

Zionist Revenge After Hamas Offensive Shakes Israel to the Core **Defend the Palestinians Against U.S./Israel Genocidal War on Gaza!**

OCTOBER 10 – In the early morning hours of Saturday, October 7, the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in Gaza carried out a stunning surprise attack on Israel, the Zionist state that has driven millions of Palestinian Arabs from their homeland and oppresses millions more in Gaza, the occupied West Bank and within Israel. Reportedly over 5,000 missiles were launched, reaching as far as Tel Aviv, overwhelming Israel’s vaunted Iron Dome anti-missile shield. The massive 30-foot high, 40-mile long border wall that completely surrounds the Gaza Strip was breached in numerous places and Hamas fighters poured out, overrunning two dozen Israeli communities. At this time (October 10) the Israeli military is reporting over 900 Israelis dead, while Palestinian medical authorities report almost 800 Palestinians killed, mostly by Israeli air strikes in densely populated Gaza. In addition, there are thousands of injured on both sides.

The unprecedented number of Israeli dead has deeply shaken the Jewish population. The Zionist media talk of Israeli forces’ “Catastrophic Failure” (*Haaretz*) while Arab publications hail Hamas’ “Decisive Blow,” headlining “From Indignation to Jubilation” (*Al Mayadeen*). Western media and politicians denounce pro-Palestinian demonstrators as “apologists for terrorism.” For the first time in more than half a century of clashes, more Israelis were killed than Palestinians. (The usual figure is more than 20 Palestinians dead for every Israeli.) Israel’s military is quickly turning that around and has already begun, once again, to turn the giant concentration camp that is Gaza into a killing field of Palestinians. Already more than 1,200 homes in Gaza have been destroyed, and as Israel’s rightist prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed, the bloody assault on Gaza is “just the beginning.” As for Israel’s patrons in Washington, who pose as champions of “human rights,” they are responsible for the deaths of close to a million people in U.S. imperialist wars just since 2001.²

Currently, the United States under Democratic president Joe Biden is running a bloody proxy war against Russia in Ukraine under the watchword “as long as it takes” – meaning, to fight to the last Ukrainian. But that, and previous squabbling with Netanyahu, hasn’t gotten in the way of Washington marching in lockstep with the perennial hardline Zionist Israeli leader (almost 17 years in office, on and off) as he prepares to flatten Gaza. Israel has requested, and the Pentagon said it will supply, more precision-guided munitions from the U.S. (The Pentagon sent 155-mm. artillery shells from its stockpiles in Israel to Ukraine, but now Israel’s military requires the arms as it gears up to occupy Gaza.) Meanwhile, Biden’s vow – and that of just about every other imperialist leader – that “Israel has a right to defend itself” amounts to giving the Zionist state a “license to kill” Palestinians. **This is now an Israel/U.S. war on Gaza.**

¹ According to United Nations statistics, from 2008 to March 2023, 6,269 Palestinians were killed in clashes as against 293 Israelis.

² See “U.S. Imperialism Hurling Toward World War III,” *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.

**Drive the Zionists Out of the West Bank and Gaza
For International Workers Action Against the Attack on Gaza
For an Arab-Hebrew Palestinian Workers State
In a Socialist Federation of the Middle East**



The full-scale Zionist destruction of Gaza has begun. Rather than hitting individual buildings, as in 2014 and 2021, now the Israeli air force is leveling whole districts, giving no warning to the inhabitants. Above: Palestinians survey extent of damage in Al-Rimal neighborhood of Gaza, October 9.

Any real blow against the Zionist state by Palestinian forces, even by reactionary Islamists, is in the interests of the workers and oppressed of the world. But along with striking at the Israeli military, Hamas fighters carried out an indiscriminate terror attack, killing some hundreds of Israeli party-goers, residents of kibbutz communities and apartment dwellers in southern cities. This is not striking at the Zionist occupation machine but a random assault on Israelis that undermines the defense of the Palestinian people. Such a *jihad* (holy war) is the method of right-wing nationalists and religious zealots, such as the Islamists of Hamas ... and of Zionist militarists of all political stripes. Now the misnamed Israel Defense Force (IDF) is doing the same on a far larger scale, against the entire population of Gaza. The toll will quickly surpass the hundreds of Palestinians the IDF murdered in its 2021 attack on Gaza.

In almost all the imperialist countries, there are now moves to suppress any and all support for Palestinians and

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Internationalists at October 13 Palestinian solidarity protest in New York City’s Times Square. Fight for an Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state!

Samar Abu Elouf for The New York Times

Internationalist photo

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Defend the Palestinians! Defy the Witch-Hunters!

We print the speech by a supporter of the CUNY Internationalists at an October 12 protest outside the City University of New York's Hunter College in defense of the Palestinian people against Israel's onslaught on Gaza.

I am part of the CUNY Internationalists. As we stand here today, the people of Gaza are under total siege. The Israeli government, backed to the hilt and armed to the teeth by the Democratic Party administration of Joe Biden and Company, has vowed to, and is carrying out on a massive scale, the genocidal doctrine of collective punishment yet again against the Palestinian people. We say: Defend the Palestinians – Defend Gaza!

Young people here and around the world need to stand with this besieged and imprisoned people, who find themselves today in a modern Warsaw Ghetto. Many young people today are seeing that this requires swimming against the stream, against the constant barrage by the capitalist media and capitalist politicians, and showing courage and determination.

The government of Israel, backed by U.S. imperialism, has vowed to, and is, cutting off food, water, electricity -- to try to starve out, bomb out and mur-



Internationalists at October 21 protest in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn against U.S./Israel war on Gaza.

der the people of Gaza. Yesterday (October 11), the university there was bombed. Meanwhile, here in the U.S., university administrations are launching a frenzy

of McCarthyite witch hunts to stigmatize and ostracize and threaten all those who would speak up and speak out in defense of the Palestinian people. They are start-

ing “investigations” and making one threat after another – but we will not be intimidated, and we will not be silenced! We denounce and we defy these witch-hunters. The least we can do is raise our voices and show our solidarity with the people of Gaza, and with the Palestinian people.

As internationalists, as revolutionary Marxists, we see the burning need for the working class around the world to bring out its power, in workers actions in defense of the Palestinian people. And this is closely connected with the struggle against the U.S. and NATO war machine that is hurtling towards World War III.

We see the burning need to unite the workers and oppressed worldwide, and in the Near East, to fight for a socialist federation anchored in the massive proletariat of Turkey, Egypt, and other countries, together with a fight for a binational Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state.

We say: Asian, Latin, black and white – Workers of the world, unite! Jewish, Arab, black and white – Workers of the world unite! Defend the Palestinians! Defend Gaza! ■

Genocidal War...

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enforce a Zionist monopoly on political space. In Germany, pro-Palestinian protests have been banned in Berlin. In France, pro-Palestinian demonstrations scheduled for Paris, Lyon and Marseille have likewise been banned, on the bogus grounds that they “incite racial hate.” Meanwhile, the justice minister has launched an investigation of the leftist Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) and called for a “swift and firm penal response” to any support for Palestine, claiming that this is equal to anti-Semitism. In Italy, the education minister dispatched inspectors to investigate and possibly jail student collectives in Milan that have come out in favor of the Palestinians. It is necessary to denounce and defy these bans and threats, and to link protests against the NATO imperialist war in Ukraine with defense of the Palestinian people. This could include *workers action against the ship-*

ment of arms to Israel and Ukraine.

In the U.S., the Democratic Party is whipping up pro-Zionist hysteria. New York governor Kathy Hochul went on the warpath against the NYC Democratic Socialists of America for promoting an October 8 pro-Palestinian demonstration she called “repugnant.” She is in effect putting a target on the back of anyone who dares to speak up in defense of a besieged people. What is truly vile is the support of Democrats and Republicans for the *Zionist murder machine*. Hochul was joined in this by New York City mayor, ex-cop Eric Adams, who recently returned from a junket to Israel, where he currently has a delegation of NYPD cops for “training.” At the same time, several universities are “investigating” students and student groups who have come out in defense of Palestinian rights. It is necessary to confront this new McCarthyite witch-hunting head-on.

Yet DSA Democrats in Congress echoed Biden’s vituperation. Their star, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, issued an



In a matter of minutes, using simple earthmoving equipment Hamas fighters broke through border fence that cost Israel billions and took years to build. The hated fence kept Palestinians locked up for decades in a Nazi-style concentration camp, “the world’s largest prison,” unable to leave and dependent on their Israeli (and Egyptian) jailers for food, fuel, water and electricity.

