system falsely hailed as “democratic” by its U.S. sponsors.

Washington has long sought to use Taiwan as a linchpin for imperialist military encirclement of the PRC and a launchpad for U.S. counterrevolutionary designs to “take back” China – that is, to re-enslave the Chinese masses under the boot of imperialism and “free” capitalist exploitation. In the Korean War (1950-53), the U.S. commander, General Douglas MacArthur, referred to Taiwan as his “unsinkable air-

⁷ The GMD, in the Pinyin phonetic transcription of Chinese, is known as the KMT (for Kuomintang) on Taiwan, which uses the older, Wade-Giles transliteration, under which, for example, the Chinese capital of Beijing was rendered as Peking.



Crowds in Beijing greet the arrival of the People’s Liberation Army marking the victory of the Chinese Revolution, 1 October 1949.

craft carrier.” But despite U.S. imperialism’s technological superiority, its systematic firebombing of North Korean cities and its massive use of chemical (napalm) and biological weapons, China’s entry into the war in November 1950 drove the U.S./U.N. forces halfway down the Korean peninsula. This secured the existence of the North Korean deformed workers state and dealt U.S. imperialism a defeat from which it has been smarting ever since.

In 1954, the U.S. signed a mutual defense pact with the “ROC,” establishing a United States Taiwan Defense Command and stationing up to 30,000 U.S. troops in Taiwan until 1979. In 1958 when China sought to take the ROC-occupied islets of Kinmen (Quemoy) and Matsu, located in the harbor of Xiamen, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff held that “the use of nuclear weapons would ultimately be necessary” to defend them.⁸ But in 1972, U.S. president Richard Nixon and his national security advisor Kissinger switched gears to exploit the Sino-Soviet split and enlist the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy in an anti-Soviet alliance. And as a *quid pro quo*, the U.S. formally declared that “all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain that there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China,” and the U.S. “does not challenge that position.”⁹

Mao’s treacherous alliance with U.S. imperialism was very real, and contributed to the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union. In 1979, China (backed by the U.S.) invaded Soviet ally Vietnam, and from 1980 on, Beijing colluded with the CIA’s Operation Cyclone against Soviet intervention backing a reform government in Afghanistan. China supplied arms to anti-Soviet *mujahedin* (holy warriors) and financed (together with Saudi Arabia) their training in camps run by Pakistan. The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 was a major factor setting the stage for the collapse of the Soviet bloc deformed workers states and the destruction of the USSR that began soon after. *Authentic Trotskyists defended Vietnam and hailed Soviet intervention in Afghanistan against the U.S.-sponsored reactionaries, who were backed by China’s Stalinist rulers as part of their treacherous alliance with Washington.*

But three decades on, in the decaying post-Soviet, U.S.-dominated “New World

⁸ M.I. Halperin, *The 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis* (Rand Corporation Memo, 1966).

⁹ 1972 Joint PRC-U.S. communiqué.



Bemedalled tinpot dictator Chiang Kai-shek, leader of the Guomindang (Chinese Nationalist Party) and butcher of the 1927 Shanghai workers uprising, fled to Taiwan in 1949.

Order,” the Beijing Stalinists’ illusions of building “socialism (with Chinese characteristics) in one country” through “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism have reached a dead end. Particularly since the onset of the COVID pandemic in 2020, all wings of the U.S. bourgeoisie have joined in vilifying China. Washington has now switched from backing the GMD/KMT to fomenting Taiwanese separatism through the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). During her visit, Pelosi effusively embraced Taiwan’s DPP president, Tsai Ing-wen, and declared that Taiwan had the “lowest number of deaths from COVID. A real model for the world.” In reality, the island’s COVID death rate is 3748% higher than that in mainland China (39.35 vs. 1.05 per 100,000).¹⁰

In the spirit of Democratic Party imperialist feminism, Pelosi suggested that China was only upset at her visit because she is a woman. Actually, the House speaker is famous for her rabid anti-communism and backing of every CIA-sponsored counterrevolutionary “movement” against China, from decades of enthusing over “His Holiness,” the CIA-funded, Nazi-educated Dalai Lama, to shepherding leaders of the fascist-infested, imperialist flag-waving Hong Kong “democracy” riots through Washington in 2019, to promoting the CIA conduit-funded “World Uyghur Congress” (WUC). In 2020, Pelosi appointed an advisor to the separatist WUC to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. During Pelosi’s visit, Taiwan president Tsai awarded her the “Order of Propitious Clouds with special Grand Cordons” as a “devoted friend” of Taiwan.

Pelosi’s virulent hatred of China is by no means at odds with U.S. president Biden, who campaigned as a bigger China-hater than Trump, who had feted Chinese president Xi Jinping at his Mar-a-Lago luxury resort. The House speaker traveled to Taiwan aboard a U.S. military plane, making this a deliberate *official* U.S. provocation. Left out of U.S. media reports is the fact that immediately leading up to and during Pelosi’s

¹⁰ <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>. For an account of how China mobilized centrally planned resources to effectively protect its population from the deadly plague, in stark contrast to the profit-driven capitalist rulers who have allowed COVID to ravage much of the rest of the world, see our article, “A Tale Of Two Cities: Wuhan – New York,” *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020.



Mao Zedong and U.S. president Richard Nixon sealed treacherous anti-Soviet alliance in 1972.

Taiwan adventure, from June 29 to August 4, the U.S. Indo-Pacific command held a giant military exercise, RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific), involving 26 nations, 38 surface ships, four submarines, nine land forces, about 170 aircraft, more than 30 unmanned systems, and 25,000 people. “Everything this exercise does has China in its sights, whether or not military leaders are free to say so,” reported one military site.¹¹

Meanwhile, the U.S. Navy’s Seventh Fleet, with aircraft carrier USS *Ronald Reagan*, guided-missile destroyers, nuclear submarines and other U.S. warships and aircraft was moved into position for Pelosi’s visit. And while Republican China hawks are pushing an “Arm Taiwan Act,” in his year and two-thirds in office Biden has already approved six arms sales to Taiwan, totaling \$2.3 billion.¹² On three different occasions, Biden has said that the U.S. would “defend” Taiwan by military force in case of an “invasion” by China.¹³ And the U.S.’ “2022 National Defense Strategy” states that China is the U.S.’ “most consequential strategic competitor” and **that the U.S.’ No. 1 priority is “defending**

¹¹ “At Reborn RIMPAC, A Clear Mission: Deter China, Defend Taiwan,” *Defense One*, 20 July.

¹² Wikipedia, “List of US arms sales to Taiwan.” Since abrogating the U.S.-Taiwan defense pact in 1979, the U.S. has sent over \$90 billion in arms to the island.

¹³ CNBC, 20 August 2021; CNN, 22 October 2021; *Washington Post*, 23 May.

the homeland, paced to the growing multi-domain threat posed by the PRC.”

At the same time, as Washington is more and more explicit in preparing for imperialist war against China, there has been an important shift in U.S. strategy for Taiwan. Even as Chinese president Xi continues to emphasize the PRC’s longstanding policy of peaceful reunification with Taiwan, the Trump and Biden administrations have stepped up efforts to block this, and thus make military action the only option. Rather than arming Taiwan with sophisticated (and expensive) hardware like F-16 fighter jets, at \$33 million *each*, which have no chance of withstanding a frontal assault, the Pentagon has been emphasizing a “porcupine defense,” to arm Taiwan with large quantities of high-tech, lower-cost arms (anti-aircraft and antitank weapons, drones) to wear down a Chinese “invading” force and make a takeover as costly as possible.

An article in the liberal *Foreign Policy* (8 November 2021) notes that Biden is continuing the “so-called porcupine strategy” of Trump’s national security advisors, “aimed at making Taiwan a pricklier target.” This goes back to a 2008 article by U.S. Naval War College professor William S. Murray, “Revisiting Taiwan’s Defense Strategy.”¹⁴ The “porcupine strategy,” he wrote, “would offer Taiwan a way to resist PRC military

¹⁴ Naval War College Review, Vol. 61, No. 3, Summer 2008.



On the occasion of her war-mongering visit, Nancy Pelosi was awarded the “Order of Propitious Clouds with special Grand Cordon” by Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen (right).

May-October 2022



RIMPAC 2022, timed to coincide with Pelosi visit to Taiwan, was all about practicing for war on China. Clockwise from top: sailing in formation to open exercise; Philippine navy frigate testing weapons systems; U.S., Canadian, Australian and Malaysian forces sink decommissioned U.S. warship; South Korean assault forces head towards beach; Mexican naval infantry storm beach during amphibious raid in multinational littoral operations.

coercion for weeks or months without presuming immediate U.S. intervention.” This parallels the “war of attrition” policy of U.S. imperialism in Ukraine today, which has been summed up as “fight to the last Ukrainian.” In view of the tens of thousands of Ukrainian casualties resulting from this dead-end strategy, and with Taiwan’s population (23 million) half the size of Ukraine’s, sober-minded elements in Taipei – facing vastly larger People’s Liberation Army forces – may consider whether the Biden-Trump “fight to the last Taiwanese” strategy is the way they want to go.

Preparations for Economic War Against China

In addition to the military threats against China, the U.S. continues its preparations for economic war against China. These days, about the only issue on which it is possible to get a bipartisan Democrat and Republican majority in Washington is in going after China. Last year, Congress passed “the most expansive industrial policy in U.S. history” to build up a U.S. manufacturing and technological edge.¹⁵ And in August 2022 Biden signed into law the CHIPS and Science Act, allocating billions of dollars for microprocessor chip manufacture in the United States, including by Taiwan-based firms. This makes Taiwan’s local capitalists more dependent on the U.S., particularly as the act provides subsidies for companies to manufacture chips *on condition that they cut economic ties with the Chinese mainland.*

As Wang Peng, a research fellow at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, explained:

“The U.S. is using the CHIPS Act to force companies in countries and regions of key status on the global chip supply and industrial chains to play by U.S. rules, as well as encircling and suppressing chip industries in emerging markets.”¹⁶

This may be a windfall for giant U.S. firms like Intel, but the days are long past when U.S. imperialism could easily bully the world with its economic might, and this and other such measures will ultimately prove futile. The problem for Washington is that the economic power of the Chinese deformed workers state has steadily increased, while that of the U.S. and other imperialist powers is on the decline. Mean-

¹⁵ *New York Times*, 8 June 2021.

¹⁶ “US pushes chip bill to encircle China, but ‘unable to lure firms to decouple with mainland’,” *Global Times*, 27 July.

while, Taiwan is becoming ever more economically connected to the mainland. Currently, 42% of the goods sent off the island go to the PRC, while only 15% of exports go to the U.S.¹⁷ Attempts to split Taiwan economically from the mainland would entail severe costs.

To U.S. imperialism, Taiwan is simply a chip to be played, to generate a crisis. It is seeking to run a script similar to what it has followed in Ukraine, where the U.S. and NATO instigated a war partly in order to force Europe to decouple from Russia. But China, with a GDP (gross domestic product) roughly ten times as large as Russia’s, is a very different matter. At the NATO summit in June, the U.S. was able to strong-arm its European allies into denouncing Chinese actions as “malicious” and declaring that the PRC’s “stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values.” But any practical application of NATO’s “strategic concept” will be hard for European imperialists to swallow. For example, in any given year half or more of Volkswagen’s net earnings come from China, its largest market.

Economic blackmail seeking to force companies and countries to break ties with China, as NATO and European Union (E.U.) sanctions have done with Russia, may not succeed. U.S. imperialism needs a sharper stick – a military one. Last year the U.S., Britain and Australia formed the AUKUS alliance to increase military pressure on China. Now they have lined up NATO to extend its war drive from Russia to China. But a war over Taiwan, which Biden & Co. seem hell-bent on preparing, would be a direct confrontation with China, raising the spectre of thermonuclear war. Meanwhile, China’s dramatic progress in developing its defensive capabilities make a U.S. “victory” in a conventional war increasingly doubtful. Since launching its third aircraft carrier in June, China now has the largest navy in the world.

Meanwhile, as the U.S. carries out its war provocations and economic sanctions, its propaganda machine is in high gear churning out lies about China. Perhaps the most egregious of these, echoed by every Democrat and Republican, as well as by many fake leftists, is that China is carrying out or has carried out “genocide” in Xinjiang. In fact, the 1949 revolution laid the basis for continuing enormous advances for the people

¹⁷ “Taiwan’s trade with China is far bigger than its trade with the U.S.,” CNBC, 4 August.



Workers at FAW/Volkswagen factory in Tianjin, China assembling Audi cars in December 2019. In any given year, half or more of Volkswagen's net earnings come from China, its largest market.

of Xinjiang, and while Han chauvinism is inherent in the nationalist Stalinist ideology of the bureaucracy – and has had expressions in Chinese policy in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in northwestern China – there is not a shred of evidence of mass killings or any attempt to wipe out the Uyghur Muslim people, for the simple reason that there have been none. And among the things that this war-propaganda invention omits is that Chinese official measures were taken in response to a number of murderous attacks – including a wave in 2016 in which 183 people were killed – by Islamist forces associated with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement, which even the E.U., the U.N. and the U.S. have designated a terrorist organization.

The lie of “Uighur genocide” is a battle cry of the imperialist anti-China war drive. It is also a pretext for fomenting separatism in Xinjiang and inflicting economic harm to the region, for example by imposing sanctions on cotton grown there. The United States government, through the CIA conduit National Endowment for Democracy (NED), has funneled millions of dollars to the anti-communist World Uyghur Congress,¹⁸ which has also received millions in funding from the Australian version of the NED, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute. Now the NED is preparing to hold an “11th Global Assembly” of another of its projects, the “World Movement for Democracy” (which works out of NED headquarters in Washington), in late October. And in yet another deliberate provocation, that confab for counterrevolution is to be held on the Chinese territory of Taiwan.

This “World Movement for Democracy” is the brainchild of Carl Gershman, former head of the NED from its founding by Ronald Reagan in 1984 until last year. (Before that he led the hardline Cold Warriors of Social Democrats, USA, followers of the anti-Trotskyist Max Shachtman.) Every year, the “WMD” confers “courage tributes” to Washington’s favorite U.S.-sponsored, pro-imperialist “movements.” In 2021, the list included the San Isidro Movement in Cuba, which sparked the anti-communist protests that July;¹⁹ Students for a Free Tibet, which was set up by the NED-funded International Campaign for Tibet and seeks to restore the

¹⁸ In 2019, the NED budgeted \$1.2 million for Xinjiang and other Uighur-related projects. See our article, “Washington’s Hand Behind Anti-China Riots in Hong Kong,” in *The Internationalist* No. 58, Winter 2020.

¹⁹ See our article, “The Truth About Cuba Protests – Defend the Revolution Against U.S. Imperialism and Its Frontmen,” *The Internationalist* No. 64, July-September 2021.

theocratic rule of the Dalai Lama; and the Campaign for Uyghurs, whose executive director boasts on her bio of her “extensive experience working with U.S. government agencies, including Homeland Security, Department of Defense, Department of State, Department of Justice, and various U.S. intelligence agencies.” Etc.

Pseudo-Socialist “Running Dogs of U.S. Imperialism”

Meanwhile, various left groups that falsely claim to represent Trotskyism repeat the imperialist lies. The International Socialist Alternative (ISA) current, which includes Socialist Alternative (SAIt) in the United States and Socialist Action in Hong Kong, grotesquely smears the Chinese workers state as “imperialist.” These anti-Trotskyists loudly backed the 2019 anti-communist riots in Hong Kong, including the call for “independence” for the capitalist enclave and former British colony. In the current crisis, the ISA/SAIt calls to “actively engage in the struggle” for Taiwan independence “[i]f the Taiwanese people want independence, which is clearly the case today.”²⁰ Actually, the polls it cites show that 82% favor the status quo while only 5% want “independence as soon as possible,”²¹ and it admits that for Taiwan nationalists, “independence” means to support U.S. imperialism. The counterrevolutionary line of the ISA/SAIt on Hong Kong and Taiwan shows that the “socialist” pretensions of these imposters are only a cover for their real role as deckhands on the Pentagon’s “unsinkable aircraft carrier.”

Another group abusing the name of Trotskyism in the region is the International Marxist Tendency (IMT), which recently published an article on “The Taiwan national question and the tasks of the Taiwanese Marxists” (*In Defence of Marxism*, 5 August). The very title is a capitulation to imperialism. There is no “Taiwanese nation”: as noted, according to Taiwan government statistics, 97% of the island’s population is ethnic Han Chinese,²² while its separate existence was as a Japanese colony and since 1949 as a U.S. neo-colony. The IMT is less effusive in its embrace of Taiwanese independence, and even criticizes “the reactionary nature of Taiwanese nationalism.” But since the IMT also peddles the myth of “Chinese imperialism,”

²⁰ International Socialist Alliance, “What’s Behind the Taiwan Strait Crisis?” (1 September).

²¹ *Newsweek*, 14 July.

²² “2004 Annual Meeting of the Taiwan Population Society Seminar – Comparative Analysis of Taiwan’s Current Ethnic Identity Situation [in Chinese]” (2004)

its call for “no to unification with China on a capitalist basis” in practice means opposing reunification with the PRC, and its fantasy talk of a “democratic socialist Taiwan” would just give a left cover for going along with those pushing for in “independent” capitalist Taiwan.

The bulk of the left slanders China as imperialist while refusing to defend it against the real imperialists. As usual they are parroting the capitalist Democratic Party, in particular the “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders, whose platform in the 2020 primaries declared: “we must work with the international community to deter foreign support for China’s military buildup.”²³

Today and for the last decade – ever since Barack Obama’s 2011 “strategic pivot to Asia” – U.S. imperialism has been increasing the economic pressure on China. To what end? There is zero possibility that Beijing would renounce its historic demand of national reunification, which goes back to the 1919 May 4 Movement against imperialist domination of China.²⁴ Nor would Taiwanese nationalists have any chance of mounting a successful military resistance to a determined Chinese takeover. But by ratcheting up U.S. arming of Taiwan to make the island “like a porcupine,” combined with escalating provocations like Pelosi’s trip and Biden’s “bloopers,” Washington is making it clear that it will go all-out to prevent reunification of China. The seemingly perverse effect is to encourage Beijing to move militarily sooner rather than later.