October 9 statement, “I condemn Hamas’ attack in the strongest possible terms.” While piously calling for “an immediate ceasefire and de-escalation,” her statement had not a word of criticism of Israel or defense of Palestinians. Another member of AOC’s “Squad,” Jamaal Bowman, made a similar statement.³ Now (October 10) the NYC DSA is backing away from its earlier stance, saying it is “sorry for the confusion our post caused.” All DSAers, as mem-

³ In November 2021, Bowman went on an all-expenses-paid tour of Israel “arranged” by the liberal Zionist lobby J Street, which he reported on in a glowing account of his meetings with Israel’s president, prime minister (Netanyahu), “the Israel Defense Forces” and others (“Reflecting on My Trip to Israel,” 20 November 2021). Amid the recent uproar, Bowman let it be known that he had let his DSA membership lapse a year ago.

bers of this pro-imperialist organization, are complicit in the shameful capitulation before the Zionist and imperialist censors. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian American, at least called to lift the blockade, end the occupation and dismantle the suffocating system that produces resistance.

At the White House today, Biden declared: “In this moment, we must be crystal clear: We stand with Israel,” adding that “we will make sure that Israel has what it needs” to attack Gaza. So in this moment, as the imperialist warmongers are insisting it is “which side are you on,” we are equally clear: as Israel is dropping U.S.-supplied bombs on mosques, schools and hospitals, murdering worshipers, schoolchildren and patients, all opponents of imperialism and Zionism must *stand with the Palestinian people*, oppressed by Israel since its incep-

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Italian Unions Call to Stop Arms to Israel and Ukraine

On October 16, as Israel ramped up its genocidal attack on Gaza – which as of this writing (October 19) has killed more than 8,000 Palestinians, including 3,195 children, according to the Gaza health ministry – Palestinian trade unions issued an urgent call on fellow unions and workers worldwide to “End All Complicity, Stop Arming Israel.” The appeal, signed by the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) as well as its affiliate in Gaza and other independent labor federation, called in particular to stop building weapons for Israel, to “refuse to transport weapons to Israel,” and to get their unions to pass motions to that effect.

The League for the Fourth International urges unions and class-conscious workers to respond to the emergency appeal and to take action against the monstrous slaughter being jointly carried out daily in Gaza by Israel and the U.S. In many Western countries the Palestinian unions’ call has fallen on deaf ears, notably in the United States and Germany, where leaders of major unions are in bed with the Zionist state. In Canada, the public employees union CUPE called on the government to end sales of arms to Israel. In Britain, the RMT rail and transport workers union called on members to join Palestine solidarity protests and called to stop arms sales to Israel, while workers in Unite, Unison and other unions have blocked the entrance to the Israeli arms company Elbit Systems in Kent. But these are modest and isolated initiatives.

In Italy the situation is notably different, as a militant sector of the labor movement has long called for Palestinian solidarity. On Friday, October 20, some of these unions, led by S.I. Cobas (for *comitati di base* – “rank and file committees”) called a “general strike” against the attacks on workers’ living standards by the fascist-led government of Giorgia Meloni, and against the production and shipping of arms. The following day, the same unions and their allies protested at the Italy/U.S. military base in Ghedi, outside Brescia in northern Italy. Since 1963, this base has held dozens of U.S. atomic bombs and has been used for NATO imperialist wars against Serbia, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. A call by the S.I. Cobas for the two days of action included:

“We will demonstrate in Ghedi against



Demonstrators at October 21 protest call to “Block Everything: Factories, Trains, Ports.” The mobilization against the Ukraine and Gaza wars was called by S.I. Cobas at the Italian/U.S. Ghedi air force base outside Brescia, Italy.

military spending, to close the military bases that are used for imperialist aggression and to stop the sending of Western arms to the Ukraine and Israel....”

The combative demonstration of some 5,000 protesters in Ghedi was heavily proletarian in character, reflecting the union’s base among immigrant workers in the logistics industry.

On the same day, October 21, there was a smaller demonstration called by the USB “rank-and-file” union and its allies in San Pietro Grado, outside of Pisa, against plans to expand a *carabinieri* (paramilitary police) center there into a much larger military base. Again, one of the demands was against sending arms to Ukraine and Israel. The forces that organized this demonstration, along with others, are now organizing a national anti-militarist demonstration in Rome on the “Day of the Armed Forces,” November 4, with a central demand of “Stop the sending of arms to the Ukraine,” along with slogans in defense of the Palestinians.

In the past, these labor groups have on several occasions carried out actions blocking cargo bound for wars in the Middle East. This was the case in June 2019, when the Autonomous Collective of Port Workers (CALP) in Genova refused to load military cargo on a Saudi Arabian

ship which was destined to be used in the bloody war against the Houthi population in Yemen.¹ In May 2021, in the midst of the last Israeli war on Gaza, dock workers in Livorno affiliated with the USB refused to load containers with arms and explosives bound for the Israeli port of Ashdod.² That same month in Ravenna, the port unions of the three main labor confederations (CGIL/ CISL/UIL), alerted to the approach of an Israeli ship, announced they would refuse to move containers with arms that were waiting on the docks there.³

Action by Italian workers against arms shipments to the Zionist military can have an important impact. Italy is the third-largest exporter of arms to Israel, including of Leopard tanks and aircraft.⁴ It is also the only European producer of F-35 fighter-bomber aircraft, which NATO countries are

¹ See “Port Workers Boycott Saudi Military Cargo Bound for War in Yemen,” in *The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019.

² “The Port of Livorno Will Not Be an Accomplice with the Massacre of the Palestinian Population: No to Shipping of Arms from our Port of Call” (in Italian), USB, 14 May 2021.

³ “Tensions in the Port: ‘The Workers Refuse to Load War Materiel for the Israel-Gaza War’” (in Italian), *Ravenna Today*, 21 May 2021.

⁴ “Arms trade: Which countries and companies are selling weapons to Israel?” *Middle East Eye*, 18 May 2021.

purchasing in large numbers as they prepare to hand over their used F-16s to Ukraine. This multibillion-euro trade is an important reason why the Meloni government is not about to halt weapons shipments, either to Israel or to the fascist-infested NATO puppet regime in Kiev. That is why workers action is key. Now it is reported that there will soon be another attempt to ship military cargo to the Saudi air force through the port of Genova, this time by a subsidiary of the U.S. military contractor DSX Technology. *This must be blocked!*

Blocking individual shipments of war material to Israel and Ukraine can be deemed symbolic, but it has tremendous importance as an example of mobilizing the power of the working class against imperialist (and Zionist) war. There are notable political differences between the different mainstream and “rank-and-file” unions in Italy, with some explicitly opposing NATO’s war in Ukraine while others refuse to defend any capitalist country under attack by imperialism (such as Russia in the U.S./ NATO Ukraine proxy war). Reflecting this, and traditional organizational enmity, worker actions against arms shipments that have occurred have been by each union acting separately. *This undercuts the tremendous potential of united proletarian action to defeat imperialist war.* (See our article, “Italy: Workers Action Key to Defeating Imperialist War Drive Against Russia, China,” on page 6 of this issue.)

So far, since the beginning of U.S./Israeli murderous assault on Gaza, the calls to “stop” arms shipments to Israel have been by the different “rank-and-file” unions acting separately. The Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italia has pushed for united workers action to *block* NATO arms shipments to Ukraine, and now to Israel as well. At a meeting of S.I. Cobas held in the CALP office in Genova on October 14, one of several in preparation for its demonstration at Ghedi, when a Nid’I supporter called for joining forces to stop weapons shipments, this was warmly applauded. But it’s necessary to turn this sentiment into concrete action. To actually mobilize workers in powerful class struggle against imperialism requires one thing above all: revolutionary leadership fighting for international socialist revolution. That is the program of the Nid’I, Italian section of the League for the Fourth International. ■

tion, and now subject to genocidal attack.

The Internationalist Group, U.S. section of the League for the Fourth International, has joined recent pro-Palestinian protests with signs calling to “Defend Gaza, Defeat Israeli-U.S. War on Palestinians!” and “Defend Palestinians’ Right to Return!” We called “For Workers Action Against Zionist Terror,” and declared, “Defend Gaza, the New Warsaw Ghetto! Expel Zionist Occupiers from the West Bank!” Our signs call as well as to defeat the U.S./NATO war drive against Russia and China, for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, to break with the Democrats and build a revolutionary workers party, and to fight for an *Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state* in a *socialist federation of the Middle East*.

Bitter Fruits of Decades of Bloody Zionist Occupation

Courageous Israeli journalist Amira Hass, who has reported from and lived in Gaza and the Occupied West Bank for decades, wrote in the liberal Zionist daily *Haaretz* (10 October):

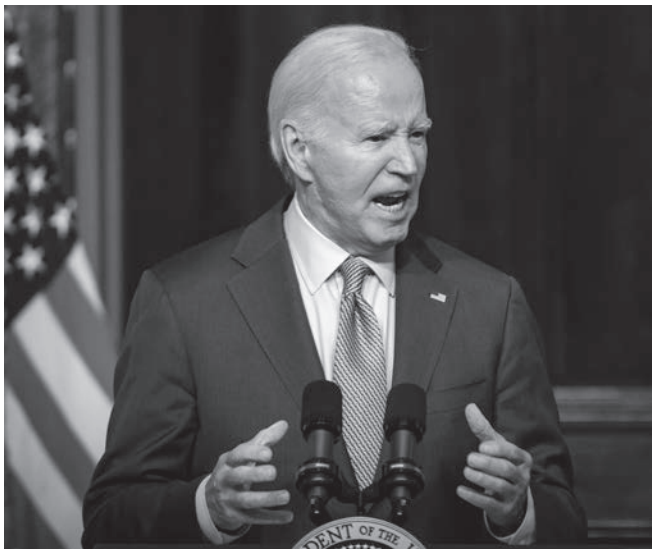
“In a few days Israelis went through what Palestinians have experienced as a matter of routine for decades, and are still experiencing – military incursions, death, cruelty, slain children, bodies piled up in the road, siege, fear, anxiety over loved ones, captivity, being targets of vengeance, indiscriminate lethal fire at both those involved in the fighting (soldiers) and the uninvolved (civilians),

a position of inferiority, destruction of buildings, ruined holidays or celebrations, weakness and helplessness in the face of all-powerful armed men, and searing humiliation.”

The Hamas operation, on air, land and sea – using bulldozers to break through the massive fortifications that Israel spent billions to build, and which have confined Gazans for decades in their barren strip of land; vaulting over the wall on improvised paragliders; knocking out military communications, seizing an Israeli army base, taking out Israeli tanks with drones – caused celebration in much of the Arab world and shock in the Zionist government. Its security apparatus apparently

had no inkling of the elaborate operation, which had to involve hundreds of people over many months of preparation. Israel’s vaunted Mossad spy agency, whose deadly skullduggery has become a staple of Hollywood thrillers, was caught flatfooted. The arrogant Israeli leaders, who revel in subjugating Palestinians, were dealt a blow.

The Zionist leaders are now out for bloody revenge. Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant declared on Tuesday (October 9), “We are imposing a complete siege on Gaza. There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything will be closed. We are fighting against human animals. We act accordingly.” This vile *declaration of intent to commit genocide* is



U.S. president Biden speaking at the White House the day after venomous announcement that the U.S. would supply Israel with “what it needs” in weaponry to bomb Gaza to smithereens. Beyond complicity, this is a U.S./Israel war on the Palestinians.

from one of the more “moderate” elements of the hard-right government, who opposed Netanyahu’s judicial reform that hundreds of thousands of liberal Zionists have mobilized against for months. Netanyahu himself said that what the Israeli government was about to do to Gaza “will reverberate with them for generations.” This talk is echoed by U.S. president Biden, who today declared the Hamas attack “pure, unadulterated evil.” That would be a better description of U.S. imperialism’s murderous wars on Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and now in Ukraine.

For 16 years, ever since Hamas took over the territory in 2007, more than 2 million people have been penned up in the tiny Gaza Strip, smaller than the New York City borough of Queens, unable to leave what amounts to the largest prison in the world. Controlled by Israel and Egypt, Gazans are deprived of jobs, dependent on their jailers for food, water, fuel and on the United Nations for meager essential services. The Palestinian population of the West Bank, under Israeli occupation since 1967, is confined to even smaller enclaves, subject to repeated murderous incursions by IDF hit squads and fascist settler gangs. Keep an entire population locked up for decades, condemning them to a threadbare existence, and what did Israel expect? People who feel they have nothing left to lose may strike out in rage.

For Arab-Hebrew Workers Revolution!

Last November, Netanyahu took office yet again, this time at the head of the most right-wing government in Israel’s history,

including two ministers from the fascist movement of the late Meir Kahane, Bezalel Smotrich (finance minister, also in charge of the West Bank) and Itamar Ben-Gvir (national security minister, in charge of the police). Ever since, there has been a string of provocative police/army attacks on Palestinian cities on the West Bank, particularly in Jenin, searching for “militants.” More than 200 Palestinians were killed in 2023 already before the October 7 attack. And last week, “More than 800 Israeli settlers stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound

in occupied East Jerusalem on Thursday morning under the protection of Israeli forces” (*New Arab*, 5 October). None of this is mentioned in the Western media, of course.

October 6 was the 50th anniversary of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when Israel shook under a surprise attack by Egypt and other Arab countries. It can’t be an accident that Hamas staged its attack early on the next day. In its announcement of the assault, “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood,” Hamas’ military arm cited the attacks on the Jerusalem mosque and the over 5,000 Palestinians languishing in Israeli jails. Hamas justified taking hostages in order to exchange them for the imprisoned Palestinians. Defenders of democratic rights have long called for release of the thousands of Palestinians who are being held by Israel as hostages. But in the present atmosphere, it is doubtful that concern for the lives of Israeli hostages will hold off the Zionist military invasion of Gaza for even a minute.

It is also certainly not accidental that the dramatic Hamas attack came after the huge protests of hundreds of thousands against Netanyahu’s judicial “reform” that would eliminate the ability of Israel’s Supreme Court to block decisions and policies voted by the Knesset, Israel’s parliament. Although liberal and “left” Zionists (and their U.S. backers) call this a “coup” by Netanyahu, the present situation, where a few unelected judges can veto the actions of the elected parliament, is highly undemocratic. The real issue is that the Zionist state itself is anti-democratic to the core, a religiously defined “Jewish state”

based on the subjugation of the Palestinian population, whether as second-class “citizens” in Israel itself, or as subjects without rights in the occupied West Bank. Yet the liberal Zionists have rigorously excluded any Palestinian flags from their protests.

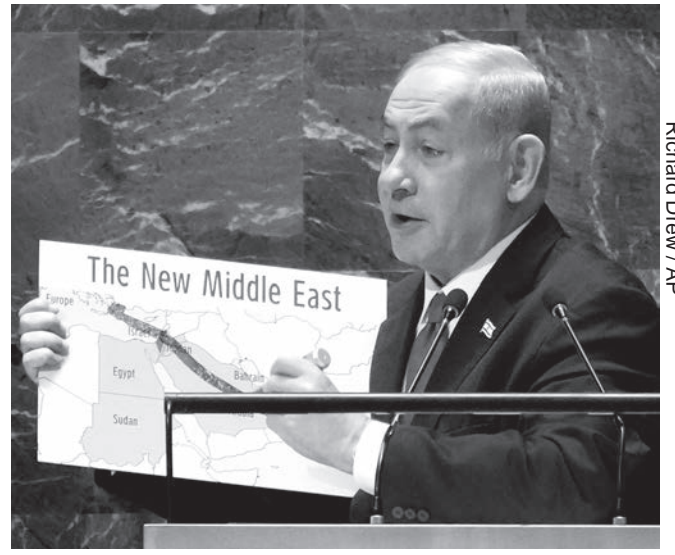
Hamas may also have calculated that the Biden administration in the U.S. was preoccupied with the war in Ukraine, and thus less able to intervene, which is far from the case; and that its attack would be more difficult for Arab regimes to “normalize” relations with Israel, which

could turn out to be accurate. Speaking at the United Nations last month, Netanyahu held up a map of the “new Middle East,” and with a red jumbo marker drew an axis extending from the United Arab Emirates across Saudi Arabia and Israel (including the West Bank and Gaza) to Europe. But while such a Zionist pipe dream may be off the agenda for now, the fighting in Israel could spark a regional war. The U.S. moved a naval battle group to the eastern Mediterranean as a warning to Iran not to intervene, but a massacre in Gaza could set off explosive unrest throughout the region.

For now, the liberal Zionists are closing ranks with Netanyahu, as negotiations for a “national unity” government are underway which would include Benny Gantz, the retired general who ran against Netanyahu in the October 2022 elections. While being sold to the Zionist “left” as a way to rein in the fascist ministers, Gantz is no “dove,” having commanded the previous massacre of Palestinians in Gaza in 2021 as defense minister in an earlier “unity” government led by Netanyahu. A full-scale invasion of Gaza will doubtless produce significant casualties in the IDF, as Hamas forces capable of overcoming the border wall in minutes will certainly have prepared deadly traps inside Gaza.⁴ But no matter what the scale of Israeli losses, the impending Israeli ground attack (for which the IDF has mobilized over 360,000 reservists) will be nothing but a deliberate slaughter of Palestinians.

Many Palestinians living under the yoke of Israeli occupation and Palestinian activists abroad were elated by the Hamas attack. The bourgeois-nationalist PLO and the deeply discredited Palestine Authority it leads are nothing but security guards for Israel, paid for by the United States through the U.S. Security Coordinator, a Pentagon lieutenant general. While it has grown at the expense of the PLO, the Islamic fundamentalism of Hamas and other formations such as Islamic Jihad can only lead to defeat. The surrounding Arab states will not come to Palestinians’ aid in anything more than a token manner, and more likely not at all, as seen in the role of Egypt and Jordan as jailers of Palestinian refugees ever since

⁴ Saleh al-Aroui, deputy head of Hamas’ political bureau, said: “The resistance bases its position and plans on the worst possibilities, including a ground invasion,” which he described as “the best scenario for us to resolve the battle” (quoted in International Crisis Group, “A Second October War in Israel-Palestine” [9 October 2023]).