This imperialist “strategy” – shared by Democrats and Republicans alike – is directly tied to U.S. instigation of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. By refusing any security guarantees to Moscow, or to rule out Ukraine membership in NATO, and by constant anti-Russia war “games,” the Cold Warriors in Washington made it clear that sooner or later Russia would have to militarily confront NATO and its proxies. Similarly, by escalating its provocations over Taiwan, the Biden administration is making clear that it will pull out the stops to block reunification with China, accelerating the push toward war whose ultimate aim is bloody counterrevolution in China and reestablishment of its subjugation to Western imperialism. The LFI calls to **defeat the U.S./NATO imperialist war drive against Russia and China**, and **support the reunification of Taiwan with China**, including by military means if necessary.

For International Socialist Revolution!

The would-be masters of the world in Washington and Wall Street rightly see China, with its socialized economy (despite huge capitalist inroads), as a threat because it belies the neoliberal mantra that “there is no alternative” (TINA) to “free market” capitalism. More fundamentally, U.S. world domination is threatened by the very existence of the Chinese deformed workers state, particularly with its growing military and economic power. As we have written:

“[D]espite bureaucratic mismanagement, the Chinese planned economy has made remarkable achievements in improving the lives of working people who had previously been hideously oppressed by imperialist plunder. Since the revolution, the

²³ “Bernie Sanders on China,” at feelthebern.org

²⁴ See “For Revolutionary Reunification of China” in this issue.

population of China has seen an unprecedented increase in life expectancy, from 35 years in 1949 to 77 years in 2018, and now enjoys a higher healthy life expectancy than the U.S. population. Moreover, from 1998 to 2018, workers’ wages increased by ten times (1,000%), tripling over the last decade, and are now higher than the newest members of the European Union. (U.S. workers’ real wages have stagnated for the last 40 years.) And contrary to the expectations of bourgeois economists and fake leftists who claim that China is capitalist, the state sector has grown greatly since the 2007-09 world capitalist crisis.”²⁵

The reality that *capitalism kills* was vividly brought home by the COVID-19 pandemic, with corpses piling up in trailers to be dumped in mass graves in the U.S., while China with its socialized economy effectively contained the deadly virus. In the last two years, China has had a little over 5,000 deaths compared to over a million in the United States: a cumulative COVID death rate of 314 per 100,000 in the U.S. in contrast to only 1 per 100,000 in China.²⁶ Meanwhile, the imperialist media keep lambasting China’s successful “zero COVID” policies, the latest variant being to complain about lockdowns in Xinjiang and Tibet.²⁷

As capitalism putrefies, the imperialist rulers increasingly turn toward military might to maintain their fraying hegemony. The IG and LFI, defend the deformed workers states of China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam while warning that U.S. imperialism’s provocations are bringing the planet ever closer to a (thermonuclear) third world war. See for instance: “U.S. Response to Coronavirus: China-Bashing and War Moves” (*The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020), “Biden Escalates Anti-China War Plans” (*The Internationalist* No. 64, July-September 2021); “Behind the War: U.S./NATO War Drive Against Russia, China” (*The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022). As the fighting drags on in Ukraine, will the next imperialist-instigated war break out in the Taiwan Strait? Or the South China Sea? Or...?

The policy of Stalin and Mao, of “building socialism in one country,” was a nationalist betrayal of the internationalist program of the October 1917 Revolution headed by Lenin and Trotsky, and ultimately led to the destruction of the first workers state in history. The call of the latter-day Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy, from Deng to Xi, for “socialism with Chinese characteristics,” on the basis of “one country, two systems,” further endangers the foundations of the 1949 Revolution. Trotskyists say: **Defeat the imperialist war drive aimed at fomenting counterrevolution in China! Defend the gains of the Chinese Revolution through proletarian political revolution to oust the bureaucracy, expropriate the capitalists and extend those gains to Hong Kong and Taiwan through revolutionary reunification!** ■

²⁵ “Hong Kong “Democracy” Riots: Pro-Imperialist, Anti-Communist, Fascist-Infested,” *The Internationalist* No. 58, Winter 2020.

²⁶ <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>

²⁷ The latest demand of the Campaign for Uyghurs is that “Chinese Regime Must End Extreme Covid Lockdowns in East Turkistan” (9 September). So these supposed champions of “human rights” are calling for Uyghurs to die, for that is what ending the “zero-COVID” measures would mean!

Not “One Country, Two Systems” For Revolutionary Reunification of China!

Reunification of Taiwan with the People’s Republic of China is not just a currently hot issue, it is the culmination of the drive to undo the imperialist dismembering of China going back to the mid-1800s. It was this national oppression that gave rise to the May Fourth Movement in 1919, particularly against Japanese colonial inroads including Taiwan (and their endorsement by the “democratic” imperialist victors of World War I in the Versailles Treaty), but more generally against imperialist domination of the most populous country on earth. This movement quickly went beyond patriotic nationalism to embrace revolutionary anti-imperialist workers struggle with the founding of the Communist Party of China in 1921.

A century later, the Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International have repeatedly called to defeat the imperialist drive for war against China whose aim is to foment capitalist counterrevolution, just as Leon Trotsky fought to defend the Soviet Union against imperialism, despite the betrayals of Stalinism. At the same time, we warn that the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy undermines and is an obstacle to that defense with its policies of conciliating capitalism and imperialism. Regarding Taiwan, the Communist Party of China and its leader, Chinese president Xi Jinping, call to reunite China on the nationalist, explicitly non-socialist basis of “one country, two systems.” Concretely, what this means was made explicit in the White Paper issued by the Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of China’s State Council in 2000:

“After reunification, the policy of ‘one country, two systems’ will be practiced, with the main body of China (Chinese mainland) continuing with its socialist system, and Taiwan maintaining its capitalist system for a long period of time to come.”

The White Paper noted that this policy on Taiwan was first put forward by Deng Xiaoping in 1979. This was precisely when the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy was further deepening its treacherous alliance with U.S. imperialism against the Soviet Union that had been established by Mao Zedong, who died in 1976. It was also when Deng was elaborating his policy of “reform and opening up” the Chinese economy to privately owned enterprises and foreign capitalist investment. While (contrary to what most bourgeois economists and reformist pseudo-socialists claim) the state sector is still dominant in China, these policies have fostered a large capitalist sector that ultimately endangers the very foundations of the workers state.

On Taiwan, Xi elaborated his position in a 1 January 2019 “Speech at

the 40th Anniversary Commemoration of the ‘Message to Compatriots in Taiwan’.” There, the Chinese president and CPC general secretary stated that, “Taiwan compatriots have made significant contributions to the reform and opening up of the mainland, and have also shared the development opportunities of the mainland.” He promised to “provide the same treatment to Taiwan compatriots and Taiwanese enterprises” as to mainland companies, and while vowing to give no quarter to Taiwanese separatists, and not renouncing the use of force, Xi declared that “after peaceful reunification, the social system and way of life of the Taiwan compatriots will be fully respected, and the private property, religious beliefs, and legitimate rights and interests of the Taiwan compatriots will be fully guaranteed.”

The wager of the Stalinist bureaucracy, from Deng to Xi, is that by enabling a lot of Taiwan capitalists to make a lot of money off exploiting the labor of Chinese workers, they would create a sector of Taiwan’s bourgeois ruling class favorable to reunification with China. The Beijing bureaucrats have succeeded in fostering such a sector, but whether the owners of the key semiconductor industry, in which Taiwan is the world leader, would stand up to a credible threat of being cut off from the rest of the world capitalist market is open to question. Already, many Taiwan-owned companies are moving operations to Vietnam, India, or Mexico and the U.S. But what about the rest of the Taiwan population, including those induced to vote for the Taiwanese separatist Democratic Progressive Party (which since 2016 has held the presidency and a majority in the island’s legislature)?

A recent paper by professors at the Wuhan University Law School, “An Outline of China’s National Unification” (<http://www.aisixiang.com>, 20 July 2022 [in Chinese]), notes that:

“It is foreseeable that in the absence of sufficient political guidance and institutional guarantees, it will be difficult for Taiwan compatriots who have long received the Taiwan authorities’ ‘anti-Communist’ education and have been affected by the ‘de-sinicization’ policy to realize their identity transformation spontaneously after the reunification of state power.”

So then how is that to be accomplished? The Wuhan law professors call for “an institutional system with a coherent and unified narrative structure to realize the transformation of the historical, collective and



The drive to undo the dismembering of China goes back to the May Fourth Movement in 1919 (above) which joined students and workers in anti-imperialist struggle.

individual identities of Taiwan compatriots,” that will “promote the transformation of the identities of Taiwan compatriots,” to “guide the Taiwan compatriots to form a correct collective identity” and to “form a correct individual identity.” This is a call for a giant Mao-Stalinist-style bureaucratic reeducation campaign, after reunification.

To win the masses of working people in Taiwan to reunification, it is indeed necessary to combat the poisonous anti-communist Taiwanese nationalist/separatist ideology promoted by the imperialists and their flunkies in the U.S. neocolonial government of Taiwan. But the bureaucracy’s policy is to force-feed Chinese nationalism. Nowhere in the Wuhan paper, or in Xi’s 2019 speech, is there any mention of socialism or building *class consciousness*. And the only mention of autonomy for a reunified Taiwan is in terms of maintaining its *capitalist* social relations and “way of life.” Yet there is a real basis for building *internationalist communist consciousness* among Taiwanese and mainland Chinese workers in the course of waging class struggle against the capitalists and ousting their defenders whose policies endanger the foundations and gains of the Chinese Revolution. This internationalist orientation is, of course, diametrically opposed to Stalinism’s nationalist outlook and program, going back to the anti-Marxist dogma of “socialism in one country” put forward by Stalin and embraced by Mao and his successors.

Rather than nationalism or patriotism, what needs to be raised is the *revolutionary consciousness* that workers in Taiwan together with their comrades in mainland China have the power to expropriate capitalism, to take over all the factories and industries on the island and incorporate them into China’s centralized planned economy. In many cases, Taiwanese and mainland Chinese workers face the same capitalist bosses. As of 2019, according to one survey, Taiwanese-owned businesses employed more than 3.2 million workers in mainland China.¹ Meanwhile,

¹ “The Time is Up: Taiwanese Businessmen in China Facing the Centennial of the Chinese Communist Party,” *Taiwan Gazette*, 21 January 2022.

there are roughly 4 million industrial workers in Taiwan (35% of an overall workforce of 11.5 million).² Moreover, Taiwan has over 700,000 immigrant workers, mostly from the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand, who “account for 8 per cent of the country’s workforce and more than 60 per cent [of whom] work in the industrial sector, including in the microchip industry.”³ These workers are held in virtual bondage by a labor brokerage system. Southeast Asian workers do the jobs locals are unwilling to do, like being forced to handle dangerous chemicals without proper safety measures and to live in on-site factory dorms adjacent to combustible chemicals, which, unsurprisingly, has been known to cause deadly fires.

A genuinely communist leadership would take up the cause of these workers, and link them to the struggles of workers in mainland China against their brutal Taiwanese bosses. In 2018 workers in Taichung, Taiwan protested the deaths of three Vietnamese migrants living in a dormitory dangerously located above a circuit board factory of the Chin Poon Industrial Company where a fire broke out. Chin Poon also has a plant in Jiangsu, China. The 2010 suicides of workers protesting low pay and forced overtime in the giant Foxconn plant in Longhua, Shenzhen, where iPhones and Apple computers are made, drew worldwide attention. China responded by ordering sharply increased wages. Hon Hai Precision Manufacturing, Foxconn’s Taiwanese parent company, also has plants in Taiwan, as well as in Brazil, India, Mexico and a host of other countries. The imperialists seek to divert struggles against Taiwanese-owned and imperialist companies for anti-communist purposes using tools like the NED-funded *China Labour Bulletin* and China Labor Watch. To unite these workers in *class* struggle against their capitalist bosses requires a *revolutionary internationalist* program.

Authentic Trotskyists stand for the *revolutionary reunification of China*, which would be a significant blow against imperialist world domination. That means fighting for *socialist revolution in Taiwan*, to expropriate the capitalists on the island and throughout China, and for *proletarian political revolution* to replace the bureaucracy governing the People’s Republic of China with the soviet democracy of workers councils under authentic communist leadership while extending the revolution internationally. The reintegration of Taiwan could include a degree of autonomy so long as that is not a cover for maintaining capitalism or any suggestion of Taiwan “independence,” which can only mean subordination to imperialism. To defeat once and for all the threats and aggression of the imperialists, to defend the gains of the Chinese Revolution and open the way for socialist development throughout Asia and beyond, what’s needed is international socialist revolution. ■

² “Share of Taiwanese workforce employed in the industrial sector from 2011 to 2021,” Statista.com.

³ *Equal Times*, 30 July 2021.

Unpayable Debt, Food Shortages, Runaway Fuel Prices Hit Dozens of Countries Sri Lanka Economy Collapses, Masses Rise Up, President Flees, But Capitalist Crisis Remains

Forge a Trotskyist Party on a Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution For the Right of Tamil Self-Determination! For a Socialist Federation of South Asia!

SYDNEY, Australia, August 29 – Since early this year, Sri Lanka has been rocked by the most severe economic, social and political crisis it has experienced since independence from Britain in 1948. After several years of rising income from a flourishing tourism industry, the bottom dropped out after a terrorist attack during Easter 2019 on churches and hotels in the capital, Colombo, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic that all but wiped out this main revenue earner. By March 2022, the island nation off the southern tip of India had run out of foreign exchange, while saddled with US\$51 billion in foreign debt. Now prices for vital food and fuel imports have shot up due to sanctions imposed on Russia over its war with Ukraine, instigated by the United States and its NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) imperialist allies, and the U.S. Federal Reserve is ratcheting up interest rates. Result: Sri Lanka is broke.

As the country of 22 million people is unable to purchase basic goods, daily life for the masses has become unbearable. People line up for hours and days for petrol (gasoline), cooking gas, milk powder, food and medicines, often only to be told none is available. Power outages, with blackouts of 12-15 hours or more per day, are common. Meanwhile, the Electricity Board raised rates by 75%. Shortages have driven the annual inflation rate to over 40%, while food prices are up by more than 80%. In mid-April, payment of foreign debt was suspended and in May Sri Lanka formally defaulted. With petrol stations locked and people forced to cut back on meals, mass demonstrations multiplied, protest camps sprung up and general strikes were held on 28 April and 6 May calling for the resignation of the government.

Then on 9 May, now known as “Black Monday,” Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa bussed in hundreds of government supporters from across the island, who met at his official residence and then stormed the protesters’ camp at Galle Face, on Colombo’s seafloor, burning their tents. Over 200 were injured and at least eight killed. Furious protesters lashed out by torching the homes of leading politicians of the ruling Sri Lanka People’s Front (SLPP, from its initials in Sinhala) while thousands surrounded the home of the prime minister, who resigned and was rescued by a Lankan air force helicopter. Protesters then turned to the president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Mahinda’s younger brother, whose resignation they had also been demanding. The government mobilised the military and issued “shoot-to-kill” orders.

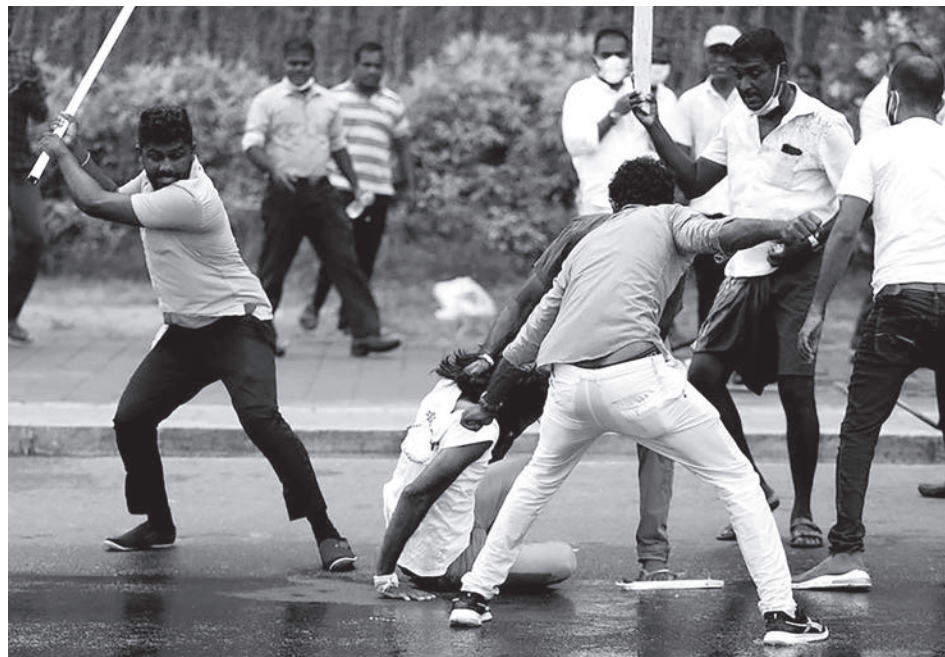


Protesters swarm police tear gas truck after storming presidential compound in Sri Lanka capital of Colombo, July 9, demanding resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa. Three days later he fled the country.