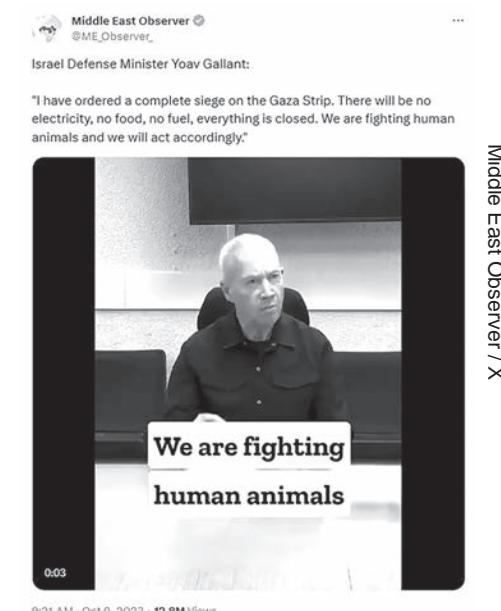
Speaking at the United Nations on September 22, Israeli prime minister Netanyahu brandished a jumbo marker to draw a map of “The New Middle East” in which the occupied West Bank and Gaza were annexed to the Zionist state.

the 1967 Arab-Israel War. Nor is Iran likely to join a fight with Washington, as it has gone to great lengths to get U.S. sanctions partially lifted. All these forces – including Hamas – in reality seek to strike a deal with the imperialists and Zionists, at the Palestinians’ expense.⁵

The only road to a future of peace and genuine liberation for the Palestinian masses lies in common revolutionary struggle with the working people of Israel, both Hebrew-speaking and Arab, as remote and unlikely as that seems at present. And the Jewish population of Israel, half of which is not religiously observant, can only look forward to a “future” as a besieged garrison facing the endless threat and periodic reality of war. The Zionist “left” is finished as an electoral force, consumed by the logical evolution of the theocratic state it once led. Meanwhile, the fascist settler movement may try to seize on the present crisis to carry out longstanding plans to push hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arabs out of the West Bank and Israel.⁶ A “Jewish state,” by definition exclusionary and

⁵ Hamas repeatedly proposed a ten-year truce with Israel (which was refused), so it could peacefully administer Gaza, just as the PLO/PA does in the West Bank enclaves.

⁶ These plans were originally drawn up by the “Labor Zionist” politician Yigal Allon, a former member of the Palmach militia and the “left” Zionist Ahdut HaAvoda party, as the next step after Israel’s conquest of East Jerusalem and the West Bank in the 1967 war.



Israeli war minister Yoav Gallant orders a racist, genocidal siege of the Gaza Strip, October 9.



Israeli tanks line up in preparation for ground invasion of Gaza that can only be a genocidal slaughter of Palestinians. Drive the Zionists out of Gaza and the occupied West Bank!

The Origins of Hamas

We have written more than once about how, “while Zionists vituperate against Hamas they neglect to mention that Israel helped set up the reactionary Islamic group, in order to compete with the Palestinian nationalist Fatah”¹ (“Defend Gaza and the Palestinian People – For Arab-Hebrew Workers Revolution!” *The Internationalist* No. 38, October–November 2014). During and since Israel’s 2021 attack on Gaza, more details have come to light about the Zionist sponsorship of the Islamists. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* (18 May 2021), the former chief of the *Times*’ Jerusalem bureau, David Shipler, wrote that “Israel did much more than ‘allow’ Hamas to rise as a counterweight to Yasir Arafat’s secular Fatah party that leads the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO):

“In 1981, Brig. Gen. Yitzhak Segev, Israel’s military governor of Gaza, told me that he was giving money to the Muslim Brotherhood, the precursor of Hamas, on the instruction of the Israeli authorities. The funding was intended to tilt power away from both Communist and Palestinian nationalist movements in Gaza, which Israel considered more threatening than the fundamentalists.”

After a former Muslim Brotherhood leader, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, set up his Islamic Association in 1978, Israel poured money into some of his projects and continued to do so for years. General Segev said, “The Israeli government gave me a budget, and the military government gives it to the mosques.” A few years later, Yassin founded Hamas (the Arabic acronym for Islamic Resistance Movement). Avner Cohen, the official who was responsible for religious affairs in Gaza for more than two decades

¹ Fatah (“Victory”), a reverse acronym for the Palestine National Liberation Movement, is the nationalist party that is the largest component of the PLO.

of Israeli occupation, later said, “Hamas, to my great regret, is Israel’s creation” (from the video, “Blowback: How Israel Helped Create Hamas,” *The Intercept*, 20 February 2018).

Building up Hamas as an alternative to the PLO and in order to prevent the formation of a Palestinian state has been a policy of the right-wing Zionist Likud party for decades. It was the cornerstone of the 2005 decision by then-Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, who took over Likud after the fall of Netanyahu’s first government, to “disengage” from Gaza. Sharon advisor Dov Weissglas wrote: “This whole package called the Palestinian state has fallen off the agenda for an indefinite period of time.... The plan provides the amount of formaldehyde required so that there will be no political process with the Palestinians.” With Netanyahu back at the helm, in 2018 he agreed to Qatar transferring millions of dollars a year to finance the Hamas government in Gaza (“The End of the Netanyahu Doctrine,” *+972 Magazine* (9 October).

The next year, at a meeting of Likud members of the Knesset in March 2019, Netanyahu declared: “Anyone who wants to thwart the establishment of a Palestinian state has to support bolstering Hamas and transferring money to Hamas.... This is part of our strategy – to isolate the Palestinians in Gaza from the Palestinians in the West Bank.” The prime minister, who is under indictment for three corruption cases, confided his strategy to police investigators. Regarding Hamas and Hezbollah in Lebanon, he said, “I mislead them, destabilize them, mock them, and then hit them over the head.” There can be no agreement with them, he said, “but we control the height of the flames” (“Israel Can’t Be Managed by a Criminal Defendant,” *Haaretz*, 9 October). Not this time. The Hamas attack just sent Netanyahu’s whole strategy up in flames. ■

counterposed to the surrounding population, can never be secure in the Middle East, even using genocidal terror, as Israel is now doing.

The Internationalist Group and League for the Fourth International stand squarely on the side of the Palestinian people, which we have always defended against the Zionist oppressor state and its imperialist patrons who have condemned them to a stateless, impoverished existence and exile. Trotskyists opposed the founding of the Zionist state, built on the dispossession and mass expulsion of the Arab majority of Palestine. This historic crime came on the back of the Nazi Holocaust that murdered over 6 million Jews in World War II and was fed by the refusal of the “democratic” imperialists to accept Jewish refugees during and after the war. We oppose all religiously based states, whether the self-proclaimed “Jewish state” of Israel or the Islamic Republics of Iran and Pakistan, officially Christian states (like Franco’s Spain), etc.

Nevertheless, as a result of this history of crimes upon crimes, there are now two peoples inhabiting the same small territory,

the Hebrew-speaking population of some 7 million and an equal number of Palestinians split between the occupied West Bank, Gaza and Israel proper. Meanwhile, there are another 3+ million Palestinian refugees in the immediate vicinity (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt), and another couple million elsewhere in the diaspora. Defending the oppressed Palestinians against the Israeli oppressor, we fight for the **right to return of all Palestinians** to their homeland. To open a path toward a just and viable solution, there is no way around it: these two peoples both have national rights to exist. But in a “two state” scenario, as foreseen in the 1994 Oslo Accords, under capitalism who gets scarce resources, like water, will be the stronger entity, which won’t be a small, dispersed Palestinian “state.”

While many “progressives” call Israel a “colonial settler state,” unlike the West Bank settlers, who are mostly émigrés from the U.S., particularly New York City, the vast majority of Hebrew-speaking Israelis have no other home to go back to. The Zionist fortress state of Israel must be exploded from within, and the mass protests of the first nine months of 2023 show plenty of fissures

Internationalists Protest U.S./Israel Genocidal War on Gaza



New York, October 9



Mexico City, October 12



Berlin, October 21

that could crack the seeming monolith. The IG/LFI holds that in such cases of *interpenetrated peoples*, the only road to an equitable and democratic resolution to competing national rights is through socialist revolution by the common struggle of the working people of both nations. To secure real defense of the Palestinian people, we fight for a **binational Arab-Hebrew Palestinian workers state**,

linking up with the powerful proletariats of Turkey, Egypt and Iran **in a socialist federation of the Middle East**.

That perspective requires forging the leadership of an **Arab-Hebrew revolutionary internationalist workers party based on the genuine communism of Lenin and Trotsky**. It is the only road to liberation, and it is a task we must undertake in the dark times ahead. ■

Internationalist photo

Rogelio Morales Ponce / Cuartoscuro

Permanente Revolution

**February 25: 10,000 Protest in the Port of Genova Against Arms to Ukraine
Summer 2023: Mobilize Workers' Power to Shut Down NATO Bases in Italy!**

Italy: Workers Action Key to Defeating Imperialist War Drive Against Russia and China

JUNE 27 – The imperialist war against Russia, ultimately aimed at restoring capitalist rule in China, continues to escalate. Last September, immediately after the electoral victory of her party, the fascist Fratelli d'Italia (Fd'I – Brothers of Italy), Giorgia Meloni tweeted to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, president of the fascist-infested U.S./NATO proxy regime in Ukraine: "You know that you can count on our loyal support.... Stay strong and keep your faith steadfast!" She affirmed her loyalty to NATO and the European Union (EU), while calling for more sanctions against Russia, more arms for Ukraine, and denounced the incorporation (after a popular referendum) of the four Russian-speaking southeastern regions into Russia.

When the fascist puppet Ukrainian president visited the fascist Italian prime minister in the Palazzo Chigi in May, Meloni reiterated that her government would continue its military support to Kiev, declaring: "We are betting on Ukraine's victory" (*Deutsche Welle*, 13 May). The previous "national unity" government under Eurobanker-premier Mario Draghi began supplying armaments to Ukraine last year. This has increased under the far-right Meloni government, which has reportedly sent dozens of surplus M109 self-propelled howitzers and most recently a modern SAMP/T anti-aircraft missile system. Unlike other NATO countries, Rome has been secretive about its shipments because of vocal popular opposition to arming Ukraine.

Every opinion poll shows that a majority of Italians are against sending arms to Ukraine, and that the NATO imperialist war and sanctions against Russia are unpopular. No matter, Meloni declares Italy will continue arming Ukraine "regardless of the impact this may have on public opinion" ("L'opinione pubblica non ci interessa, Kiev va sostenuta" [We're not interested in public opinion, Kiev will be supported], (*Quotidiano di Sicilia*, 22 March). Despite occasional barbs from her coalition partners, Putin fans Matteo Salvini (Lega) and the late Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia), the Rome government, both under cabinets of "national unity" and the far right, exhorts the masses to accept sacrifices for the cause of "liberty and democracy" in Ukraine.

The Meloni government's involvement in the imperialist war goes hand in hand with vicious attacks against the working masses in Italy. Runaway inflation, largely caused by the imperialist sanctions and war, is hitting the middle class and working class

Defeat the Italy-Backed, U.S./NATO Proxy Regime in Kiev!



Port workers in Genova, Italy, February 25, led march of thousands protesting arms shipments and NATO war. Actions of international proletarian solidarity such as this land a blow against imperialism.

hard, while homelessness and poverty increase. The "May Day Decree" enables employers to extend short-term work contracts to 24 months, sometimes 36 months, with no obligation to permanently hire at the end of this period, while axing the (utterly inadequate) "citizenship income" and introducing an even lower and harder-to-qualify-for "inclusion grant." It reintroduces vouchers, which pay hour by hour. And with maximum job insecurity will come even more fatal work accidents (1,361 in 2021).

Today, older people are forced to work until age 67 (or even beyond if the number of years worked do not reach a ceiling) while there is massive youth unemployment. Since most jobs are precarious and low-paying, many young people go to live and work abroad. There are now more emigrants than immigrants and the total population is declining and aging because young people mostly can't afford to have a family. Many women are fired or lose their job when they are pregnant or because childcare is too expensive or

insufficient. Desperate to raise the birth rate, the government is pushing to severely restrict or eliminate the limited (first trimester) right to abortion which women have had under Law 194 since 1978. (Meloni vowed in the campaign to give women "the right to not have an abortion.")

Meanwhile, COVID continues to kill dozens a day while spending for health care, education and other services are slashed. In short, imperialist war and sanctions have exacerbated the privations facing working people in Italy, which escalate with each new cabinet in the revolving-door governments and can only be overcome through workers revolution.

The Anti-NATO Demonstration in Genova: A Step Forward

On February 25, the Autonomous Committee of Port Workers (CALP, *Collettivo Autonomo Lavoratori Portuali*) in Genova organized a demonstration of 10,000 people that marched through the large port area calling to stop arms shipments to the imperialists' Ukraine proxy government, denouncing anti-Russia sanctions and opposing "NATO's war." The call for the demonstration attracted many supporters of CALP's longstanding refusal to handle arms traffic, as in June 2019 when (alerted by French dockers in Le Havre) it successfully blocked the loading of military cargo onto a Saudi Arabian ship that was to be used in the murderous war



Return of the black shirts as champions of imperialist war. The fascists' puppet president of Ukraine and the fascist premier of Italy meet at Palazzo Chigi, May 23. For Meloni, "public opinion does not matter," Rome will continue to supply arms to Kiev. Mobilize workers power to stop them!

Fascist Meloni, Populists, Liberal "Democrats": War Makers, Strikebreakers All



The sizable turnout at the February 25 protest in port of Genova was largely due to the fact that it was linked to a workers action: a dock strike against the war, inflation and sending arms to Ukraine.

against the Houthi population in Yemen.¹

That action and the February 25 demonstration were blows against imperialism through international proletarian solidarity action. Most CALP port workers are members of the USB (Unione Sindacale di Base), a “rank-and-file” union. On March 14 of last year, workers at the airport of Pisa discovered a shipment of arms to Ukraine disguised as humanitarian aid, notified their union – also an affiliate of the USB – and refused to load the cargo. USB dock workers from the nearby port of Livorno and some 2,000 people flocked to the Pisa airport to solidarize with their action. Two weeks later, on 1 April 2022, rail worker unions in northern Greece refused to move trains loaded with NATO tanks for Ukraine as supporters of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) blocked the tracks.

The Genova demonstration was called by CALP on a low-level basis (“Put down arms, Raise wages”). However, it was politically distinct from the many “peace” demonstrations organized by the CGIL trade-union bureaucracy, the Democratic Party (PD), bourgeois pacifists and NATO socialist “leftists” – such as the huge 5 November 2022 “antiwar” march in Rome – which don’t oppose the imperialist sanctions or arms to Ukraine. On the contrary, many in those demos hail the Ukrainian fascist-infested “resistance” and raise its blue-and-gold flag. Outright social-imperialists and NATO supporters stayed away from Genova on February 25. Many youth and workers, on the other hand, saw the march as a way to express defense of Russia against NATO’s war, reflected in the warm reception that our newspaper calling to “Defend Russia and China, Defeat

¹ See “Port Workers Boycott Saudi Military Cargo Bound for War in Yemen,” *The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019.

NATO Imperialism” received.

The February 25 Genova demonstration was supported and built by the USB, the soft Stalinist Rete dei Comunisti (RdC – Network of Communists) and its Internet daily *Contropiano* along with its university student supporters of Cambiare Rotta (Changing Course) and its high-school supporters of Organizzazione Studentesca Alternativa (OSA). Also prominent was the left-populist Potere al Popolo (PaP, Power to the People), of which RdC is a constituent part. Smaller Stalinist formations including several latter-day PCIs² were also present. Busloads arrived from as far away as Naples and other southern cities.

Clearly, most of the demonstrators were for the defeat of “NATO’s war,” and many would defend Russia and China against imperialism, some even affirming that China

² The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was for decades after World War II the largest pro-Moscow Stalinist CP in Western Europe, with over 1.3 million members in the 1960s and over 10 million votes as late as 1987. The long-since reformist PCI, which sabotaged the very real possibility of workers revolution in Italy during 1943-48, was already well on the way to total social-democratization when it adopted the watchword of “Eurocommunism” at the beginning of the 1980s, refusing to defend Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and Poland. Following the counterrevolution that destroyed the USSR and the Soviet bloc East European bureaucratically deformed workers states, the PCI collapsed. It first morphed into the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS) and ultimately, in 2007, joining together with Christian Democrats to form the bourgeois Democratic Party (PD). A social-democratic Communist Refoundation Party (PRC) was formed in 1991 and has gradually declined in strength, so that today it has no parliamentary representation. Meanwhile, several small PCIs have formed with memberships ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand, all with deeply reformist Stalinist politics.



“Down with arms, up with wages.” Peace movements are by their nature class-collaborationist popular fronts with sectors of the bourgeoisie. Potere al Popolo and the Unione Popolare fit this type; both are bourgeois political formations and have been prominent in all the antiwar protests of the recent past.

is “socialist,” or at least not capitalist, (The League for the Fourth International upholds the historic Trotskyist position that China is a bureaucratically deformed workers state.) Yet these Stalinist and Stalinoid tendencies are deeply nationalist, echoing the PCI’s traditional defense of the 1947 “anti-fascist” Italian Constitution, with all the illusions that implies. Thus, rather than calling to defeat U.S./NATO imperialism with workers action, many call on the Italian government to stop arms shipments and for “Italy out of NATO” and, in some cases, out of the EU. Yet a capitalist Italy “independent” of these imperialist alliances would be no less imperialist.