With its economy in shambles, the mass of the population living hand to mouth, day to day, Sri Lanka has been in an almost continuous upheaval for almost five months now. The popular response was to blame the calamity on the boundless corruption of the Rajapaksa “dynasty,” which has dominated the island with its hard-fisted rule for most of the last two decades. The SLPP government, elected in 2019, had four Rajapaksa brothers in top posts, including finance minister Basil, until he resigned under fire in April. “This is our country, not your ATM,” read one protest sign.

After Mahinda quit as prime minister, the protesters focused on calls for Gotabaya’s ouster as well. Their encampment, originally named “Occupy Galle Face” (after the 2011-12 Occupy Wall Street movement), was renamed Gota Go Gama (“gama” means village, in Sinhalese).

Two months after Black Monday, as another attempted police crackdown backfired, on 9 July thousands swarmed the President’s House as well as that of the new prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe. For the next few days, protesters lounged around the residences, took a dip in the pool, picnicked in the formal garden and



Government supporters brought in by Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa beat protesters, May 9. Amid uproar, he resigned.

scrawled “Go Home Gota” on the walls. And then suddenly the Rajapaksas were gone, as Gotabaya and his wife fled aboard a military plane to the Maldives, on to Singapore and to Thailand where he is awaiting a “green card” to return to the United States.¹ Wickremesinghe offered to resign as prime minister (a position he has held six times since 1993), but then was named acting president and on 21 July was duly designated president by parliament, still dominated by the Rajapaksas’ SLPP.

While the venal and nepotistic Rajapaksas are out, their hand-picked successor has continued their policies of vicious repression and brutal anti-working-class austerity. The day after Wickremesinghe took office, in the pre-dawn hours of 23 July, some 1,000 heavily armed military and police security forces stormed the protesters’ encampment outside the presidential compound. He declared a state of emergency under extraordinary powers of the “executive presidency,” giving him broad, unilateral authority over the nation’s security forces. Over 100 activists, journalists, student and trade-union leaders have been arrested, including one Joseph Stalin, the secretary (top leader) of the Sri Lanka Teachers Union. Meanwhile, the government is negotiating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a loan, its 17th (!) since 1965.

Protesters have taken aim at the theft (“give our stolen money back”) and colossal economic mismanagement (slashing taxes, cutting off fertilizer imports) of the Rajapaksa regime. More fundamentally, the Lanka crisis is an acute manifestation of imperialist looting of semi-colonial countries, augmented by the global COVID pandemic and the backfiring Western sanctions against Russia. Social explosions like that consuming Sri Lanka could erupt in dozens of countries around the world facing bankruptcy in a decaying capitalist system amid a looming world recession and skyrocketing inflation. An IMF “bailout” would certainly require privatisations (the Electricity Board and Petroleum Corporation are already being “restructured” in anticipation of that), slashing food and fuel subsidies and further impoverishing the poor.

Marchers in Colombo did not limit themselves to calling for an end to the endlessly corrupt Rajapaksa clique, but

¹ After early retirement from the army, Gotabaya Rajapaksa worked in information technology in the U.S. from 1998 to 2005. His wife is a U.S. citizen.



Army soldiers patrol near Sri Lanka's presidential compound on July 12, three days after protesters seized it.

extended their demands to all the politicians who have ruled and ruined this island nation, which not long ago had the highest living standards in the region. Demands of the protest movement – the *aragalaya* (struggle) – for “Go home Gota!” were soon joined with “Go home 225!” referring to all members of the parliament. What they got instead was a deeply unpopular president “elected” by the discredited legislature. Wickremesinghe is the leader of the arch-conservative United National Party (UNP), which has governed Sri Lanka for 38 out of the 74 years of its independence. So as protesters now chant “Go home Ranil!” the system remains, and with it the mass impoverishment that is fundamental to semi-colonial capitalism.

On an island marked since independence by sharp divisions between a predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese majority and a mostly Hindu Tamil minority, the Rajapaksas came to office, twice, as the embodiment of harsh military suppression of ethnic minorities. Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected in 2005 (against Wickremesinghe) demanding a hard line to put an end to the civil war that had lasted since 1983. In that year, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had launched guerrilla attacks in response to pogroms and massacres by Sinhalese mobs, instigated by the UNP, against Tamils in Colombo and elsewhere. With Mahinda as president, Gotabaya Rajapaksa was the head of the armed forces that slaughtered some 40,000 Tamils in the final period of the genocidal war that killed an estimated 100,000 and disappeared another 20,000.

The Rajapaksas' second election victory, in 2019, was based on their vow to crack down on Sri Lanka's Muslims, smeared as being responsible for the Islamist bombings. The SLPP represents the iron fist of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, which still dominates the major bourgeois parties, including the so-called “opposition.” The mass anti-government mobilisations themselves have not been marked by the overt communal divisions between Sinhalese and Tamils that Sri Lanka's rulers have repeatedly relied on to divide and divert the struggles of the oppressed. But that may be due in part to the fact that many Tamils in the northern and eastern provinces hung back, some figuring that it serves the Sinhalese right for massively voting for the SLPP. Also reportedly largely absent from the protests, at least early on, were the

Muslim minority, which bore the brunt of the Rajapaksas' latest campaign of ethno-communalist repression.

Now Wickremesinghe is using his predecessors' favoured tool for terrorizing opponents, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, enacted by UNP president J.R. Jayawardene in 1978. Under this draconian legislation, those accused of “unlawful” activity can be held for a year without any possibility of judicial intervention, while actions such as putting up posters can be punishable by death. This “anti-terror” law is now being used to quash opposition to the anti-worker policies of the new government in exchange for a short-term IMF bridge loan, reportedly of a measly US\$3 billion, which won't even cover interest on existing loans. Projected cuts may include slashing tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands of public sector jobs, in addition to the already decreed wage freeze for government workers while prices of essentials are skyrocketing.

Class-conscious workers should demand the abolition of the Prevention of Terror Act and immediate release of all those held under it.

Whither Sri Lanka? Toward Socialist Revolution or Authoritarian Capitalist Rule

Not only the hard-hit working people of Sri Lanka, but the imperialist rulers as well are concerned about the outcome of the present struggle – for opposite reasons. Early on, the British *Economist* (16 May) worried: “Sri Lanka's default could be the first of many.” If one country after another stopped paying its tribute to the imperialist creditors and paymasters (i.e., the foreign debt), the effect on the tottering house of cards of world finance capital could be devastating. The Lehman Brothers default that set off the 2008 Wall Street crash and a decade-long depression could pale in comparison. Then on 14 May, this house organ of the London global bankers headlined: “Sri Lanka has no money and no government. What now?”

In the short term, it is unclear if the crackdown will stem or further inflame the widespread protests which have mobilised hundreds of thousands of Lanka's angry and desperate masses. The government is widely seen as illegitimate, and is having difficulty finding parties willing to form a new majority coalition. Yet the upsurge has fallen back and lacks direction or mass worker partici-



A vegetable market in Colombo in March. Food prices have soared by 80%, forcing many into desperate poverty, hunger and, in some areas, starvation.

pation. The back-to-back “general strikes” in April-May, while quite large, were only one-day affairs and focused on ousting the Rajapaksas, which has now happened, to little effect. The first organised protest since Wickremesinghe took over was held on 9 August, called by trade unions and human rights groups demanding new elections and an end to arrests, but drew only a few hundred participants.

Various accounts of the Lankan *aragalaya* note the middle-class character of the leadership – “civic” and human rights groups, lawyers, student/youth organizations, etc – with the working class largely absent. In many respects it resembles the large protests that swept the globe in 2011 including Occupy Wall Street in the U.S., the *indignados* (Spain and Portugal), the *aganaktismenoi* or movement of the squares (Greece) and particularly the so-called Arab Spring. All had a populist character, and were a response to the deep economic crisis of 2007-08. Today we have another burgeoning economic crisis coming off the COVID pandemic following a decade-long depression, the unravelling of neoliberal “globalisation” and a war intensifying already existing food shortages while spurring spiralling inflation in the imperialist centres.

In the 2011 “Arab Spring,” while there was a lot of loose talk of “revolutions,” intervention of the working class – where it did occur (Tunisia, Egypt) – was key to achieving any kind of overturn. But because of the utter lack of revolutionary leadership, that period was short-lived, reversible, and ultimately reversed. Authori-

tarian capitalist regimes backed by imperialism soon returned. In Sri Lanka, the present unstable interregnum cannot last. Either the nucleus of a truly revolutionary Marxist (Trotskyist) vanguard is cohered that can win the most conscious elements of the Lankan urban and rural working class and direct the struggle to the overthrow of capitalism, or the bourgeois rulers will reconsolidate their power, through parliamentary or military means. This rule of history is proven again and again, in even the most severe crises.

Bankruptcy of the Sri Lankan Bourgeoisie ... And the Opportunist Left

Following two years of a COVID-induced global slump, the world economy is now facing a “stagflation” crisis (stagnant growth plus runaway inflation), not seen on a global level since the 1970s. A widely predicted world recession will likely be compounded by a debt crisis hitting the entire world economy, but middle-income countries in particular. While Sri Lanka's debt crisis has grabbed headlines due to the extreme shortages and explosive protests, Bloomberg Economics cites 19 countries facing imminent default on US\$237 billion of outstanding debt – including Pakistan, Egypt, Argentina, Brazil, Tunisia, Kenya, South Africa and others – home to nearly a billion people.² The IMF is tracking 73 highly indebted countries and estimates 40 of these are “high risk” or already in “debt distress,” double the number in 2015.

² “Historic Cascade of Defaults Is Coming for Emerging Markets,” *Bloomberg*, 7 July.



Lining up to buy diesel fuel in March. During one week, two men died while waiting in scorching heat.



Millions joined one-day general strike on April 28, but trade-union leaders limited demands to ouster of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa (caricatured in mask) and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. Revolutionaries would call for an all-out general strike with occupation of workplaces and the formation of workers defence guards.

Sri Lanka is the first country to blow in the current crisis, but there will almost certainly be others, as dozens of countries are saddled with unpayable foreign debt. One of the first may be Argentina, where on 9 July – the same day that the Lankan masses stormed President’s House in Colombo– tens of thousands of workers marched in the streets of Buenos Aires calling to stop debt payments and to break with the IMF. In Sri Lanka, however, many in the desperate middle class are perversely looking to the international bankers’ cartel as a saviour, contrary to all history. Meanwhile, Egypt has US\$7 billion due on external debt by February 2023, and Pakistan needs US\$41 billion over the next 12 months for debt repayment and to fund imports. Already demonstrators have taken to the streets in Pakistan to protest power cuts of up to 14 hours to conserve fuel.

The Lankan economy suffers specific afflictions that sparked its debt crisis: looting by ruling families, depredations of the decades-long civil war, a dependency for hard currency on tourism and remittances from overseas workers (mostly from the oil-rich Arab/Persian Gulf sheikdoms), both of which collapsed during the COVID pandemic, and a reliance on food imports whose prices have shot up during the U.S./NATO-provoked war in Ukraine. Most of the recent protests focused on the symptoms (dynastic corruption, government malfeasance and cronyism), not the root causes of the crisis. To the extent that “progressives” looked for deeper causes, they pointed to “neoliberalism” and “financialisation” of the economy, i.e., policies, when in truth the origins of Sri Lanka’s economic collapse are in the *system* of imperialist capitalist exploitation.

Periodic debts crises are but one symptom of that exploitation. Under imperialism, the dominant financial institutions spread their tentacles over the entire planet. While the imperialist media want to blame the Lankan crisis on a “Chinese debt trap,” China holds only 20% of the country’s foreign debt while almost half (47%) is held by investment corporations (BlackRock), Wall Street banks (UBS, HSBC, JPMorgan Chase) and insurance giants (Allianz, Prudential).³ And in today’s unipolar world, U.S. imperialism calls the

³ “The Canary in the Coal Mine”: Sri Lanka’s Crisis is a Chronicle Foretold,” Committee for the Abolition of Illegitimate Debt (CADTM), 7 August.

shots. So at the end of 2021, Lanka’s foreign debt (\$50.6 billion) represented 60% of its annual gross domestic product (\$84.5 billion), a percentage so high that bankers deemed it not creditworthy. Yet the U.S. external debt (\$23.9 trillion) is 103% of its GDP (\$23 trillion), and investors keep buying U.S. bonds.

Seeking profits through imposing debt and loan repayments is one of the mechanisms of imperialist domination. Bourgeois regimes in less-developed countries usually have little alternative to these loans for investment purposes. And for the tiny minority on top, such loans are a lucrative source of self-enrichment through graft and kickbacks. When the economy goes south through a global slump or otherwise, the IMF steps in to “restructure” loans yet again and enforce repayments with inevitably onerous conditions for the masses. Nevertheless, virtually all the Lankan parliamentary opposition parties prior to Wickremesinghe’s appointment were united in calling for an all-party interim government (a call Wickremesinghe has now taken up) whose task would be to approve austerity measures being demanded by the IMF.

The measures required by the IMF will include slashing public service jobs, privatisation of essential services, attacks on public health and education, elimination of subsidies on which millions depend for survival. The “opposition” which has called for an “all-party” government includes: the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), a party set up with the express approval of the UNP to divert public hostility from the government and take part in the 2020 elections; the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), representing the Tamil elite in the north; and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP – People’s Liberation Front), a Mao-Stalinist and Sinhala-chauvinist outfit which backed and even spearheaded the savage war against the LTTE and has supported bourgeois parties since the 1990s, even entering the government in 2004.

The more “leftist” organisations in Lanka are not much better. The Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), a 2012 split from the JVP, initially called for a “consensus regime” of parliamentary parties and held talks to that end with the capitalist SJB and TNA and other smaller political parties in-

cluding the United Socialist Party (USP). The results of such discussions could only be an attempt to bind the masses to yet another coalition committed to rescuing capitalism. Wary of being associated with the widely detested Wickremesinghe, the FSP and JVP have, at least for now, backed off this complete dead-end. The JVP is calling for “snap elections” while the FSP, sensing mass hostility to the parliamentary parties, has shifted to calling for “People’s Councils” (deliberately *not* councils of workers and toilers) as a basis for an alternative government. Both are bourgeois non-solutions to the crisis.

The USP, affiliated with Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers International (CWI), characteristically calls for a “national assembly” to prepare the election of a “revolutionary constituent assembly,” the CWI’s often-invoked diversion from the tasks of social revolution. The problems besetting the “Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka” (the country’s official name, harking back to a time when “democratic socialism” was fashionable in some bourgeois circles) will not be solved by having some bourgeois “democratic” assembly rewrite its oft-amended authoritarian constitution. To meet the desperate needs of the masses, what is required is an *internationalist socialist revolution*, driven by the urban and rural proletariat and linking up with the working people of Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and elsewhere in the region in a socialist federation of South Asia.

Finally, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) of Sri Lanka calls for “rank-and-file action committees” in factories and rural farming areas and, rather grandly, “convening of a Democratic and Socialist Congress of Workers and Rural Masses.” All to be done “independent of the trade unions.” The SEP is affiliated with David North’s WWSW internet operation, which three decades ago wrote off trade unions globally as mere instruments of capitalist rule. On the contrary, unions are defence organisations of the workers, beset by the contradiction between the working-class ranks and pro-capitalist bureaucracies at the top. While defending the unions against the bosses and their state, the task of genuine Marxists is to intervene in workers’ struggles to expose the treacherous misleaders in order to win the working-class masses to revolutionary politics.

The WWSW strikes a phony “left” posture, but with its anti-union line it actually lines up with the bosses, earning it the sobriquet of “World Scab Web Site.” In Sri Lanka, where the SEP has been around for some decades, one can see how its fake-left policy is directly counterposed to class struggle. Millions of Lankan workers participated in two general strikes on 28 April and 6 May, the first in 40 years. Over 1,000 unions were involved in calling the strikes, their leaders under enormous pressure from the mass struggles erupting around them. The central demand of these strikes remained limited by the union tops to calling for the resignation of the Rajapaksa government, and plans for an indefinite strike on 11 May were scuttled. Yet the fact that these massive strikes were called and carried out shows the conflicted nature of trade unions under pro-capitalist leaders.

As the Lankan masses face ever more desperate conditions, with a wave of repression and intensified anti-working-class austerity, revolutionaries would call on the

unions, the only mass organisations of the working class, to undertake an *all-out general strike* with *occupation of workplaces* and organization of *workers defence guards*. Such bold action could serve as a platform to lead all of the workers and oppressed in a *struggle for proletarian power*, against all the capitalist parties and their state.

A Transitional Program Leading to Socialist Revolution

“There are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen.”

– V.I. Lenin

Revolutionary crises erupt in societies only at generally long intervals. These social upheavals frequently share two outstanding and essential characteristics: a belief by the masses that they can no longer go on in the old way and a loss of confidence – however fleeting – on the part of the ruling class in its continued ability to rule. But the social fever pitch that produces this acute confluence cannot last indefinitely. Either the revolution triumphs or the rulers regain their senses and find a way – through guile or the brute force of armed repression – to stabilize society on their terms.

Just weeks before Bolshevik-led soviets seized state power in Russia, Lenin wrote a pamphlet titled *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It* (September 1917). The striking relevance of the circumstances he describes – and the program he advances – with the current situation in Lanka warrants quoting the pamphlet at some length.

“Unavoidable catastrophe is threatening Russia.... The railways will come to a standstill. The delivery of raw materials and coal to the factories will cease. The delivery of grain will cease.... The danger of a great catastrophe and of famine is imminent.

“Everybody says this. Everybody admits it.

“Yet nothing is being done.

“Control, supervision and accounting are the prime requisites for combating catastrophe and famine.... [T]hese measures are not being adopted only because, exclusively because, their realisation would affect the fabulous profits of a handful of landowners and capitalists.