RdC, *Contropiano* and the USB along with Potere al Popolo all backed the bourgeois Unione Popolare (U.P.) electoral coalition in the September 2022 elections, and continue to campaign for this “popular front” chaining working people and the left to sections of the capitalist class. This has meant support for the U.P. standard-bearer Luigi De Magistris, a former judge and mayor of Naples. As mayor, De Magistris privatized public services, conducted a war against the public transit workers and administered capitalist austerity. Now he is supporting Article “41 bis” of the prison administration act that is essentially a slow death penalty through solitary confinement. While billed as an anti-Mafia measure, it is currently being used against the courageous anarchist prisoner Alfredo Cospito. The entire labor movement must demand: *Free Alfredo Cospito!*

RdC has been part of the bourgeois populist Potere al Popolo since 2017. The program of PaP calls for a “more just, more equitable society” – i.e., for an illusory reform of capitalism. Its populist program does not call for workers to take power or even class struggle but for “democratic control of the market.” Impossible! PaP wants “the people” to determine the functioning of capitalism. Like its ally and partner Podemos is doing as part of the Spanish government, administering capitalist austerity, enforcing racist laws, including in major cities like Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia, and supporting Ukraine in the NATO imperialist proxy war in Ukraine? At its 2021 Congress, RdC proclaimed: “Potere al Popolo is in fact the most advanced experience on the front of political representation.”

Elsewhere in Europe, SYRIZA (the bourgeois “Coalition of the Radical Left”) imposed capitalist austerity dictated by the Eurobankers on working people in Greece. On the other side of the Alps, Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s La France Insoumise (LFI – France Unbowed), who campaigned for De Magistris and the UP at a Rome rally in September 2022, voted for the repressive “anti-terrorist” laws in 2015. More recently it sought to divert the massive revolt against the anti-worker pension “reform” into a non-binding (i.e., empty) referendum. (See “France: Drive Out Macron, Fight For a Workers Government” [March 2023].) Any government including the likes of Mélenchon’s LFI in France, UP or PaP in Italy, Podemos in Spain or SYRIZA in Greece, would be a bourgeois government, and no matter what its professed program, it would end up enforcing capitalist austerity and imperialist war.

At the February 25 demonstration in Genova, and again more recently at a June 24 “National Demonstration Against Meloni and her Warmonger Government” in Rome, the Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italia under-

lined the need to break with the politics of class collaboration and fight for a *workers government based on factory councils (soviets)*. As for the USB, it commits the worst kind of class collaboration when it organizes the police and judicial system – mortal class enemies of the working class – into its ranks. We demand: *Police out of the trade unions and workers movement!*

RdC/USB vs. T.I.R./S.I. Cobas

Also on February 25, the same day as the Genova port workers’ protest to stop arms to Ukraine, S.I. Cobas, the largest of the “rank-and-file unions,”³ organized anti-war demonstrations in Milan, Bologna and Rome, supposedly against all sides in the fighting in Ukraine. These demonstrations had a few hundred people each, mostly from their immigrant working-class base in logistics. S.I. Cobas only sent a small contingent to Genova, primarily to express their political differences with the mobilization called by the CALP/USB. They chose not to use the occasion to initiate effective workers actions with the USB and others against the bourgeoisie sending arms to Ukraine because they didn’t want common action with those who they portray as being soft on, or even supportive of, so-called Russian “imperialism” or Chinese “imperialism.”

The call for the S.I. Cobas demonstration (sicobas.org, 24 February) was headlined with a generic leftist-pacifist slogan, “Pace tra gli oppressi, Guerra agli oppressori” (Peace Among the Oppressed, War on the Oppressors), and an appeal “Against War, the High Cost of Living and the Government.” This was followed with a laundry list of economic/social demands (fund social programs, health and education, for wage increases to keep up with inflation, etc.), against racist policies and repression. While voicing a ritual “no to imperialist wars, no more military spending” there was no call for concrete working-class *action* against the war, and no mention of Ukraine, Russia, NATO or Italian imperialism. In short, a typical social-pacifist “butter not guns” appeal for a class-collaborationist “peace movement.”

This was also the case with a broader antiwar march on 3 December 2022 initiated by S.I. Cobas and the closely aligned Tendenza Internazionalista Rivoluzionaria (T.I.R.) which brought together much of the supposed “far left,” including other “rank-and-file” unions (CUB, USB, CALP), various Stalinist/Stalinoid parties (RdC, FC, FGC, PRC), some Trotskyoids (Sinistra Anticapitalista, FIR) and a number of social centers in a “broad” popular front with a sector of the bourgeoisie in the form of De Magistris’ Unione Popolare. In this case, the appeal (sicobas.org, 22 November 2022) was for “Giù le armi, su i salari” (Down with Arms, Up with Wages), and again, in the interest of “unity” of the disparate tendencies, no mention of NATO, Russia or Ukraine. A generic lowest-common-denominator “peace movement.”

Subsequently, the T.I.R., a political formation consisting mostly of people in and around the S.I. Cobas, published a polemic

³ There are several unions (S.I. Cobas, SLAI Cobas, Sol Cobas, Cobas, CUB, USB, and others), some with thousands of members, using the generic designation Cobas, for *comitate di base*, or rank-and-file committees. Collectively they are referred to as *sindacati combattivi* (“militant trade unions”) in contrast to the totally bureaucratized, class-collaborationist *sindacati confederali* (union federations) of the CGIL (ex-communist), UIL (social-democratic) and CISL (Christian Democratic).



Also on February 25, at the same time as the workers protest at the port of Genova against the NATO war, S.I. Cobas organized its own, smaller demonstrations in Milan (above), Bologna and Rome, supposedly against all belligerent parties in Ukraine. They thereby chose not to take the opportunity to begin effective common action against the bourgeoisie shipping arms to Ukraine.

against the forces that organized the Genova demonstration, titled “The Three Demonstrations on Saturday, February 25, and the Choices You Can’t Get Around” (*Pungolo Rosso*, 10 March). The three choices, according to the T.I.R., are, first, pro-Ukrainian pacifism (such as of the CGIL, the other labor federations, and their godfathers in the bourgeois PD); second, calling to oppose the NATO war (CALP/USB, Rete dei Comunisti et al.), thus (*dixit* T.I.R.) implicitly backing “Russian imperialism”; and a putative third “choice” (T.I.R./S.I. Cobas), against both sides in the war in Ukraine. The T.I.R. calls the latter policy *revolutionary defeatism*. It is not, as we explain below.

Because Rete dei Comunisti, in calling for “war against imperialist war,” denounces NATO’s war, the T.I.R. accuses it of being “water carriers” for the “bloc in formation of Russia and China,” which it labels “the major anti-Western capitalist states.” Indeed, the RdC talks of a “multipolar world taking shape” and promotes a PaP initiative, “Fermare la guerra, imporre la pace” (Stop war, impose peace), which calls to “support the proposals of China and the Vatican for peace negotiations.” These latter-day Stalinist proponents of “peaceful coexistence” also hold that “a prospect for peace can occur only and if NATO, and the forces that collaborate with it, are ‘rebalanced’ by other actors who are pointing to a diplomatic exit from the current situation” (“Genova, the Antiwar Movement Changes Its Face,” *Contropiano*, 26 February).

The forces for “peace through diplomacy,” according to *Contrapiano*, would include “a strong antiwar movement” in NATO countries, which would be “a class movement.” Yet, as the T.I.R. notes, Potere al Popolo supports the bourgeois Unione Popolare of De Magistris, who has complained of the “subservience of Europe to the United States.” Indeed, there are significant sectors of Italian capitalism that are uneasy with the U.S./NATO war against Russia, both among populist politicians and sectors of big business which profited from cheap Russian fuel, going back to the days when ENI (the state oil company) was the biggest European importer of oil from the Soviet Union. But while decrying the anti-NATO tilt, the T.I.R. does not take RdC to task for its *class collaboration* in allying with De Magistris’ U.P.

This is no accident, oversight or minor omission. The appeal for the December 3 protest called by S.I. Cobas, USB and others in Rome was so watered down that the

Unione Popolare, Potere al Popolo and other minor bourgeois forces endorsed and participated, like they do at pro-NATO/Ukraine “peace demos”, such as in Rome on November 5. Moreover, while RdC calls for a “strong antiwar movement” that would be a “class movement,” the T.I.R. wants a “mass movement against the war with class connotations” (call for a June 11 “National Assembly Against the Imperialist War in Ukraine” [18 April]). In reality, all three “unavoidable choices” outlined by these would-be ideologues of the S.I. Cobas – implicitly pro-Ukraine, implicitly pro-Russia or “independent” – are calls for a *popular-front* “antiwar/peace movement” with sectors of the bourgeoisie. Fact: the U.P. was in all of them.

Defeat the Imperialist War Drive Against Russia and China!