“These principal measures [of control] are: (1) Amalgamation of all banks into a single bank, and state control over its operations, or nationalisation of the banks. (2) Nationalisation of the syndicates, i.e., the largest, monopolistic capitalist associations (sugar, oil, coal, iron and steel, and other syndicates). (3) Abolition of commercial secrecy. (4) Compulsory syndication (i.e., compulsory amalgamation into associations) of industrialists, merchants and employers generally. (5) Compulsory organisation of the population into consumers’ societies, or encouragement of such organisation, and the exercise of control over it.

“There is no way of effectively combating financial disorganisation and inevitable financial collapse except that of revolutionary rupture with the interests of capital and that of the organisation of really democratic control, i.e., control from ‘below,’ control by the workers and the poor peasants over the capitalists.

“Perish or forge full steam ahead. That is the alternative put by history.”

Add to these measures “Repudiate the debt!” (decreed by the Soviet government in February 1918) and you have the means

of revolutionary control by the working class and its allies that forms a concrete platform of struggle for the Lankan masses today to: (a) combat the dissolution and destruction of society by bourgeois rule; (b) meet the immediate needs of the insurgent workers and their allies; and (c) point the way forward to socialist revolution.

Lenin's concept was codified in the early congresses of the Communist International and again in the 1938 *Transitional Programme*, written by his co-leader of the 1917 October Revolution, Leon Trotsky, which served as the founding document of the Fourth International. Trotsky observed that "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership." That crisis is excruciatingly evident in Sri Lanka today.

What existed in revolutionary Russia that is most absent in Sri Lanka is two-fold: a revolutionary party with the program and discipline to lead the revolution, and widespread councils of workers, soldiers and peasants ("soviets"), which were organs of class struggle that then formed the basis for a new government serving the revolutionary masses to come into existence.

We have cited various calls for different kinds of assemblies or councils put forward by left organisations in Sri Lanka today, including "people's councils" (FSP), "national assembly" to prepare a "revolutionary constituent assembly" (USP), all of which lack a *working-class* basis, and hence by default would assume a bourgeois character; while putative "rank-and-file action committees" to convene a "democratic and socialist congress of workers and rural masses" (SEP) have no link to existing organs of the working class. What these different formulas do *not* call for is intervention in the actual struggle to raise *transitional demands pointing to socialist revolution*, which if taken up by the masses could give rise to the organisational forms that could become genuine soviets.

Cohering the nucleus of a revolutionary workers party, to be forged on the program of Lenin and Trotsky, is thus the essential task facing communists in Sri Lanka today. Inextricably linked to that is the internationalist perspective of revolution throughout the South Asian region. If the Stalinist nationalist dogma of "socialism in one country" was not possible in the vast, resource-rich lands of the former Russian empire, even less can socialism be successfully constructed if isolated in a small island nation with a population of 22 million and with natural resources accounting for less than 5% of exports. The only road forward for freeing the Lankan masses from debt servitude, mass poverty, ethnic terror and imperialist domination is the *internationalist* Trotskyist program of *permanent revolution*, the program of Red October 1917.

Forward to a Socialist Federation of South Asia!

Sri Lanka is not isolated. It has close ties to, and its political landscape is heavily influenced by, its much larger neighbours to the north. These include India (population 1.4 billion), Pakistan (221 million) and Bangladesh (165 million). Taken together, these countries have hundreds of millions of urban and rural proletarians, potential powerful allies in the struggle against capitalist immiseration. Further, India/Pakistan/Bangladesh together with Sri Lanka



Map of South Asia.

form an arc of extreme instability in an imperialist world whose masters rightly fear their control is fracturing.

In the fairy tale accounts in the imperialist press, prior to the collapse Sri Lanka was "one of the wealthiest countries in South Asia, ranked by the UN on a par with much of eastern Europe in terms of development" (*Economist*), an economic success story "soaring to the status of an upper-middle-income nation," which "built a tourism-based economy that brought billions of dollars, many jobs and middle class comforts: high-end eateries and cafes, imported Jeeps and Audis, and upscale malls" (*New York Times*, 26 March). This may be the self-image of those who profited from the Rajapaksas' rule, but it bears no relation to how the masses lived. Yes, Sri Lanka had higher income levels than its neighbours, but the garment workers and tea pickers producing for the world market lived no better than their counterparts elsewhere in the region.

Almost all of the nearly two billion people in South Asia live in conditions of imperialist-imposed privation and poverty. Average annual household expenditures per capita in these countries, in U.S. dollars, are (CEIC data):

- Sri Lanka – \$1,182
- Bangladesh – \$592
- India – \$574
- Pakistan – \$525

In other words, on average the masses are living on less than 2 or at most 3 U.S. dollars a day per person. The comparable annual figure for Australia is US\$27,595. And of course, averages conceal the huge disparities in income between the jet-setting elite and the extreme oppression of the overwhelming majority. In Lanka, the richest 10% hold a massive 63.8% of the island's total wealth while the bottom 50% have just 4.3%.

Prior to European colonisation, there were advanced civilisations throughout the Indian subcontinent, as was also the case in China. But the needs of what Karl Marx called primitive capitalist accumulation led eventually to imperial enslavement being forced on the populations of these countries, as throughout the colonised world. The British empire directly controlled South Asia (encompassing what is now India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and smaller states) from the mid-19th century until after World War II. This was the richest prize of the Em-

pire, its "jewel in the crown." The British Raj (colonial administration) infamously mastered the use of "divide and rule," fostering deadly sectarian, communal divisions. Hindu-Muslim tensions were inflamed, and the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 resulted in mass population transfers of up to 15 million people and the deaths of between several hundred thousand and two million people.

East Bengal was partitioned off by the British in 1905, with a Muslim majority

but a British-favoured Hindi-speaking elite, and became part of Pakistan with the 1947 partition. In 1971, "East Pakistan" carried out an independence struggle, under the leadership of the bourgeois Awami League (with the support of the Indian army), and modern Bangladesh was created. Today, South Asia is a region of extreme exploitation, outrageous inequality and recurrent crises. The debt peonage that ensnares Lanka likewise extends throughout the subcontinent. External debt figures are \$615 billion for India, \$122 billion for Pakistan, \$78 billion for Bangladesh, all exceeding Lanka's \$50 billion. This toxic debt burden exacerbates every aspect of the cruel exploitation gripping these nations, creating ever-deeper states of instability.

Every country in the region is wracked by religious and ethnic conflict, even as there is significant class struggle. India is currently ruled by Narendra Modi, leader of the Hindu-nationalist BJP (Indian People's Party). Attacks by BJP gangs on Muslims, who are hacked, beaten or shot to death, further polarise the country. At the same time, in 2020-21 Indian farmers carried out a massive year-long "strike," including blockages of the main roads to the nation's capital. The protests successfully forced the government to scrap laws favouring agribusiness corporations. While not a working-class or even a peasant movement, the farmers' action seriously undermined the government's authority. Today, India's capitalist economy is in the doldrums, with incomes falling and youth unemployment large and growing.

In Pakistan, the prime minister and former world-famous cricket star Imran Khan was forced out in April by a "no confidence" vote in parliament. This was widely seen as a slap down by Washington and Pakistan's powerful military/intelligence establishment for Khan's posturing against the West. In the same month that Russia invaded Ukraine, Khan made highly publicised trips for friendly discussions with both Russian president Vladimir Putin and Chinese president Xi Jinping. No Pakistani prime minister has ever served a full term and the position was unfilled during the years 1960-1973, 1977-1985, and 1999-2002 when the country was under military rule. Despite being a major recipient of

U.S. aid, Pakistan is high on the IMF's list of countries most likely to default on their debt and Khan had applied for a new \$6 billion IMF loan.

Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, in early August the government hiked petrol prices by 52%, in a move widely seen as a precursor to Lanka-like conditions. Thousands of protesters took to the streets in response. Already in July the Bangladesh government sought a \$4.5 billion loan from the IMF, while also seeking \$1 billion from the Asian Development Bank. Bangladesh is notorious for deadly working conditions among the horribly oppressed workers in the garment industry which accounts for more than 90% of export revenue. It is also beset by repeated waves of Islamist terror attacks against Hindus and other religious minorities (as well as secular writers, homosexuals and others deemed as infidels), often spurred by anti-Muslim attacks by Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) groups in India like the fascist RSS, closely allied with the governing BJP.

Thus the murderous communal terror by predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese chauvinists against the predominantly Hindu Tamils in Sri Lanka is mirrored throughout South Asia – a direct result of the imperialist partition of the subcontinent into separate and hostile ethnic and religion-based states. This is epitomised by the continuing division of Kashmir between India and Pakistan, and the recent escalation of repression against the Muslim majority population there by the Indian army and police. The League for the Fourth International has called to "Build Working-Class Defense Guards to Fight Against Communist/Fascist Barbarism!" and for "self-determination for Kashmir and all the oppressed peoples of the region."⁴

In Sri Lanka, we call today – as we did in the International Communist League, when it stood on the internationalist program of revolutionary Trotskyism – for *workers defence of the endangered Tamil and Muslim minority populations* against Sinhalese chauvinist attacks, and for the *right of Tamil self-determination*, as part of the struggle for a *socialist federation of South Asia*. The subcontinent will not escape the fate that international capital is dealing to Sri Lanka. And the working people of Lanka will find the power to combat their own corrupt and thieving ruling class only in unity with their sisters and brothers to the north. Overcoming the imperialist division of the subcontinent through united class struggle of the oppressed and downtrodden under proletarian leadership would be an inspiration for the workers of the world.

Looking to the IMF and other imperialist agencies, seeking unity with the parties of the bourgeoisie, spell doom for the working people. As Wickremesinghe calls on the troops to suppress protest, as the Rajapaksas await their U.S. "green cards" and pseudo-socialists seek coalition governments to rescue capitalist rule on the island, the central task of revolutionaries is to *build Leninist-Trotskyist parties of the proletarian vanguard*, to lead all the oppressed in socialist revolution against imperialism and its boundlessly avaricious local viceroys. ■

⁴ "India-Pakistan: For Workers Revolution Against the Chauvinist Warmongers!" *The Internationalist* No. 13, May-June 2002.

Break with the Democrats! For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!

Labor Notes Conference 2022:

“Solidarity” with the Democrats

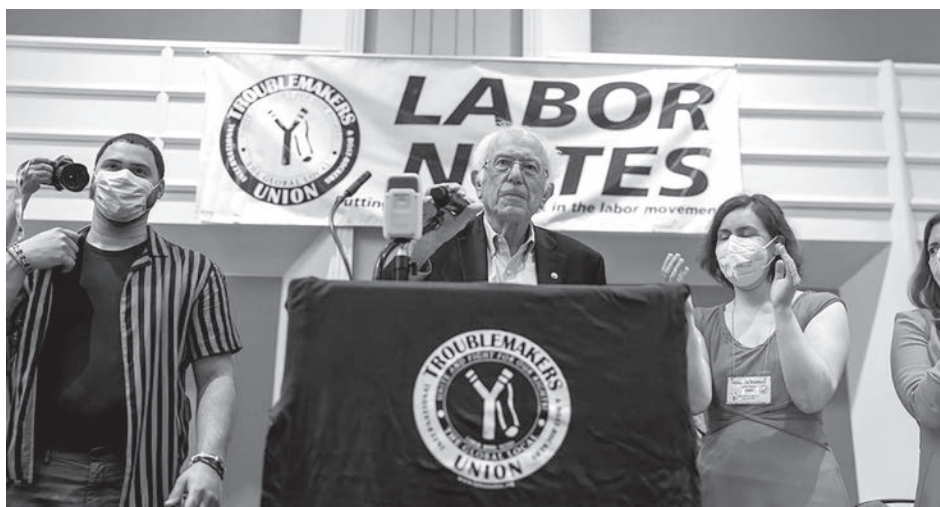
On June 17-19, the social-democratic Labor Notes (LN) magazine held its biennial conference in Chicago, drawing by far its largest attendance ever, some 4,000 trade union officials, activists, workers and leftists. The gabfest was touted as representing and helping to build a revitalized labor movement, following the “Striketober” flurry of strikes in the fall of 2021 as well as the recent votes for unionization at Amazon and Starbucks locations.

In reality, the conference served mainly to channel younger activists and militants into Labor Notes’ program of building up the liberal wing of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy. That means supporting “progressive” Democrats and playing by the bosses’ rules. The featured speaker was Vermont senator Bernie Sanders, who postures as a “democratic socialist” while pushing a liberal program and roping youth and labor into the Democratic Party. The main plenary of the conference concluded with the audience chanting “Run, Bernie, run,” egging him on for a third attempt to become the chief executive officer of U.S. imperialism.

Among those on stage with Bernie at the opening session were the new Teamsters (IBT) union president Sean O’Brien and Chris Smalls, president of the Amazon Labor Union (ALU). The conference scheduled scores of workshops and meetings, with topics like “Strike! Reviving Labor’s Most Powerful Weapon,” “Amazon Workers in Motion,” “A Union Brews at Starbucks,” and “Labor’s Upsurge: How Unions Can Make the Most of this Moment.” Panels included worker-activists from the ALU, Amazonians United and other Amazon organizing campaigns, activists from Starbucks around the country as well as from the UAW John Deere strike of 10,000 workers last fall and other recent strikes.

Many attending the LN conference identified themselves politically as supporters of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a component of the capitalist Democratic Party. Presenting a counterposed program of class struggle and revolutionary leadership, supporters of the Internationalist Group attended from Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP) as well from New York City, including an Amazon worker active in the ALU’s campaign to unionize the JFK8 warehouse on Staten Island. The union’s victory in the union representation vote was announced on April 1, but Amazon contested the election and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) held hearings 2,000 miles away in Phoenix.

ALU leader Smalls, in his plenary speech, urged labor to take “action” – by attending the NLRB hearings via Zoom! Our supporter spoke at several workshops, making the point that the fight to organize Amazon nationally, and actually get improved wages and working conditions, won’t be won through reliance on the NLRB, an agency of the bosses’ government. To cripple Amazon’s high-tech operation based on speedup and brutal, even deadly, working conditions will take hard



Bernie Sanders giving the keynote address at Labor Notes conference 2022.

class struggle, including explosive strikes that spread to non-union facilities and are backed up with labor solidarity from the Teamsters and other unions.

Another workshop, titled “Supply Chain Solidarity Down Commodity Chains,” sponsored by Railroad Workers United, discussed the fight to organize Amazon and the potential of shipping, transport and warehouse workers to shut down the economy. Along with rail workers, longshore workers and Teamsters were in the audience. Our ALU supporter got an enthusiastic response when he spoke in the discussion period emphasizing that the social power the panelists referred to is presently chained to the Democrats by the union bureaucracy. Labor needs to break with the Democratic Party and build a workers party, he said.

[Since the LN conference, the 12 rail unions’ bureaucrats have negotiated a sell-out contract, brokered by the Biden administration, which feared a strike before the midterm elections. The deal does little to limit the railway industry’s brutal work schedules, based on a drastic cutback in employment, as the freight bosses continue to push dangerous plans for one-man crews. The deal gives workers only one paid sick day per year! Seething workers at two unions have voted down the pact, and four unions, including the two largest (SMART-TD and the BLET) have yet to vote, posing the possibility of an explosive strike – either official or wildcat. To win, it would need massive, militant support from all of labor.]

Our comrades from Portland spoke about their work in mobilizing union power to stop fascists like the Proud Boys who carry out murderous attacks against black people, leftists and gay and transgender people. They also pointed to a 2016 resolution by the painters and drywallers union, IUPAT Local 10, which they had initiated. The local voted unanimously to reject the Democratic and Republican parties or “any party of the bosses,” and to “call on the labor movement to break from the Democratic Party, and build a class-struggle workers party.” This contrasted sharply with the conference, which was a love fest for “progressive” Democrats.

Various left groups have published mostly gushing accounts of the conference.

The Left Voice (LV) grouping, which occasionally puts on phony Trotskyist airs, enthused over the occasional “left” talk at the conference. In a 25 June report, LV soft-peddled criticism of the Labor Notes organizers for promoting Bernie Sanders, even though the article itself praises Sanders for bringing young people to “socialist ideas,” lamenting only that he is “limited” by his support to the Democratic Party and drumming up votes for the presidential campaigns of Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden. It praised Flight Attendants union leader Sara Nelson as “a stirring, brilliant” speaker, although hampered by a “lack of imagination.” (Nelson was the “progressive” union bureaucrats’ pick to replace the late Richard Trumka as president of the AFL-CIO, which instead anointed his chosen successor, Liz Shuler, at its convention held the week before.)

The LV piece cites an intervention by a supporter who pleadingly asked in a workshop “When can we have our own party,” writing that Nelson “waffled” in response. Actually, Nelson vociferously opposed breaking with the Democrats, saying “we don’t need a party,” because “the politicians will respond to us” if “we start seeing ourselves as the working class.” Sara Nelson is a hardcore Democrat, having served (along with DSAer Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) on the “Unity Task Forces” in 2020, set up to reconcile Sanders supporters with nominee Biden, who early on led Congressional opposition to busing for desegregation, later was an architect of mass incarceration of black people, and still has difficulty bringing himself to say “abortion.”

Summing up, the Left Voice article (titled “Something Big Is Stirring”) opined that, “what’s important” is that people like Nelson – “and Bernie too” – are “bellwethers” or “tuning forks – registering something bigger than them, that doesn’t quite have its voice yet – something new, and possibly powerful, at work in a dark way inside labor itself.” Clearly, LV vibrates to these Democratic Party tuning forks, and has found its voice as “left” advisors to DSA “Sanderistas” and wannabe “socialist” labor bureaucrats on the fringes of the capitalist Democratic Party.

The night before the conference a Bernie Sanders rally was held in Chicago, sponsored by Teamsters Local 705. Last December, the

IBT changed leadership, as O’Brien defeated the slate of the late Jimmy Hoffa Jr., who had run the union for 24 years. O’Brien was backed by the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) caucus, which he had earlier opposed, and the new leadership is promising a return to militancy and to organizing. But the TDU has a long history of collaborating with the capitalist government and running to the capitalist courts against the Teamsters, all in the name of “union democracy.” O’Brien and several TDU members were featured speakers and panelists at the conference.

O’Brien vows that the Teamsters is gearing up to strike against UPS next year when the contract runs out, and the TDU says that a fight for a good contract at UPS will inspire Amazon workers to unionize. Actually, this is the second time that a TDU-backed candidate has won the Teamsters’ presidency. The first time was in 1991, after the TDU had called for and supported the federal government’s RICO (“Racketeer-Influenced Corrupt Organization”) lawsuit and takeover of the Teamsters, resulting in government-run elections won by TDU-supported Ron Carey. Owned by the bosses’ government that put him in office, Carey proceeded to negotiate weak, concessionary contracts at UPS and in the nationwide master freight agreement.

Narrowly winning re-election in 1996 and under pressure from the ranks, Carey in August 1997 led a strike at UPS against the erosion of contracts and the spread of part-time work. The two-week strike won pledges to convert many part-time jobs to full-time jobs. But soon the chickens came home to roost. Shortly after the strike settlement, the government, which the TDU had invited into the union, moved against Carey, accusing him of kickback schemes to funnel money to the Democratic Party in the 1996 election. By the next year, it had had banned Carey from the Teamsters for life. Meanwhile, the feds handed over the Central States Pension Fund to “professional managers,” who lost over \$11 billion in the 2008 market meltdown, while the IBT funds that weren’t taken over “made out like bandits,” with lucrative investments in Las Vegas.

The TDU today continues to look to the federal government to intervene in the Teamsters. In a 10 December 2021 article, the TDU hailed a judge permanently banning IBT official Rome Aloise from the Teamsters. Labor Notes has long supported the TDU, and this year’s conference also featured a new caucus in the United Auto Workers (UAW) calling itself the UAWD (Unite All Workers for Democracy). The UAWD supported a Department of Justice consent decree that mandated a referendum on “one member, one vote” in UAW elections.

Labor Notes, the TDU and the UAWD all promote “reform” through collaboration with the feds. At a workshop on “Amazon, UPS, USPS – Workers Fighting Back in the Age of e-Commerce” that featured a TDU panelist, in the discussion period our ALU supporter pointed out that suing

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Whatever Happened to “No Contract, No Work”?

ILWU: Prepare to Strike for a Shorter Workweek

Fight for 6-Hour Shifts x 5 = 30 Hours, No Loss in Pay

As we go to press (end of October), the West Coast dock workers are still without a contract after five months.

AUGUST 6 – With the July 1 expiration of the contract between the West Coast International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the maritime companies, the stage was set for a major showdown and the possibility of a big labor victory with reverberations across the country. Instead, as the clock ticked down on June 30, the ILWU tops and the maritime bosses issued a joint statement: “While there will be no contract extension, cargo will keep moving, and normal operations will continue at the ports until an agreement can be reached between the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) and the International Longshore & Warehouse Union” (*Logistics Management* 6 July).

As the contract expired, the PMA added its own statement: “We are proud of our collaboration with the ILWU during this extraordinary period and hopeful that spirit of cooperation will continue as we pursue a new agreement.” No doubt. For the shipping bosses, patting the ILWU negotiators on the head for keeping the freight moving makes sense. For the longshore rank and file? Not so much.

Then, a month later, on July 27, the union and PMA announced a tentative agreement on health benefits. “Maintenance of health benefits is an important part of the contract between employers represented by the PMA and workers represented by the ILWU” (*Journal of Commerce*, 27 July). With health care costs going through the roof, employers around the country have threatened to cut those benefits. But health care is only part of a contract. The same article noted that “the likelihood is growing that a deal will be reached in August or September with little disruption occurring on the docks.”

“August or September”?! ILWU members have already been working for a month without an agreement. What happened to “No contract, No Work”? The ILWU is one of the most powerful unions in the country. There is no contract. The odious no-strike clause doesn’t exist. While the ILWU leadership has made it clear that it’s opposed to a strike, class-conscious militants should demand a *strike vote* and *gear up to shut down the West Coast, now!* If there is a walkout, the rest of labor should back up the ILWU, joining picket lines and refusing to handle struck cargo. A victorious longshore strike will benefit unions and working people everywhere in looming battles fueled by runaway inflation.

The companies are flush with cash. According to the maritime research consultancy Drewry, “Ocean carriers have generated about \$190 billion of annual profits and about \$130 billion of fresh cash in 2021, obtained mainly by charging higher prices” (*Offshore Energy*, 23 Febru-



Automation at the Port of Los Angeles (above) has been carried out at a cost of over 500 full-time jobs. ILWU should fight for union control of technology, 30-hour workweek, jobs for all.

ary). That’s more than seven times what they made in 2020! “They are projected to rake in another \$200 billion this year, as they continue to take advantage of the supply chain snafus to increase shipping rates,” reported Rachel Phua in *Payday Report* (1 July). The charges for a 40-foot box shipped from China to the West Coast hit a record \$20,000 last August, and are still around \$9,000. “Before the pandemic, they were below \$2,000,” Phua noted. Even though they are gorged with profits, the maritime bosses are demanding concessions from the ILWU.

The ILWU Has the Power – Use It!

The union has tremendous leverage and should use it. Los Angeles/Long Beach/San Pedro is the port of entry for 42% of container freight shipped from Asia to the U.S. In 2021, the Port of Los Angeles became the first port in the Western Hemisphere to process 10 million container units in a 12-month period. Port bosses worry that a walkout could create havoc in the already snarled supply chain. They weren’t the only ones worried about a strike. On July 1, more than 150 local, state, and national business and trade associations wrote to President Joe Biden and urged him to ensure that there would be no work stoppage. “We know the administration understands the economic significance of these negotiations” (Reuters, 1 July).

You bet it does. On June 10 Biden met with PMA and ILWU reps in San Pedro Bay aboard the Battleship USS *Iowa*. Four days later, the PMA and ILWU tops announced that cargo operations would “continue beyond the expiration of the contract.” Mission accomplished. “Neither party,” the statement added, “is preparing

for a strike or a lockout” (*Logistics Management*, 14 June). The ILWU bureaucrats certainly weren’t prepared for a fight – they haven’t even held a strike vote. But the bosses sure are: a one-sided fight.

“U.S. Container Imports Jump in April as Coastal Shift Continues,” headlined *The Loadstar* (17 May), a shipping logistics newsletter, stating: “the coastal shift by shippers from the west coast to east ports appears to be gaining fresh momentum ahead of the expiry of the US west coast labour agreement on 1 July.” PMA Chief Executive Officer Jim McKenna was even more explicit: “If they don’t come to a compromise, then freight will get permanently diverted to the East Coast” (*New York Times*, 28 March).

In the event of a West Coast strike, the shipping bosses will undoubtedly make good on their threat to shift cargo to other North American ports. Solidarity across borders and jurisdictional lines would be crucial. Longshore workers in the Canadian ports refusing to handle struck cargoes from the U.S. will be key. The same goes for Gulf and East Coast ports such as Houston, New Orleans, Charleston, Port Newark, etc., where dock workers are represented by the International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA).

“I want the word to go out that the ILA stands firmly behind our West Coast longshore workers,” union president Harold Daggett said in a video message on May 12. But Daggett did *not* say that the ILA would carry out any action in solidarity with the ILWU. *Action*, not empty solidarity messages, is what’s needed. Struck cargo is scab cargo! *For joint ILWU and ILA action!* Likewise, Dennis Daggett (son of the ILA president), who is general coordinator of the International Dockworkers Council (IDC), called upon member unions

to back the ILWU “with declarations and resolutions of support.” But Daggett Jr. just expelled left-led dockers unions in France, Spain and Sweden from the IDC!

Right now, there is a real opportunity for actual international solidarity, as opposed to empty words. On July 14-15, thousands of German port workers struck for 48 hours in Hamburg and other North Sea ports. Across the Channel, where workers are facing the highest inflation in four decades, a summer of strike action by railway workers began with a three-day walkout by the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) union, at the same time as London Tube (subway) workers struck for a day, which taken together was the biggest British rail strike in 30 years.

This wave of strike action in Britain continued the next month, with rail work stoppages on July 16, 23, 27 (when 40,000 RMT-led workers struck) and 30, when 5,000 locomotive engineers represented by the ASLEF train-drivers union walked out. ASLEF has scheduled another walkout for August 13, while the RMT is going out on August 18 and 20. Industrial action also hit rail companies in Scotland. This “summer of discontent” is the biggest outbreak of strikes in the United Kingdom since 1989. But as long as they are separate, time-limited actions, their power is undercut. A national rail and transit strike at this time, with the fall of the government of the corrupt warmonger Boris Johnson, could lay low the lords of industry who have royally profited, both before and after Britain exited the European Union, as working people are seeing their living standards plummet.

In the U.S., railroad workers – who have gone without a pay raise for three years – could link up with the ILWU in powerful joint action. On July 12, the membership of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET), a division of the Teamsters, voted by 99.5% to strike. The BLET is one of 13 rail unions in negotiations for a national contract. A federally ordered “cooling-off period” expired on July 18, whereupon Biden issued an executive order setting up an emergency board and prohibiting a walkout for another 60 days.

Outrageously, Greg Regan, president of the Transportation Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, hailed Biden’s action. But a strike simultaneously shutting down trains and West Coast harbors could rip up those strikebreaking orders. Picket out the intermodal rail yards! And as the capitalists who run the maritime industry prepare to shift cargo from the West to Gulf and East Coast ports, common strike action by the ILWU and ILA could land an unprecedented blow against the bosses whose profiteering has been driving an inflationary spiral even as the economy sinks into recession.

Across the country, people can’t make ends meet because of soaring prices at the gas pump and supermarket. A hard-fought

longshore strike could show the way to fight back. What will it take to win?

- From the Mexican border to Canada: Shut down the docks, terminals and warehouses! Build strong picket lines that no one dares cross!
- For “fishbowl negotiations,” a union tradition, open to all ILWU members. Form a mass strike committee of representatives to be elected at every dock and warehouse.
- Build strike support committees with other unions, unorganized workers, community groups and students, such as with ILWU Local 10’s joint actions with Oakland teachers.
- Hardline it for a big wage hike with COLA (cost of living adjustment) to protect against the ravages of inflation.
- Abolish the Group System of A, B and Identified Casual. Longshore workers need unity in preparation for a strike. Divisions in the union’s ranks only work in PMA’s interest.
- Push through a shorter workweek – four shifts of six hours each – with no loss in pay, and full-time jobs for casuals. A decent standard of living shouldn’t depend on racking up hundreds of hours of overtime.
- For union control of new technology, which must not be used to kill jobs – elected union committees to sign off on any automation.

Organize Port Truckers and Warehouse Workers Into the ILWU

While ILWU longshore workers and clerks have been working without a contract, ports have been thrown into turmoil as port truckers picket to protest California’s AB5 law. The law was passed in January 2020 as a result of a push to enable Uber and Lyft drivers, and other workers in the “gig economy,” to unionize, be eligible for unemployment benefits, and be covered by minimum wages, overtime pay, workers’ comp and other job protections for employees. This was done by eliminating the fiction that they are “independent contractors” when their labor is in fact under the control of the giant app-based taxi and delivery companies.¹

Uber and Lyft spent millions of dollars to finance Proposition 22, which passed in the November 2020 elections, to exempt their operations and prevent the legislature from passing future legislation on the issue.² However, in 2021 the federal district court ruled against a suit brought by the California Trucking Association (CTA) to prevent AB5 from being applied to the trucking sector, and this past June 30 the U.S. Supreme Court denied an appeal of that ruling. So now the intermodal trucking companies which run dozens and even hundreds of owner-operated rigs, many of them leased, will no longer be exempt from job protections and unionization.

On July 14 and 15, hundreds of short-haul (drayage) truck drivers who move cargo from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach jammed traffic on Interstate 710 to protest AB5. And then, from July 18 to 25, truckers in Oakland picketed the port for a week. The terminal operators were livid when ILWU Lo-

¹ See “Finally! California AB5 Law Says App-Taxi Drivers Are Workers” (December 2019), in *The Internationalist* No. 58, Winter 2020.

² See “Defeat Uber and Lyft Bosses’ Prop 22 in California!” *The Internationalist* No. 61, September-October 2020.



President Joe Biden, aboard the USS Iowa on June 10, orders ILWU and PMA to keep working. U.S. rulers use “national security” to avoid labor strikes at the ports. But longshore workers have the power to shut it down.

cal 10 members refused to cross the picket line. “Some offered tips on where to stand and hold up signs to block certain gates to ‘be more effective,’” *Freightwaves* (1 August), an industry publication, reported. Local 10 members said longshore workers were working without a contract, so they sympathized with the owner-operators.

We support AB5 and its application to the freight carriers, who hide behind the “independent contractor” classification of their drivers in order to avoid granting basic labor rights. Class-conscious workers would not support the demands of the protests that were organized by the trucking bosses of the CTA. But any real trade-unionist would, on principle, refuse to cross the picket lines. A class-struggle leadership would seek to link the interests of the heavily immigrant port truckers to the longshore workers, which could include directly *unionizing fleet workers* and forming a *cooperative of owner-operators linked to the union, with union control of dispatching*.

Unity between longshore workers who unload cargo and the truckers who move it inland would be a mighty force. It could also spearhead an organizing drive of the warehouses they deliver to. The ILWU has an often-overlooked history of organizing warehouse workers. This is detailed in Harvey Schwartz, *The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division*.³ Schwartz notes that in 1933 there were no unionized warehouse workers in the Bay Area, but in the wake of the 1934 San Francisco general strike, “nearly all of the region’s 8,500 freight handlers belonged to one of the largest and most powerful union locals in the country.”

That history holds lessons for those today seeking to unionize Amazon. The e-commerce giant has warehouses in the SF Bay Area and all over the Los Angeles metro area. Recently it announced plans for its largest-ever “fulfillment center” in Ontario, California, in the Inland Empire east of L.A. A successful organizing campaign at Amazon, and other virulently anti-union companies like Walmart, will not win on a warehouse-by-warehouse, *store-by-store* basis with votes according

³ Originally published in 1978 by the Institute of Industrial Relations at the University of California, Los Angeles. Reprinted in 2000 by the ILWU.

to the rules of the National Labor Relations Board, a government agency set up to tame militant labor. Instead, it will take a full-fledged *labor revolt* on the scale of the SF longshore workers’ ‘34 Big Strike.

Building on the victory of the Amazon Labor Union in Staten Island, NY, in April, a militant West Coast longshore strike that sought solidarity with port truckers and warehouse workers could go a long way toward turning the L.A. metro area into union country, and spark a drive to organize the unorganized nationwide.

The Threat of Militarization of the Ports

In October 2021, amid the pandemic-linked supply chain crisis, Biden convened a White House roundtable of “stakeholders” in the shipping industry to declare a “90-day sprint” to clear cargo logjams. Attendees included transportation secretary Pete Buttigieg, vice president Kamala Harris, ILWU president Willie Adams, the executive directors of the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, and (attending virtually) the heads of UPS, FedEx, the American Trucking Association, American Association of Railroads, Walmart and other corporate executives. Biden pressed for 24-hour operations of West Coast ports, to which the union leader replied that this was already provided for in the contract with the PMA, shippers just have to put in the orders.

But the problems persisted. At his June 10 meeting with ILWU and PMA leaders aboard the *Iowa*, it was not just moving consumer goods Biden was concerned with. He announced there that the new port envoy to the federal, supply chain task force is retired four-star general Stephen Lyons. Previously, Lyons led the U.S. Transportation Command, which co-ordinates military and commercial resources missions worldwide. Ports are, and always have been, critical to U.S. imperialism. For the Pentagon, labor peace on the docks is a “national security” issue. A report by the Committee on Military Transportation of the National Academies’ Transportation Research Board, part of the mammoth compendium *Transportation in the New Millennium* (2000), states:

“most military cargo, personnel, and war-fighting assets now move on commercial assets. For example, more than

95 percent of the equipment and cargo shipped in Desert Shield and Desert Storm moved on commercial carriers. Because of this, DoD instituted agreements with commercial carriers to ensure asset availability when needed.”

This is nothing new. Containerization, first introduced in 1956 by trucking magnate Malcolm McClean, completely transformed shipping worldwide. Rather than fight to preserve jobs, ILWU president Harry Bridges negotiated the disastrous 1960 “modernization and mechanization” agreement. This led to a huge loss of longshore jobs and introduced the destructive division of ILWU members into A, B and casuals, with only “A men” guaranteed work. The *New York Times* (13 May 2006) later reported, “The key moment came during the Vietnam War, when [Malcolm] McClean proved to the United States military, which had become increasingly frustrated at the difficulty of shipping materiel to the war zone, that his way was the only possible solution. Once the armed forces became converts, there was no turning back.”

Today you can be sure that military needs will once again be a major factor in ramming through port automation. That will also be a main excuse for government attempts to block a West Coast port shutdown, as it was in 2002. That July, during the build-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Homeland Security secretary called ILWU president Jim Spinoso to warn that a longshore strike was not in the “national interest,” while draconian legislation to militarize the docks, the Port and Maritime Security Act, was passed unanimously by the Senate amid the war hysteria following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. When the PMA locked out workers in October 2002, Democratic senator Dianne Feinstein called on Republican president George Bush II to impose a Taft-Hartley injunction to order the ILWU back to work, which he did. *The Internationalist* called at the time for the ILWU to “hot cargo” war material, and to mobilize labor to smash Taft-Hartley.