As we have analyzed previously, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 set off a full-scale war between these two regional capitalist powers. Proletarian internationalists opposed both sides of this reactionary nationalist war. At the same time, the League for the Fourth International called to defeat the imperialists’ war drive against Russia and China, and to defend self-rule by the besieged Russian-speaking population in the south and east.⁴ However, by fall 2022, the sharply escalating arming, financing, advising and ultimately control of the Ukrainian military by the U.S. and NATO reached the point that quantity turned into quality, transforming the conflict into an *imperialist proxy war on Russia* in which the Kiev government and army are acting on behalf of and under the direction of the U.S./NATO imperialists.

Reflecting the changed situation, the LFI shifted its position and now called for the defeat of the U.S./NATO proxy regime in Ukraine and for military defense of Russia, while giving no political support to, and calling for workers struggle against, the reactionary bourgeois nationalist Putin government.⁵ In contrast, by falsely labeling the war in Ukraine as “imperialist” on both sides, the T.I.R. and its propaganda

⁴ See “Behind the War: U.S./NATO War Drive Against Russia, China” (28 February 2022), in *The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022.

⁵ “Defend Russia, China Against War-Crazed U.S. Rulers” (22 October 2022), in *The Internationalist* No. 67-68, May-October 2022. [“Difendere Russia e Cina contro i governanti guerrafondai statunitensi” (22 ottobre 2022), in *L’internazionalista* supplemento, ottobre 2022.]

bloc partners refuse to defend those fighting against the *actual war on Russia by all the imperialists, Italy included*. And while hypocritically declaring that they are “not at all indifferent to the desire of most of the Donbass populations suffering from Kiev’s ethnic cleansing to join the Russian Federation,” the T.I.R. says this “has no role” in the war (call for June 11 “National Assembly Against the Imperialist War in Ukraine”).

To cover up its refusal to undertake concrete action against its “own” imperialist rulers, the T.I.R. resorts to vague/ambiguous characterizations. It refers to the Meloni government as simply capitalist “with ‘neo-liberal policies’,” a “government of the right,” or at most “the first postwar executive under an explicitly post-MSI leadership” for which “*directly invoking fascism leads astray*.” But this is not just another right-wing cabinet, it is the first fascist-led Italian government since World War II. This means that unions and left groups must prepare *workers defense groups* against police repression and also by squads of strikebreakers, as has already happened and will intensify. It means that *workers action to stop war material* from the fascist-led Rome government to the fascist-infested Kiev U.S./NATO proxy government could be met with bloody attacks, which must be resisted and *defeated*.

The main operative part of the line of the T.I.R. and its propaganda bloc partners is their call to “politically combat” those who call to oppose “NATO’s war,” who are labeled “defensists,” “sovereignists” and advocates of a “multipolar” world. This is justified with the fiction that those in NATO’s bomb sights are equivalent to the imperialists, talking of a “global clash in an advanced state of gestation between the great powers of decaying Western imperialism and the new rising capitalist powers.”⁶ Dancing around the key issue of whether Russia and China are imperialist while never quite saying so, the T.I.R. equates the present conflict with the inter-imperialist World War I: “capitalist wars that have as their object the carving up of the world market, or parts of it, as is the current war in Ukraine” (“Against ‘Defensism’...”).

It is absurd to portray the current war as one of two similarly powerful capitalist-imperialist blocs competing for markets. As we noted in “The Bugbear of ‘Russian Imperialism,’”⁷ Russia is a net *importer* of capital and its exports are overwhelmingly (three-quarters) of energy and raw materials, a structure closer to that of a semi-colonial country such as Iran or Venezuela. As for China, despite dangerous capitalist inroads, the key economic sectors are still state-owned, the fundamental course of the economy is dictated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) not by market forces, and as one economist’s letter to the *Wall Street Journal* (4 August 2021) put it, “China’s ‘State Capitalism’ Is Not Capitalism.” The myth of a “capitalist China” was wishful thinking by the bourgeoisie, which has been picked up by the left in order not to defend China.

Imperialist Proxy War on Russia in Ukraine: Test for Revolutionaries

Imperialist war is an acid test for all would-be revolutionary tendencies. Since WWI, it has been axiomatic for Leninists that *communists* and all class-conscious

workers are duty-bound to stand with non-imperialist countries in wars with imperialism, especially when “their own” imperialist rulers are among the warmongers. Lenin stressed this in *Socialism and War* (1915):

“For example, if tomorrow, Morocco were to declare war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China on Russia, and so on, these would be ‘just’, and ‘defensive’ wars, irrespective of who would be the first to attack; any socialist would wish the oppressed, dependent and unequal states victory over the oppressor, slaveholding and predatory ‘Great’ Powers.”

In line with this, after the war and the formation of the Communist International, the French Communist Party (PCF) launched a campaign in defense of the Berber insurgency led by Abd el-Krim in the Rif region of Morocco, leading to a general strike in France against the war on 12 October 1925 (and the arrests of up to 1,000 PCF and worker militants). Later, in 1949-50, Marseille dock workers refused to load munitions for French forces waging imperialist war in Vietnam.

Some erudite hair-splitters have argued: yes, but Morocco and India were colonies, and Iran and China were semi-colonies, while Russia today is no semi-colony. True, it is an intermediate country targeted by the united imperialists. Yet already in 1920-22, Soviet Russia under Lenin’s leadership militarily supported Turkey, the remnant of the Ottoman Empire, led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, against the Western imperialists. In 1935, Trotsky and the Trotskyists called to defend Ethiopia under Emperor Haile Selassie, a slave-owning feudalist, against the invasion by Italian imperialism. And in 1939, Trotsky called to defend China under Chiang Kai-shek against the Japanese imperialist invasion. These were all independent states, ruled by brutal nationalists, but the overriding issue was to defeat the imperialist military attack or threats.

Moreover, the T.I.R.’s call for “war against war” and for building an “antiwar movement ... with class connotations” recall the Italian Socialists’ policy of neutrality in World War I. Its call to oppose “all wars of capital” would mean *opposing defense of any capitalist country under attack by imperialism*. This resembles “Maximalist” Socialist Giacinto Serrati’s opposition to Lenin’s theses on the national question at the Comintern’s Second Congress (1920), which called to defend bourgeois-democratic “national liberation movements” against imperialism. Serrati accused the theses of “class collaboration,” although they called to “unconditionally maintain the independent character of the proletarian movement.”⁸ The militant syndicalist line has a huge blind spot when it comes to imperialism, particularly regarding imperialist world domination.

In contrast, the League for the Fourth International fought from 2001 on to defend Iraq and Afghanistan and to defeat the U.S.-led imperialist invasions and occupations of those countries, while giving no political support to Saddam Hussein or the Taliban. And not only at the level of propaganda, but agitating on the docks for U.S. port workers to “hot cargo” (refuse to handle) arms shipments to the region as early as 2002.⁹ The LFI playing a significant role in the May Day 2008 shutdown of all U.S. West Coast

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⁸ Serrati’s objection to Lenin’s theses are pretty rich, considering that the PSI supported the 1911 Italian invasion of Libya.

⁹ See “Strike Against Taft-Hartley! Hot-Cargo War Materiel!” *The Internationalist* No. 15, January-February 2003.

The T.I.R.'s pretense of a "class position" in opposition to an "inter-class front" is entirely based on the fiction that Russia and China are imperialists. It simply repeats this bourgeois lie, providing no Marxist explanation, whereas we of the League for the Fourth International have analyzed and explained in detail that Russia is a regional capitalist power (as is Ukraine), while China is a deformed workers state.¹ In Ukraine, *all of the imperialist countries are lined up in the U.S./NATO war drive against Russia and China*. And while all of the various "peace/antiwar" demos are class-collaborationist fronts, in Genova on February 25, many came in order to express their *opposition to the NATO imperialist war* and because it was connected with *workers action – a strike – against sending arms to Ukraine*.

Against this, the T.I.R. and the other political groupings that sponsored a 16 October 2022 "National Conference on the War in Ukraine, the Economic Crisis and the Great World Chaos: What Is To Be Done?" called to "revive the historical watchword of the labor and communist movement: war against war, defeatism on both sides!"² This bloc also includes the FGC (Fronte della Gioventù Comunista, Communist Youth Front) and the Fronte Comunista, along with local collectives. In the first place, the *anarchist/pacifist slogan* of "guerra alla guerra" – against all wars – is counterposed to the Marxist approach to "examine the historically specific features" of "each war separately" (V.I. Lenin, *Socialism and War* [1915]). And secondly, Lenin's policy in the *interimperialist* World War I was not "defeatism" in general but "revolutionary defeatism."

It is evident to all that the war in Ukraine has thrown the left in Italy – and internationally – into disarray. The confusion has been intensified by the pounding imperialist war propaganda portraying Russian president Putin, Russia and Russians in general as the embodiment of pure evil. Many would-be leftists have become outright "NATO socialists," supporting the "Ukrainian resistance" and even backing sending imperialist arms to Ukraine.³ In the infighting for position within the left, the T.I.R. and its bloc partners have staked out the political space of ostensibly opposing all sides – Russia/China and NATO/Ukraine – in the war. But its main fire is directed anyone on the left who, however timidly, denounces the NATO imperialists, as the T.I.R. labels one and all stooges of "pro-Russian capitalist sectors" defending "national interests."