In fact, Democratic as well as Republican administrations have used that strikebreaking, union-busting slave labor act against the unions. Democratic president Jimmy Carter invoked it against coal miners in the 1977-78 coal strike,⁴ while the Democratic Obama/Biden administration used the Coast Guard to break the ILWU mobilization against the opening of the scab EGT grain terminal in Longview, Washington in 2012. ILWU International president McEllrath collaborated with the government by ordering longshoremen to work at the terminal without a contract.

Over and over, the U.S. labor bureaucracy have knuckled under to government anti-union repression. But the ILWU was built by “reds” and fought the “red purge” engineered by the Democrats at the start of the anti-Soviet Cold War, particularly the attempts to deport Harry Bridges and to drive the ILWU off the docks. On May Day 2008, the ILWU stopped work on all 29 West Coast ports to protest the U.S. war on Iraq and Afghanistan. When the PMA tried to sue for violation of Taft-Hartley, the union told the PMA to drop it or face a

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⁴ See the pamphlet, *The Great Coal Strike of 1978*, available online at www.internationalist.org.

¡Todos parejos! The Cabricanecos Campaign in NYC

Indigenous Immigrant Workers Fight Deadly Conditions in NYC

By Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas / Class Struggle International Workers

BROOKLYN, NY – Facing flagrant management abuse and a wave of retaliatory firings, a courageous campaign by 40 demolition/construction workers – mainly indigenous immigrants from Guatemala and Mexico – shines a spotlight on deadly dangerous conditions on the job faced by many thousands in the New York area and beyond. “We are human beings, but they use us up and then just throw us away,” a worker who suffered multiple injuries unloading heavy materials for Best Super Clean/ISK Group said, echoed by fellow campaign activists during a collective interview with *The Internationalist*.

Best Super Clean/ISK does construction-site clean-up and demolition. The company refuses to provide its workers with adequate equipment on the job, or even the most basic tools they need. “The owners are making millions from our labor, but they treat us as if we have no worth or value,” said another worker active in the campaign. Organized by the Laundry Workers Center (LWC), the campaign, presently focused on winning key improvements in job conditions and wages, is called “Cabricanecos,” because many of the workers are originally from the town of Cabricán in Guatemala.

“Tools and safety on the job” are central to the struggle, emphasized compañeros Luca and Wilmer, two leaders of the campaign. Many kinds of unsafe conditions are “part of our work every day” and need to end, said compañero Cesáreo. “They treat us like garbage and even talk to us as if we were animals,” sometimes calling the workers dogs and other vile and degrading insults. “We want them to stop doing that,” he said. “Too many injustices,” added Luca. In addition to tools and job safety, workers’ key demands also include the rehiring of five workers fired in reprisals against organizing; a pay raise; sick days, lunch hours on a set schedule, and breaks as required by law. (“What do you need breaks for?” is a typical jibe from company managers.)

Best Super Clean/ISK – whose properties also include a video surveillance operation called Live Lion Security – typifies many non-union contracting firms that make a mint paying immigrant workers poverty wages to clear debris at construction sites. Workers report that the company’s profits have grown so much in the recent period that it was able to increase its fleet of trucks from 4 to around 30. Since the workers launched their campaign publicly with a dramatic rally at the company’s truck dispatch site on May 2, Best Super Clean/ISK has faced repeated protests outside a sign-less building in Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood that serves as its HQ.



Launch of organizing drive of indigenous immigrant construction workers in New York City, May 2.

New Link in a Chain of Struggles

The Cabricanecos campaign was initiated by a group of workers that includes veterans of the organizing drive by immigrant warehouse workers at B&H Photo, also led by the LWC.¹ “We took that experience into this struggle here,” one of them explained during the collective interview with *The Internationalist*. The B&H struggle was in turn sparked by immigrant workers’ fight to unionize the Hot and Crusty restaurant in midtown Manhattan almost a decade ago.² After unionization won at B&H in 2016, the company, in a flagrant union-busting move, closed warehouses the following year.³ Some of those laid off there found work in construction and demolition.

Thus the Cabricanecos campaign is a link in a chain of struggles underlining both the need and the great potential for militant organizing among sectors of immigrant workers who are key to making the city run, at the same time as they are denied basic rights and treated as “undocumented” pariahs while often risking their lives due to intolerable working conditions.

Most of the time such conditions go under the radar, rarely making it into the headlines. An exception came last month when a building in the Bronx acquired grim but fleeting notoriety in an exposé titled “The Men Lost to 20 Bruckner Boulevard” (*New York Times*, 30 May). An old building being transformed into a charter school, it is “one

¹ These struggles were covered in depth in our press, including in “V-I-C-T-O-R-Y! B&H Workers in Big Win for Labor and Immigrant Rights,” *The Internationalist* No. 42, January-February 2016; and “NYC: Immigrant Workers Rebel,” *Revolution* No. 12, March 2016.

² See “Hot and Crusty Workers Win with Groundbreaking Contract,” *The Internationalist* special issue, November-December 2012.

³ See “De Blasio Administration Complicit in Closing of B&H Warehouses,” *The Internationalist* No. 48, May-June 2017.

of the deadliest construction sites in New York City,” the paper reported. Last year the bosses’ criminal negligence claimed the life of Mexican immigrant Mauricio Sánchez and gravely injured Yonin Pineda, from Guatemala, when an elevator crashed as they were trying to take “waist-high containers of construction debris” down five flights; three years previously a teenage immigrant worker from Ecuador, Marco Martínez, was killed when a mechanical lift crushed him against a ceiling.

“While government inspectors have issued numerous violations in connection with the deaths,” the *Times* reported, “they have exacted just \$28,864 in fines.” Meanwhile, shortly after the most recent fatal incident, the building’s owner “treated dozens of friends to a days-long celebration of his 50th birthday” on an island vacation spot, among them “his development partner in the Bronx Project and the founder of the charter school that had signed a long-term lease on the building.” There are thousands of non-union sites like the one on Bruckner throughout the city, where the need to organize for even the most elementary rights of labor is quite literally a matter of life and death.

As for the activists of the Cabricanecos campaign, what they have begun in launching their campaign early last month is a fight that is in the interests of the whole working class, in New York and beyond. Helping them win, and helping extend the struggle to the thousands facing similar conditions, is a crucial duty of the labor movement as a whole, which can and must bring its power into the fight.

Twelve Floors Up Without a Harness

Whether it is to clear rubble or even knock down walls, the company “doesn’t give us shovels, picks, crowbars, gloves, masks” or other necessary items – “not even garbage bags or cans” to put debris in, Luca

said. Instead, workers have had to look for “junk tools” that have been thrown away, or get cheap plastic ones that break easily.

As an example of conditions the workers face, Wilmer described the bosses sending them to remove the roof from a 12-story building. They were ordered to take the pieces down on scaffolding, with no harnesses, no training, and without the scaffold user certification card required by the city. “So much pressure, without tools, they don’t worry about the workers.” The bosses send workers to “take out huge pieces of wood, almost with our bare hands; and when they tell us to remove sheetrock, or walls get knocked down, the dust rises all around us, but we have no protection,” another worker noted; sometimes workers’ faces “are covered with sheetrock dust.”

Meanwhile the workers make “poverty pay.” Managers often told them that before a work group could take lunch, they would have to fill at least half of a truck with the debris the company was getting paid to clear away. “Sometimes this meant we had to wait until 3 or 4 in the afternoon, after starting at 7 in the morning,” another activist noted. Breaks are often non-existent. “‘Faster, faster,’ they yell at us,” often amidst a hail of insults.

Eventually, a group of workers got together in one of the compañeros’ home. A few knew Mahoma López, a leader of the Laundry Workers Center, from the time of the B&H campaign. They decided to get in touch. The workers began to “join together, to talk amongst ourselves,” recounts Cesáreo, and to ask: “What can we do in the face of all this exploitation? It isn’t right.”

The Cabricanecos organizing drive goes back considerably before the campaign was announced publicly this May. Workers described as a turning point the action they took in the summer of last year. “We stopped working and protested in the area where they keep the trucks,” one of the activists told us. “The owner came and asked what we wanted. We said, ‘We want a raise. We want \$17 per hour.’” (Pay was \$15/hour at that time.) “The boss said he would give different raises to different groups of workers, like as little as 25 cents more for the new people.”

“We said: No. ¡Todos parejos! [all equal], 17 an hour, all equal because we all do the same work.” The firm charges other companies “a lot more than that” per hour for the clean-up work its employees carry out. While not accepting the demand, management said some kind of raise would be forthcoming. But the workers stopped work a second time – and then the company raised pay to \$17, but still not for everyone. (Some got only a dollar raise, while new hires still get \$15.) Meanwhile, at some other companies in the same industry, “workers are getting 21, 23, 27 dollars an hour.” Today the Cabricanecos campaign is demanding a big and equal raise for all. *Todos parejos*.

This year on May Day, the workers marched together as part of the Laundry

Internationalist photo

Workers Center contingent, as supporters chanted: “*Cabricanecos, ¡estamos con ustedes!*” (Cabricanecos, we are with you!) Then, on the morning of May 2, the campaign’s public launch – titled Liberation Day – was carried out. At 6:00 a.m. workers massed at a large lot in Brooklyn’s Crown Heights neighborhood where the company keeps its trucks, while supporters gathered in a nearby park, then marched to the site. In addition to Laundry Workers Center activists and a sizable Internationalist contingent (including many students from the City University of New York), there were labor, community and left groups, among them jornaleros (day laborers), Workers World Party, Industrial Workers of the World and others. Amid a heavy downpour, militant chants of solidarity ruptured the early-morning silence.

Trucks were unable to get past the rally and leave the lot. Nor was the car of a manager, who refused to accept the workers’ *carta de demandas* (letter listing their demands). “Accept the letter, accept the letter,” chanted the crowd. “They’re afraid to take the letter,” people yelled out. Internationalists chanted, “*Los patrones tienen miedo porque los obreros no lo tienen*” (The bosses are afraid, because the workers are not), and the slogan was picked up by the crowd. The company called the NYPD, who – doing their job of upholding the interests and property of the exploiting class – eventually cleared the way for the manager’s car and some trucks to drive through. Almost two hours had passed since the rally began. The campaign had definitely been launched.

Indigenous Immigrants: A Growing Part of NYC Workforce

The workers involved in the campaign come from many countries, including Guatemala, Mexico, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras and Colombia. “It doesn’t matter where you come from,” Cesáreo said, they all work together and are determined to defend their rights. Like several other campaign activists who are originally from the southwestern Mexican state of Guerrero, Cesáreo is a member of the Tlapanec indigenous people. Proudly multilingual, he speaks the Mixtec and Náhuatl indigenous languages in addition to Tlapanec and Spanish.

“Cabricanecos” is the name that the whole workforce involved in the Best Super Clean struggle uses for their campaign. This too is an expression of solidarity amongst this multinational workforce. The name was chosen originally since “a lot of us are from Cabricán, in Guatemala,” notes Wilmer. Their mother tongue is Mam, part of the Maya family of languages.⁴ A municipality in the department (province) of Quetzaltenango, “Cabricán is a town, it is a land, of *minas de cal* [lime mines],” Luca explained, showing us a lively online video about this.⁵ This mineral has a wide range of uses, from the preparation of corn for tortillas to the production of plaster and other construction materials. In Cabricán, many of the *compañeros* used to work as lime miners.

Immigrants from Guatemala are a growing part of New York’s working class. Census figures for 2010 stated there were over 100,000 Guatemalans in the

⁴ The Mam people are the fourth largest of the 22 Maya ethnic/linguistic groups in Guatemala. ⁵ “La mina de cal (La Pedrera), Cabricán, Quetzaltenango.”



Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas (Class Struggle International Workers) in the May Day 2022 march in New York City.

New York metropolitan area as a whole. In NYC specifically, their numbers grew to over 32,000, increasing by almost 50% from 2010 to 2019, making this the fastest-growing Latino immigrant group in the city.⁶ And while nearly three quarters of Latin American immigrants in the NYC workforce are essential workers as defined by New York State, “Guatemalans and Mexicans had the highest share” (84 and 78 percent respectively). Yet Mexican and Guatemalan immigrants are more than twice as likely to live in overcrowded housing than the overall rate for NYC immigrants, have the highest share classed as “undocumented” among Latino immigrant groups, and face many other intolerable indices of oppression and discrimination.

Linguistic and ethnic discrimination against indigenous Latin American immigrants is one of the factors that has led to their frequently being undercounted. A significant number report being afraid or reluctant to be identified as indigenous. Up-to-date estimates are lacking, but as of 2017, figures for the U.S. as a whole showed an almost five-fold growth since 1990, to a (conservative) estimate of over 565,000 indigenous Latin American immigrants.⁷ Among indigenous working people in New York City, there are significant numbers of Kichwa speakers from Ecuador, Afro-indigenous Garifuna people from Honduras, and many others, including a growing proportion of immigrants who come from Mexico (with some estimates approaching 20%) and from Guatemala.

Like other largely agricultural regions in Mexico, the state of Guerrero faced devastating effects from the North American “Free Trade” Agreement, which went into effect in 1994. Flooding Mexico with heavily subsidized, industrially farmed U.S. corn and other products, NAFTA made subsistence impossible for vast numbers of the rural poor.⁸ This was a key factor accelerating out-migration to the U.S. from

⁶ Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, “A Demographic Snapshot: NYC’s Latinx Immigrant Population,” October 2021.

⁷ Sebastián Villamizar-Santamaría, “Racial and Ethnic Composition among Latinos in the United States (1990-2017),” CUNY Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies, May 2022.

⁸ Even mainstream bourgeois media have had to acknowledge this fact; see, for example, “Mexican farmer’s daughter: NAFTA destroyed us,” CNN Business, 9 February 2017; and “Want to understand the border crisis? Look to American corn policy,” The Counter, 24 July 2018.

Guerrero, which, among Mexican states, has the fourth largest percentage of people who speak indigenous languages.⁹

A study of “histories of dispossession of one of the newest migrant groups in NYC,” indigenous immigrant workers from the La Montaña region of Guerrero (an area with a high proportion of indigenous people), notes that NAFTA’s effects were exacerbated by “state violence through the militarization of Guerrero” as part of the U.S.-fueled “drug war” in Mexico. Having previously served as a “supplier of seasonal indigenous day labor for the agribusiness sector in the northwest of Mexico,” the Montaña region “was transformed into a labor force supplier for the North American migrant labor market.”¹⁰

At the time of the unionization campaign at the B&H warehouses, where many of the workers were of Mixtec origin, CUNY Internationalist comrades visiting Mexico recorded a message of solidarity with the B&H workers in Mixtec and Spanish, from a striking member of Mexico’s militant teachers movement.¹¹ He was from Oaxaca, the southern Mexican state with a long history of labor/indigenous struggle, which was also the birthplace of the first indigenous president of any country in Latin America: Benito Juárez (1806-72), who led the *Reforma* against the power of the Church and in 1867 defeated France’s attempt to conquer Mexico.

Yet discrimination against indigenous people continues to be a bitter reality. “When you speak your language, sometimes what happens when you go to the city is that people criticize you for being indigenous,” one of the Tlapanec Best Super Clean workers told us during the interview. “That’s why we are sometimes afraid to say that we speak our language,” though “many of us speak different languages, like Mixtec, Tlapanec, Náhuatl” and others.

⁹ Almost 16% of the population of Guerrero speaks indigenous languages, according to figures for 2020 published by Mexico’s statistical/geographical agency (cuentame.inegi.org.mx). Guerrero is also where, in September 2014, the 43 students of the Ayotzinapa teachers college, many of them of indigenous origin, were “disappeared” in an act of state terror.

¹⁰ Rodolfo Hernández Corchado, “From the Montaña to the city: a history of proletarianization of Mixteco indigenous from Guerrero, Mexico to New York City,” *Dialectical Anthropology* (2018).

¹¹ See “In Mexico: Revolutionary Internationalism Up Close,” *Revolution* No. 13, November 2016.

With regard to Guatemala, it has a higher proportion of indigenous people (41%, according to United Nations figures for 2018) than any other Latin American country except Bolivia. After a U.S.-organized coup ousted a left-leaning nationalist president in 1954 for the “crime” of nationalizing some unused land held by the United Fruit Company, the country was ruled by a series of U.S.-armed military regimes. Anti-indigenous racism was key to the terror. This culminated in literal genocide in the late 1970s and the ’80s, in which hundreds of thousands were killed, at least 1.5 million displaced, and innumerable indigenous villages were wiped out as part of the dirty wars of U.S.-orchestrated counterinsurgency in Central America.

This is the background for the situation of recent years in Guatemala. A 2018 photo essay titled “Why Are So Many Guatemalans Migrating to the U.S.?” answered that many “are fleeing circumstances that are American-made.” Having spent decades among the Mam indigenous people in northern Guatemala, the author emphasized:

“[P]olicies and U.S. political interventions of the past – and the *present* – have led to malnutrition, maternal and infant mortality, fractured communities, deep-rooted violence and corruption, and the loss of loved ones among Indigenous peoples living in the highlands. Those who leave for the U.S. are fleeing these conditions, which have been inflicted upon them....” – *Sapiens* magazine (25 October 2018, emphasis in original)

While the capitalist politicians block desperate refugees at the border, whipping up racism amid the periodic xenophobic panics and immigration “crises,” the essay’s author notes that many of the Guatemalans she has spoken with, and who face this situation due to U.S. actions, made the point that “they fit the conditions for asylum.”¹²

Victory to the Cabricanecos Workers’ Struggle!

Long active in organizing drives and campaigns among immigrant workers, the Internationalist Group and Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas emphasize that the power of the whole workers movement must be brought to bear in the fight to stop deportations and for *full citizenship rights for all immigrants*. This call will be of great importance in the coming period, in which threats and dangers to workers and oppressed people will continue to multiply. Workers solidarity is key.

Since the campaign was launched on May 2, supporters have repeatedly come out to help publicize its demands. The workers have intensively leafleted in the surrounding community. On June 15, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice helped organize a delegation that included six local rabbis, which presented a letter supporting the workers to the company, which is Hasidic-owned.

The Cabricanecos struggle comes at a moment when large numbers of workers and youth have been inspired by organizing efforts at Amazon and elsewhere; when inflation is eating away at already skimpy

¹² For the revolutionary program for workers action defending refugees and migrants, put forward by the Internationalist Group/League for the Fourth International, see, for example: “Border Flashpoint in the Racist War on Immigrants: We Say: Let Them In – Free Them All – Let Them Stay!” and accompanying materials in *The Internationalist* No. 54, November-December 2018.

paychecks, one basic right after another is under attack, and the many-sided crises of U.S. capitalist society keep getting sharper. Crumbling imperialist “democracy” says workers like those who have launched this campaign are essential – which they are – yet treats them as disposable pariahs. Its ruling parties, Democratic and Republican, will not even allow the “undocumented” workers, who are key in a broad range of industries, to vote. If one thing is certain, it is that no salvation will come from the politicians of the exploiting class.

Yet struggles like the one courageously launched by triply oppressed indigenous immigrant workers in New York can and should help spark a militant counteroffensive in which the workers and oppressed, bringing out their own power in their own class interest, open their own path to victory. *Organizing the unorganized* through mass militant struggle is a key part of this perspective.

Echoing his compañeros, one of the indigenous immigrant demolition-construction worker activists sought to hammer home a message: “We came here to work. We are here and we are fighting. If we don’t defend our rights, the same abuses will be carried out against those who come after us. It is for the people who come after us in the future that we will keep fighting, *hasta el final* (to the end).” ■

To make a contribution to the *Cabricanecos* campaign, see <https://bit.ly/3KvQwXm> or write laundryworkerscenter@gmail.com

Labor Notes...

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the union in the bosses’ courts does not strengthen the labor movement, it weakens it, by bringing the bosses’ government into labor. No to intervention by the bosses’ government and courts in the unions – Labor must clean its own house!

The TDU was founded in 1976 and Labor Notes three years later, following the historic 1977-78 United Mine Workers (UMWA) strike, in which militant coal miners waged a bitter struggle in defiance of the “reform” leadership of Arnold Miller. Miller was elected in 1972 on a “Miners for Democracy” slate that had brought in the Department of Labor to run the union’s election. TDU and Labor Notes both originated and developed as projects of the International Socialists and Solidarity, heirs of Max Shachtman who broke with revolutionary Trotskyism and eventually went over to U.S. imperialism. Putting “democracy” above the class line, they became virulent Cold Warriors against the Soviet Union and other countries where capitalism was overthrown, while “at home” they looked to the capitalist government to “reform” labor.

While Labor Notes trains young activists to become “progressive” trade union bureaucrats, pushing class collaboration with the capitalist Democrats, at a panel titled “Young Workers Rising” our supporter in the ALU laid out a Marxist perspective of class struggle. He pointed to the May Day 2008 West Coast port shutdown by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) against the war on Iraq and Afghanistan, and its Juneteenth 2020 shutdown protesting racist police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor as examples of how labor must go beyond narrow economism. He added:

“Another thing is that the biggest obstacle of the labor movement today is the

link between the bosses and the unions. As workers, as union members, we cannot rely on the NLRB because ultimately it is a tool of the capitalists, it’s a part of the bosses’ government. We also cannot rely on the Democratic Party, because again it’s a party of the bosses. It is especially important because there are a lot of politicians, like ones who have been mentioned today, who have done a lot to funnel the righteous indignation of young people and of workers into the very party that represents their bosses. The most important thing for the labor movement today is to break with the Democratic Party so that we can build a class-struggle, revolutionary workers party that represents the working class and all the oppressed.”

Labor Notes and the whole current of union “reform” movements in collaboration with the capitalist parties, the capitalist courts and the capitalist state do not point the way forward to a fighting workers movement that defends all the oppressed. From Miners for Democracy to the TDU and UAWD, their program leads to defeat. This was summed up a few years ago in an LN article on how to negotiate a giveback contract: “How to Bargain Concessions (If You Must),” *Labor Notes*, May 2012. We in the Internationalist Group have often raised the watchword, “Labor has gotta play hardball to win.” The slogan of Labor Notes might be: “Play ball with the bosses and lose.” ■

ILWU...

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contract strike.⁵

The ILWU has also stood tall against racist repression. In April 1999, the union shut West Coast ports demanding freedom for Mumia Abu-Jamal, the former Black Panther and radical journalist held for more than 41 years on a frame-up charges of killing a cop. And on 19 June 2021 (“Juneteenth”), in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd, the ILWU shut down all West Coast ports in the U.S. and Canada. It was a dramatic demonstration of workers’ power in defense of the oppressed. Today, a militant ILWU strike could galvanize support across the region. Important allies would be teachers, parents, and students in Oakland, where on February 17, ILWU Local 10 and the Oakland Education Association (OEA) held a mass mobilization against construction of a new A’s stadium at the port and the closing of public schools to be replaced by charters. Then on April 29, ILWU Local 10 and the OEA carried out a first-ever joint one-day strike against the privatization of public schools and at the port of Oakland.

What is crucially needed in the ILWU – and the labor movement as a whole – is a leadership with audacity and a class-struggle program to fight to win. Playing by the bosses’ rules has brought us to where we are today. Long ago, the U.S. union bureaucracy sold its soul to the Democratic Party, which isn’t any kind of “friend of labor” but rather a chain anchoring workers to the capitalist class. To wage a successful longshore strike, the ILWU must be prepared to fight not only on picket lines, but also politically

⁵ See our articles on “May Day 2008: Port Strike Against the War,” in *The Internationalist* No. 27, May-June 2008. The Internationalist Group, which fought from 2001 on for workers strikes against the war on Afghanistan and then Iraq, played a role in preparing the 2008 ILWU walkout. See the October 2007 *Internationalist* special supplement, *Why We Fight for Workers Strikes Against the War (and the Opportunists Don’t)*.

against the ruling parties of U.S. imperialism. You can be sure that if the ILWU walks out, Democrats and Republicans will unite to accuse the union of sabotaging the war effort against Russia and China. And you can expect that the union leadership, which last March announced it was refusing to handle Russian cargo, will salute and go along.

The ILWU has the power to defeat the capitalist onslaught. That’s why the shipping and stevedoring companies desperately want to automate the union into oblivion, along with the ILA and dock unions worldwide. To fight defeat that threat, it is necessary to oust the pro-capitalist bureaucrats, break with the Democrats and build a revolutionary workers party to fight for a workers government. ■

Wooly...

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can American and Native American copper miners against the Phelps-Dodge company, which had launched an all-out union-busting offensive. This was a genuine class war. State police and the National Guard – called in by the Democratic governor – occupied the mine towns, battling and brutalizing the strikers and Women’s Auxiliary members, and carrying out mass arrests. This story, too, was reported vividly and in depth by the newspaper of the then-revolutionary SL.² The experience of the Phelps-Dodge strike, of the heroism of the strikers enveloped in clouds of tear gas, the SWAT teams and the guardsmen bursting into workers’ homes to terrorize their families – this experience made a big impression on Wooly.

The Reagan years of all-sided social reaction, broken strikes, plant closings and mass layoffs were followed, in the late 1980s and early ’90s, by the capitalist counter-revolutions that destroyed the East European deformed workers states and then the Soviet Union itself, which the then-revolutionary Spartacist tendency actively fought against. The events of this period formed the background to a sharp degeneration of

² A comrade who was part of the delegation and is now an IG member recalls that we even sold subscriptions to the revolutionary press on picket lines as strikers burned tires to help defend the lines against the mine lords’ and government’s strike-breaking onslaught.

the SL that reached crisis proportions in the mid-1990s. Pulled by the undertow of post-Soviet demoralization and in haste to “pull its hands out of the boiling water” of class struggle, in 1996 it purged the cadres who went on to form the Internationalist Group. Wooly did not support us at that time, though he soon became one of many who resigned from the SL, which, as time went by, was ever more demonstratively turning its back on the program and fighting tradition it used to stand for.

Though no longer wanting to be an active militant, over the years Wooly became increasingly a friend to our organization. He manifested this in different ways, including the warm and welcoming support he gave to comrades who traveled to the Bay Area to help build anti-fascist mobilizations, and on other occasions too. This was linked to the history of struggles by the IG to help spark shutdowns of West Coast ports by the ILWU, for the freedom of former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal, the U.S.’ foremost class-war prisoner; against imperialist war and the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan; and against racist police terror.

Two summers ago, in the midst of the pandemic and the millions-strong upheaval touched off by the murder of George Floyd, the ILWU again shut down the ports, on Juneteenth (June 19) 2020, against police brutality and systemic racism.³ Wooly came out that day in his ILWU jacket, riding in a caravan of cars as part of the massive march backing the labor action. (See photo.) A little over a year later, he died of a heart attack outside his home in San Leandro, California. Our condolences go out to Loretta, their daughter Maria, Wooly’s grandson Jacob, and all his family and friends.

Peter Woolston was a man who avoided the spotlight, generally spoke little about himself, and wasn’t a fan of pomp or long-winded ceremony – but we will remember Wooly, the communist ideals he never abandoned, and the very real contributions that he made to our common struggle. ■

³ See “ILWU Shutdown of West Coast Ports Points the Way Forward,” *The Internationalist* No. 60, May-July 2020.

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Supreme Court...

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nationwide, even in “blue” states.⁵

The present Supreme Court majority, with hardline rightists at the wheel, is ideologically driven, determined to tear down countless judicial precedents and undo decades of federal legislation. Racists see it as a bulwark against an encroaching nonwhite majority. Proposals to pack the Court by adding more members, impeach justices for prevaricating in confirmation hearings, institute term limits or otherwise reform this stronghold of reaction are a pipedream. Congressional Democrats, particularly so-called “progressives,” can try to counter this judicial wrecking ball, but they will fail, not least because of deep-seated contradictions in their own party. “Abort the court?” Who will do it? In order to overthrow the tyranny of this judicial cabal we call to *abolish the Supreme Court through workers revolution.*

Opportunist Left Auxiliaries of the Democrats

As noted above, many of the initial protests against the Supreme Court canceling *Roe v. Wade* with its limited constitutional right to abortion were called by left groups and foundation-funded NGOs (non-governmental organizations). Establishment “reproductive rights” organizations such as Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America – which was so concerned about projecting a “moderate” image that it dropped the word abortion from its name – are focused on winning votes for “pro-choice” (Democratic) candidates from suburban moms, particularly Republicans repulsed by the misogynist Trump. The role of the opportunist left, on the other hand, is to harness the energy of younger abortion-rights demonstrators whom they exhort to “take to the streets” to pressure the Democrats to act. It’s a classic case of what in the ad business is called segmented marketing.

One of the left groups that prominently called protests over the Supreme Court action is the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL). The PSL’s June 30 statement called to

⁵ In *Dobbs*, the Court found that “the State’s interest” in “protecting the life” of what the Mississippi law termed an “unborn human being” was a “rational basis” for its law banning abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy. If it is “rational” for the state of Mississippi to call a fetus a human being, the same could be true for a Congressional abortion ban. And for a Supreme Court that upheld, in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (2010), the fiction of “corporate personhood,” proclaiming “fetal personhood” is not much of a stretch. Especially since *Citizens United* unleashed a flood of corporate contributions to “pro-life” – and “pro-business” – conservative candidates.

“demand that Biden take immediate emergency action” to “ensure abortion access in all 50 states.” This call on Biden – who in 1973 said *Roe v. Wade* went “too far,” who in 1976 was the main proponent in Congress of the anti-abortion Hyde Amendment, who opposed abortion until he launched his first presidential campaign in 2007 – to use executive powers to defend abortion rights can only create illusions in the Democratic Party. But for the PSL, it’s par for the course. Last year, as Biden was vituperating against “Cuba’s authoritarian regime,” the PSL sponsored a *New York Times* ad (23 July 2021) calling on him to “return to the Obama opening” of relations with Cuba.

The PSL statement concludes, “If Biden refuses to act, he will have shown the true face of the Democratic Party, which has shamelessly used abortion as a political talking point to win elections while actually throwing abortion rights under the bus....” So after calling on people to “hit the streets” to get Biden and the Democrats to act, the PSL admits it won’t happen. This kind of reformist “tactic” only breeds cynicism. Meanwhile, it is supporting a local initiative, the GRACE Act in Austin, Texas, which it claims “partially decriminalizes abortion.” The main call of this act is for police to make abortion investigation “the lowest priority for enforcement” – hardly “decriminalization.” So the PSL, which in 2020 called to “defund” or even “abolish” the police, today calls on the cops to “deprioritize” abortion prosecutions! In both cases it was building illusions in the capitalist state.

Another left group that called abortion rights protests around the country is Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights and its parent group, the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), which also goes by the Internet handle of revcom. Rise Up has been denounced as a “Communist ‘cult’” and a “pyramid scheme” to raise money by the *Daily Beast* (11 July), the liberal internet tabloid website, and in a statement by a coalition of 23 abortion rights groups. Genuine communists resolutely oppose red-baiting, including when it is directed at groups with which we have enormous differences, like the RCP. The smear article accuses Rise Up of “duping well-meaning abortion supporters,” while the statement reeks of anti-communist identity politics. That the RCP certainly has a personality cult around its guru Bob Avakian is no revelation, but it is a parody of communism. It also has a vile homophobic past. As for being a pyramid scheme, the complaint of the groups that have denounced it is that they want the cash.

Rise Up does have a valid point against its liberal/left McCarthyite detractors: it could hardly “hijack the abortion movement” since it was out protesting against the pending overturn of *Roe v. Wade* when most



Socialist feminists who look to the Democratic Party to defend women’s rights.

other abortion rights groups had given up the ghost and were raising funds for “post-*Roe* America.” What Rise Up doesn’t accuse its accusers of is acting as a pressure group on the Democratic Party. Why not? Because the RCP/Rise Up does the same thing. Their June 28 statement following the Supreme Court decision headlines: “Into the Streets to Demand: The Federal Government Must Restore NATIONWIDE LEGAL ABORTION NOW!” As if. To pretend that if there is enough protest in the streets, the imperialist Democrats in D.C. could be pressured into restoring abortion rights – that is duping abortion rights protesters, big time.

We denounce the RCP in particular for the fact that, in addition to peddling the insipid anti-Marxist thought of “Chairman Bob,” it and its endless front groups (Rise Up 4 Abortion Rights, Refuse Fascism, World Can’t Wait, etc.) all seek to organize militant liberalism and funnel protest into the Democratic Party. In a video reproduced in the *Daily Beast* article (and promoted by the RCP), Rise Up spokeswomen say that in the primaries, “we need to get as many people to the polls as possible to vote for more progressive Democrats,” to kick out the oldsters and bring in younger ones, and then in the midterms to vote to “make sure that these more progressive Democrats get into office.” Can’t be clearer than that – Rise Up is shilling for the Democrats.

A third grouping that initiated protests following the Supreme Court’s overturn of *Roe v. Wade* is a coalition between Left Voice (LV, affiliated internationally with the Trotskyist Fraction [FT]) and Socialist Alternative (SAIt, part of International Socialist Alternative). At the June 24 New York City march they called, LV and SAIt speakers put on a left face, criticizing the Democrats. But their main thrust was getting people into the streets. With what program? SAIt is utterly clear. On July 1, it reports, “Boston Socialist Alternative led a rally inside the federal building demanding that Biden and the Democrats stand up and fight for abortion rights.” It demanded that Biden “pull no punches” and force Congress to repeal the Hyde Amendment, “tax the billionaires,” provide “Medicare for All,” etc.

Get Biden, who opposed *Roe v. Wade*, who pushed for the Hyde Amendment, who opposed calls to tax billionaires and Medicare for all, to champion the cause of abortion rights (which he opposed for decades)?! And to do so “alongside Chuck

Schumer and Nancy Pelosi”!! This is not just what Marx and Engels called “parliamentary cretinism,” it is backhanded *political support* for the ruling capitalist party of the world’s hegemonic imperialist superpower. But it’s no surprise from SAIt, many of whose members and its Seattle city councilor Kshama Sawant, have joined the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America (DSA). Plus it won’t work. On June 23, the Biden White House let it be known that it was nominating an anti-abortion Republican as a federal judge in Kentucky (later withdrawn for lack of Republican support).

For its part, Left Voice has assumed a verbally more leftist posture, but as the left flank of a “mass movement” including bourgeois feminists. The *Left Voice* (25 June) account of the New York march called by the leftist coalition said they were united in calling for an “independent mass movement in the streets” that “has no faith in the empty promises offered by the Democratic Party or any capitalist party to protect abortion rights.” Yet the call for the march by 30 left, labor and abortion rights groups made no mention of the Democrats or their nefarious role. The same call said it was organizing under the banner “for a federal law for free, safe, legal abortion on demand and without apology.” But who would pass such a law? Like others, this coalition was organized as an attempt to pressure the Democrats, a form of lobbying in the streets.

At that march, LV issued a call for the formation of Bread and Roses, billed as a “socialist feminist” organization, part of an international network linked to the FT. A subsequent article appealing to join Bread and Roses (*Left Voice*, 9 July) proclaimed “We Need Socialist Feminism.” It called for “an independent movement that does not give one iota of political support to the Democratic Party.” But having “no faith in the empty promises” of the Democrats, or even giving no formal political support to it, is not organizing for women’s liberation *against the Democratic Party* of racist cop terror, imperialist war and burying women’s rights. LV calls to “organize a mass movement like the one in Argentina,” which, as we have pointed out, was a movement led by the bourgeois Peronists, which won a more limited right to abortion than the Mississippi law that was just approved by the U.S. Supreme Court.⁶

⁶ See our article, “The Struggle for Full Abortion Rights, From Latin America to the U.S.,” cited above.

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Racism and the Deadly Anti-Abortion Crusade

Numerous polls have consistently shown for more than four decades that a solid majority of the U.S. population was against overturning *Roe v. Wade*.¹ Recently, almost two-thirds (63%) opposed the Supreme Court decision that did just that.² Today, record-high numbers say that abortion should be legal in all or most cases (61% in one poll),³ with a majority identifying as “pro-choice” and (for the first time ever) declaring abortion morally acceptable.⁴ In Texas, a 2022 poll reported that 37% agree that “By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.”⁵ At the same time, a substantial minority nationwide (37%) hold that abortion should be illegal in all or most cases and consider it morally wrong. But beyond those two poles, there are conflicting views on when abortion would be justified.

For all the complexity of public opinion, the fact is that the highest U.S. court just abolished a constitutional right strongly supported by a majority of the population. So much for “American democracy”! The justices in their black robes are able to get away with this criminal action because of the reactionary features of the U.S. Constitution, designed to curb supposed “excesses of democracy” and a “tyranny of the majority.” In addition to unelected courts with the power to overrule legislative and executive action, these provisions include a Senate designed to rein in the more representative House, and voting for the president by an Electoral College, so that two of the last four presidents were “elected” despite losing the popular vote. In addition, restraints on majority rule are reinforced by a right-wing minority mobilized by powerful capitalist forces.

This is key to the continuing battle over abortion rights for pregnant people in the United States. Today, abortion is

¹ Gallup, “In Depth: Abortion” (May 2022).

² CNN/Social Science Research Council poll (28 July 2022).

³ Pew Research, “America’s Abortion Quandary” (6 May 2022).

⁴ Interestingly, a third of the respondents in the Pew polls held that abortion was *not* morally acceptable, but should be legal.

⁵ University of Texas at Austin, The Texas Politics Project, Availability of Abortion (April 2022).

a dividing line between Democrats and Republicans, and between liberals and conservatives. Yet it was not always so. In 1967, the right-wing Republican then-governor of California Ronald Reagan signed into law the most liberal abortion bill in the country, while future Republican president George H.W. Bush secured the first federal funding for birth control. In 1969, Republican president Richard Nixon, working with Bush, enacted the Title X family planning program that is a major source of funds for Planned Parenthood. In 1970 Republican governor Nelson Rockefeller signed New York’s law decriminalizing abortion, and in 1973 he vetoed a repeal of that law by the Democrat-controlled state legislature.⁶

But in 1972, Nixon advisors Kevin Phillips and the fascistic Pat Buchanan devised a reelection strategy focusing on winning over formerly Democratic constituencies of Southern segregationists and Northern Catholics.⁷ This realigned national politics up to the present. In the 1980s, it led to the consolidation of a “religious right,” spurred not by religious or moral convictions, but by *racism* ... and *money*. Evangelical author Randall Balmer recounts how at a 1990 closed-door conference, the top leaders declared that “abortion had nothing whatsoever to do with the emergence of the religious right.” Instead, they were spurred to action by the denial of tax-exempt status to whites-only “Christian academies.” It was not *Roe v. Wade* that motivated them but *Brown v. Board of Education*, the 1954 Supreme Court decision mandating desegregation

⁶ The Nixon-appointed Rockefeller Commission Report, *Population and the American Future* (1972), stated: “The majority of the Commission believes that women should be free to determine their own fertility, that the matter of abortion should be left to the conscience of the individual concerned, in consultation with her physician, and that states should be encouraged to enact affirmative statutes creating a clear and positive framework for the practice of abortion on request.” It also called for private insurance and state aid to support abortion services. But that was before right-wing Republicans did a full 180 on abortion.

⁷ This was spelled out in Phillips’ 1969 book, *The Emerging Republican Majority*. For details and documents of this political shift, see Linda Greenhouse and Reva Siegel, *Before Roe v. Wade*, 2d. edition (2012). Also, “How abortion became a partisan issue in America,” *Vox*, 10 April 2019.

demoralized, while the opportunists act as a perennial left tail of a section of the bourgeoisie. This formula may or may not bring short-term success in numbers, but it’s no way to advance the struggle to make a revolution.

For Women’s Liberation Through Socialist Revolution

Proponents of the revolutionary politics of the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky have a counterposed approach. Our watchword is to “speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter” (from the Transitional Program of the Fourth International). The truth is that the liberation of women from age-old oppression cannot be achieved under capital-

ism, while even simple democratic goals like free abortion on demand, will not be secured under bourgeois rule.⁷ As was just demonstrated by the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the cancellation of a half-century-old partial right to abortion, even the most limited advances can be – and will be – reversed as the decaying capitalist system rips up past gains, destroying social programs and driving down the living standards of the mass of working people and the poor.

For several decades, the fight over women’s reproductive rights was pitched in religious terms, as abortion defenders chanted “Get your rosaries off my ovaries” (against Catholic anti-abortion bigots), and later, “Get your theology off my biology” (to include evangelical-led “god squads” besieging abortion clinics in the South). But anti-abortion forces have been weakened by the sharp decline in the proportion of white evangelical Protestants (falling from 23% of the U.S. population in 2006 to 14.5% in 2020)⁹ and by the fact that today a clear majority of Catholics (56%) support the right of abortion in numbers similar to mainline Protestant whites (60%).¹⁰ Thus while they now have the backing of the Supreme Court, the ranks of hard-core opponents of abortion are increasingly reduced to religious fanatics and outright racists worried that they could soon be outnumbered.

Thus the Court’s autocratic cancellation of the right to abortion could not only lead to further attacks on reproductive rights as well as rulings against gay and transgender rights, it may well spark violent assaults by racist and fascist forces on everything from school curriculums to protests against police brutality. Just as the not-guilty verdict in the case of Kyle Rittenhouse for the teenage vigilante’s murder of antiracist protesters was taken by ultrarightists as declaring open season on “antifa,” there may be a resurgence of deadly attacks

⁸ See Balmer, *Bad Faith: Race and the Rise of the Religious Right* (2021). The leaders present at the confab included Paul Weyrich, head of the Free Congress Foundation and architect of the religious right; Ralph Reed of the Christian Coalition; Ed Dobson, a top operative of Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority; direct mail mogul Richard Viguerie and other heavy hitters of the Republican right wing. Balmer documents how the forces opposed to the Internal Revenue Service’s action making donations to segregated schools taxable realized that open defense of racial segregation would not bring out voters and instead sought “an emotionally charged issue to stir people up,” as the founder of the National Christian Action Coalition put it. They first tried anti-gay bigotry with Anita Bryant’s Save Our Children crusade, which the Florida “orange juice queen” launched in 1977. But when that flopped, they latched onto the abortion issue following the 1978 midterms in which “pro-life” candidates swept Minnesota elections, breaking the hold of the liberal Democratic Farmer-Labor Party.

⁹ Religion News Service, 8 July 2021.

¹⁰ Pew Research Center, “Public Opinion on Abortion” (17 May 2022).

ism, while even simple democratic goals like free abortion on demand, will not be secured under bourgeois rule.⁷ As was just demonstrated by the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the cancellation of a half-century-old partial right to abortion, even the most limited advances can be – and will be – reversed as the decaying capitalist system rips up past gains, destroying social programs and driving down the living standards of the mass of working people and the poor.

⁷ The countries that presently have free abortion on demand are China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam – all of them bureaucratically deformed workers states, based on the overthrow of capitalist rule.

on abortion providers combined with state repression. In 2009, heroic abortion doctor George Tiller was gunned down at his church in Wichita, Kansas. This came after his clinic was bombed in 1986, in 1993 he was shot in both arms, and in 2009 he was put on trial for performing late-term abortions. He was found innocent of all charges, but three months later he was murdered.¹¹

This deadly war on abortion rights has been going on ever since *Roe v. Wade* made abortion a constitutional right, and with the overturning of *Roe* it will now likely escalate. Courageous Indiana doctor and abortion rights advocate Caitlin Bernard, who four days after the Supreme Court decision performed an abortion on a ten-year-old rape victim from Ohio, where following the Court ruling abortion is now illegal, is receiving hate messages while being investigated by the state attorney general.¹² Meanwhile, Colorado abortion doctor Warren Hern (a close friend of Dr. Tiller) began sleeping with a rifle by his bed after an attack in 1974; had rocks thrown through the window of his home/office and bullets shot through his clinic window in the 1980s; started wearing a bulletproof vest to work in 1993, and today continues to perform late-term abortions, while drawing the shades at night, because “That’s how they kill doctors.”¹³

We salute these valiant fighters for women’s rights, and warn that they and the countless others who bravely provide this vital service for those who seek to end an unwanted pregnancy face growing danger. A recent (May 19) report by the National Abortion Federation listed 11 murders, 25 attempted murders, 42 bombings and 196 arson attacks among 15,000 violent attacks on abortion providers and over 1 million disruptions of abortion services in the U.S. since 1977. And the rate is increasing: there were more death threats in 2020-21 (382) than in the entire preceding decade. This underscores the urgency of our call to “Defeat Racist Abortion Bans with Class-Struggle Action” (*The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019). In particular, abortion clinics bordering states where abortion has been banned may be particularly targeted by vigilantes, bounty hunters, racists and fascists. We call for *workers defense of abortion clinics* by all necessary means. ■

¹¹ See our article, “Assassination of Courageous Doctor in Wichita: War on Abortion Rights Escalates,” *The Internationalist* No. 29, Summer 2009.

¹² “Doctor in Indiana Faces Risks as Voice for Abortion Rights,” *New York Times*, 29 July.

¹³ “As a med student, he saw women nearly die from illegal abortions. At 83, he sees no end to his work,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 March.

What is common here is that opportunist leftists seek to latch on to an existing, or what they see as a potential, “mass movement,” taking up a position slightly to the left of the mainstream, posing as critics of the more “moderate” leadership and simultaneously being “best builders” of that movement. It could be pro-abortion, anti-gun, whatever, the formula is the same. The result is that the opportunists’ program is ultimately determined by the bourgeois liberals or “progressives.” Their calculation is that when mainstream leaders “sell out,” the masses will be radicalized and flock to the “left” wing of the movement. But more usually the masses become

“¡Todos parejos!” contra intolerables condiciones de trabajo y salarios de miseria



Cabricanecos

En Nueva York, trabajadores inmigrantes indígenas en lucha

Lanzamiento de la campaña de organización de trabajadores inmigrantes indígenas de la construcción en la ciudad de Nueva York, 2 de mayo.

Por Trabajadores Internacionales Clasistas

BROOKLYN, Nueva York, 10 de julio – Contra descarados abusos patronales, más de 40 trabajadores de demolición y construcción, principalmente inmigrantes indígenas de Guatemala y México, lanzaron en mayo una valiente campaña de denuncia y organización. Sin dejarse intimidar por la ola de despidos en represalia que ha realizado la patronal, la campaña sigue, destacando de manera llamativa las mortíferas condiciones laborales que enfrentan miles y miles de trabajadores en Nueva York y más allá. “Somos seres humanos, pero después de utilizarnos como una fuerza laboral, cuando ya no sirve, nos desechan”, dijo un trabajador que sufrió múltiples lesiones al descargar materiales pesados para Best Super Clean/ISK Group. En una entrevista colectiva con el periódico *The Internationalist*, otros activistas de la campaña expresaron sentimientos parecidos, así como la determinación de defender sus derechos.

Best Super Clean/ISK se dedica a la demolición y limpieza de sitios de construcción. La empresa se niega a proporcionar a sus trabajadores el equipo adecuado en el trabajo, y ni siquiera las herramientas más básicas que necesitan. “Los dueños de la compañía están ganando millones con nuestro trabajo, pero nos tratan como si no valiéramos nada”, dijo otro trabajador activo en la campaña. Organizada por el Laundry Workers Center (LWC – Centro de Trabajadores de Lavanderías, que organiza a trabajadores predominantemente inmigrantes en Nueva York y Nueva Jersey), la campaña se enfoca ahora en el empeño de conseguir mejoras esenciales en las condicio-

nes laborales y los salarios. Su nombre, “Cabricanecos”, se debe al hecho de que muchos de los trabajadores son originarios del pueblo de Cabricán en Guatemala.

“Herramientas y seguridad en el trabajo” son centrales en la lucha, enfatizaron los compañeros Lucas y Wilmer, dos líderes de la campaña. Condiciones inseguras de todo tipo “son parte de nuestro trabajo” diario y deben terminar, dijo el compañero Cesáreo. “Nos tratan como si fuéramos basura y hasta nos hablan como si fuéramos animales”, a veces llamando perros a los trabajadores, además de arrojarles otros viles y denigrantes insultos. “Ya no queremos que nos traten así”, dijo. “Tanta injusticia”, agregó el compañero Luis. Además de las herramientas



Voceando las reivindicaciones de los trabajadores en el lanzamiento de la campaña, el 2 de mayo.

y la seguridad en el trabajo, las principales reivindicaciones de los trabajadores incluyen la recontratación de cinco trabajadores despedidos en represalia contra la organización de la campaña; un aumento de sueldo; días de enfermedad, horas de comida en un horario fijo y *breaks* (descansos) según lo establecido por la ley. “¿Breaks? ¿para qué los necesitan?” es una burla típica de los gerentes de la empresa. Y cuando los trabajadores dicen que necesitan herramientas, la respuesta es: “Si no quieren trabajar, que se vayan.”

Best Super Clean/ISK, cuyas propiedades también incluyen una empresa de videovigilancia llamada Live Lion Security, es un ejemplo típico de muchas empresas contratistas no sindicalizadas que ganan un dineral pagando salarios de miseria a los trabajadores inmigrantes para limpiar los escombros en las obras de construcción. Los trabajadores informan que las ganancias de la empresa han crecido tanto en el período reciente que ésta pudo aumentar su flota de camiones de 4 a alrededor de 30. Desde que los trabajadores lanzaron públicamente su campaña con una impactante manifestación en el sitio de despacho de camiones de la empresa el 2 de mayo, Best Super Clean/ISK se ha enfrentado a repetidas protestas frente a un edificio sin identificaciones en el vecindario de Bedford-Stuyvesant de Brooklyn que sirve como su sede.

Nuevo eslabón en una cadena de luchas

La campaña Cabricanecos fue iniciada por un grupo de trabajadores que incluye veteranos de la campaña de organización de los trabajadores inmigrantes del almacén de la empresa B&H Photo, también dirigida

por el LWC.¹ “Llevamos esa experiencia a esta lucha aquí”, explicó uno de ellos durante la entrevista colectiva con *The Internationalist*. La lucha de B&H a su vez fue encendida por la chispa de la lucha para sindicalizar el restaurante Hot and Crusty, realizada por trabajadores inmigrantes en el centro de Manhattan hace casi una década.² En B&H, después de que la sindicalización se ganara en 2016, la compañía, en una flagrante maniobra antisindical, cerró los almacenes al año siguiente.³ Algunos de los despedidos allí encontraron trabajo en la industria de la demolición y construcción.

De esta manera, la campaña Cabricanecos es un nuevo eslabón en una cadena de luchas de trabajadores inmigrantes. Estas subrayan tanto la necesidad como el gran potencial de la organización combativa entre sectores que son clave para hacer funcionar la ciudad, al mismo tiempo que se les niegan derechos básicos y se les trata como parias “indocumentados”, que a menudo arriesgan sus vidas debido a condiciones de trabajo inaguantables.

La mayoría de las veces, estas condiciones pasan inadvertidas y rara vez aparecen en los titulares de la gran prensa. Una excepción se produjo recientemente cuando un edificio en el Bronx adquirió una sombría notoriedad cuando el *New York Times* (30 de mayo) publicó un artículo bajo el título de “Los hombres que murieron en el edificio de Bruckner Boulevard 20”. Un edificio antiguo que está siendo transformado en una escuela chárter,⁴ es “uno de los sitios de construcción más mortíferos en la ciudad de Nueva York”, informó el periódico. El año pasado, la negligencia criminal de los patrones cobró la vida del inmigrante mexicano Mauricio Sánchez, provocando también las graves lesiones sufridas por Yonin Pineda, de Guatemala, cuando un ascensor se estrelló mientras intentaban bajar cinco pisos con “contenedores de escombros de construcción hasta la cintura”. Tres años antes, un trabajador inmigrante adolescente de Ecuador, Marco Martínez, murió cuando un elevador mecánico lo aplastó en el mismo edificio.

“Si bien los inspectores del gobierno registraron numerosas infracciones en relación con las muertes”, informó el *Times*, “las multas que han impuesto suman apenas 28,864 dólares”. Mientras tanto, poco después del incidente fatal más reciente, el propietario del edificio “invitó a decenas de amigos a una fiesta de varios días para celebrar sus 50 años” en un centro vacacional en una isla, entre ellos “su socio de desarrollo en el proyecto del Bronx y el fundador de la escuela chárter que había firmado un contrato de arrendamiento a largo plazo en el edificio”.

sigue en la página 38

¹ Estas luchas fueron cubiertas en detalle en nuestra prensa, incluso en “¡V-I-C-T-O-R-I-A!” (sobre el voto para sindicalizar los almacenes de B&H), *El Internacionalista*, noviembre de 2015; y “NYC: Immigrant Workers Rebel”, *Revolution* No. 12, marzo de 2016.

² Ver “Hot and Crusty Workers Win with Ground-breaking Contract”, *The Internationalist* edición especial, noviembre-diciembre de 2012.

³ Ver “De Blasio Administration Complicit in Closing of B&H Warehouses”, *The Internationalist* No. 48, mayo-junio de 2017.

⁴ Las escuelas chárter son escuelas de administración privada que disfrutaban de fondos públicos además de los suministrados por fuentes privadas.