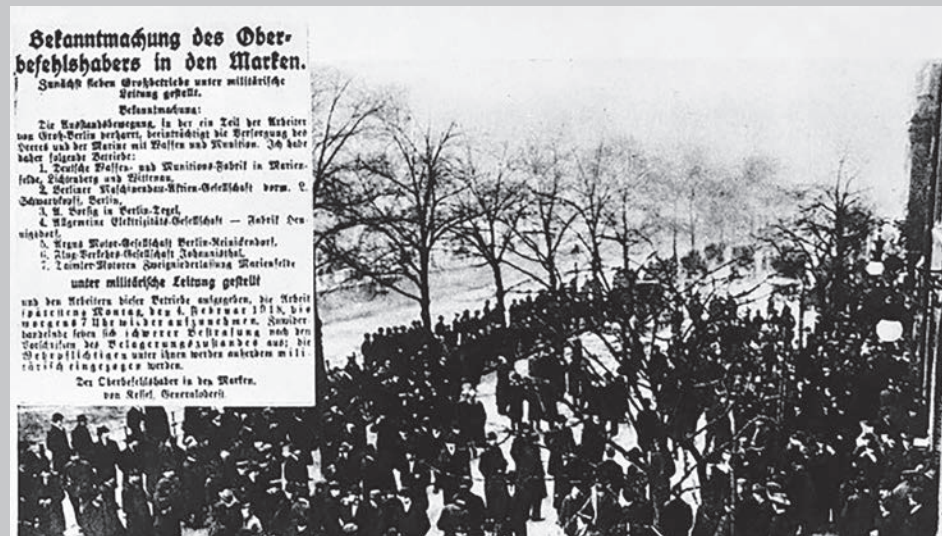
A case in point is an article, "Against 'Defensism,' For Revolutionary Defeatism in Imperialist Wars" (*Pungolo Rosso*, 5 January), which denounces "red-brown militants, declared or disguised" (i.e., supposed partisans of

¹ See "The Bugbear of 'Russian Imperialism'" (May 2014) in *The Internationalist* No. 50, Summer 2015.

² "Dichiarazione congiunta – no alla guerra imperialista!" sicobas.org, 2 November 2022.

³ See "NATO Socialists in Italy," *The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022. ["Socialisti della NATO in Italia", e "La boghesia 'riabilita' i socialisti della NATO del PCL," *L'internazionalista* n. 6, giugno 2022.]

What Is Revolutionary Defeatism?



400,000 German metalworkers on strike in January 1918 (above) demanding an end to German participation in World War I. Their walkout touched off subsequent combative workers actions leading to the overthrow of the government and the fall of the monarchy in November 1918.

a communist-fascist alliance) who say that Russia is "defending its right to exist" against "Euro-Atlantic imperialism." Likewise, any who defend China and Iran are supposedly turning their backs on workers strikes, struggles for women's rights, etc. Against this invented "orgy of defensisms" – hardly any of the groups it is shadow boxing against dares to directly defend Russia, China and Iran against the imperialist war – *Pungolo Rosso* prints a 1951 article by Amadeo Bordiga, "The Shame and Lie of 'Defensism'."

An introduction says that, "even though we are not Bordiguists," the article is being reprinted because it "reiterates with admirable clarity" the criteria by which revolutionary communists classified wars of the past. While generally to the left of the Stalinist reformists, the T.I.R. and *Pungolo Rosso* are an eclectic mixture of Bordiga and Gramsci, adept at using Marxist and Leninist-sounding phrases to cover opportunist policies. Here the editors cite Bordiga's "framing of World War II as an imperialist war *in every respect*" (emphasis in original). I.e., not only was the clash between Allied and Axis regimes an inter-imperialist war, so was, according to the T.I.R., the war of the Soviet workers state, against Nazi-fascist German imperialism, in which the watchword of "revolutionary defeatism" on all sides should supposedly apply.⁴ *Rubbish!*

As usual with Bordiga, there is much learned discourse, including such gems as denouncing Garibaldi for defending the French republic in the Franco-Prussian War after the fall of the empire of Napoléon III in 1870 (Marx and Engels took the same position). But all this is window dressing for Bordiga's opposition to defense of the USSR in World War II and the anti-Soviet

⁴ To give his refusal to defend the Soviet Union "theoretical" heft, at the height of the Cold War, Bordiga (like other renegades before and after) elaborated a construct of Soviet "state capitalism." In Bordiga's case this was explicitly against Trotsky's analysis and program, in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) and elsewhere. See A. Bordiga, *Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi* (1955-57). Also, Liliana Grilli, *Amadeo Bordiga: capitalismo sovietico e comunismo* (1982).

Cold War.⁵ For sure, Stalin's alignment with the "democratic" imperialists led to the suffocation of potential revolutions by Stalinist-led Communist parties, from Greece and Italy to France and Indochina.⁶ But while denouncing Stalin's betrayals, and despite Stalin's murder of hundreds of thousands of Soviet Trotskyists and Trotsky himself, Trotskyists defended the Soviet Union against imperialism.⁷ *Bordiga's "defeatist" policy was class treason.*

Lenin's call for *revolutionary defeatism* in World War I, a war between two opposed imperialist blocs, was very different. He invariably linked the slogan to revolutionary working-class action against the imperialist rulers. In a polemic (against Trotsky), Lenin wrote:

"The only policy of actual, not verbal disruption of the 'class truce,' of acceptance of the class struggle, is for the proletariat to take advantage of the difficulties experienced by its government and its bourgeoisie in order to overthrow them. This, however, cannot be achieved or striven for, without desiring the defeat of one's own government and without contributing to that defeat.

"When, before the war, the Italian Social-Democrats raised the question of a mass strike, the bourgeoisie replied, no doubt correctly from their own point of

⁵ Several leaders of S.I. Cobas and spokesmen for the T.I.R. claim, like Bordiga, that the Soviet Union was no longer a workers state ever since Stalin seized power in 1923-24. Focusing exclusively on the leadership and ignoring the material base is profoundly anti-Marxist. Stalin led a *political* counterrevolution at the head of a parasitic nationalist bureaucracy that renounced the Bolsheviks' fight for international socialist revolution.

⁶ See the bulletin of the Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia, 1943-1948: *Lo stalinismo contro la rivoluzione* (November 2021)

⁷ To give his refusal to defend the Soviet Union "theoretical" heft, at the height of the Cold War, Bordiga (like other renegades before and after) elaborated a construct of Soviet "state capitalism." In Bordiga's case this was explicitly against Trotsky's analysis and program, in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) and elsewhere. See A. Bordiga, *Struttura economica e sociale della Russia d'oggi* (1955-57). Also, Liliana Grilli, *Amadeo Bordiga: capitalismo sovietico e comunismo* (1982).

view, that this would be high treason, and that Social-Democrats would be dealt with as traitors."

– V.I. Lenin, "The Defeat of One's Own Government in the Imperialist War" (July 1915)

Lenin notes that those opposed to the policy of revolutionary defeatism "do not believe in the possibility of international revolutionary action by the working class against their own governments...." The T.I.R. today calls for "war against war" yet boycotted the Genova port strike and protest, saying dismissively: "Against sending arms to the Zelensky government, against NATO – so far we're okay, but it's banal."⁸ Lenin said the opposite: "'a war against war' is a banal phrase unless it means a revolution against their own government."

The political line of neither NATO nor Russia of the T.I.R. and others in its propaganda bloc, as well as many other opportunist leftists internationally, is not revolutionary defeatism but a policy of what it calls a third "choice" in a supposed "inter-imperialist war." Yet since Russia is not in fact imperialist, and rather is *the target of a united imperialist front*, this amounts to back-handed support of the imperialist first camp. In fact, in a document of 18 March 2022 the T.I.R.'s book, *La Guerra in Ucraina e l'internazionalismo proletario* (page 56), the T.I.R. calls for "Solidarity with the Ukrainian people against the Russian invasion, for the unconditional withdrawal of the Russian troops." Unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops would be a victory for the NATO imperialists and embolden them even more.

The T.I.R. denounces the organizers of the February 25 Genova port shutdown as supposed "sovereignists," who "never" attack "Italian imperialist capitalism ... as a founding partner and integral part of both the EU and NATO." Yet the T.I.R. itself raises just such a "sovereignist" call (in the manifesto from the 16 October 2022 meeting) "for Italy's exit from NATO and every transnational imperialist alliance." If Italy were to miraculously withdraw from NATO, the EU, etc., it would be just as imperialist and no less an enemy of the working people. Genuine revolutionary internationalists, in contrast, call – as the Nucleo Internazionalista d'Italia and the League for the Fourth International do – for the *defeat of the U.S./NATO proxy war against Russia (and ultimately China)*.

The T.I.R.'s purely propagandistic line recalls the centrist policy of the Italian Socialists in World War I of "absolute neutrality" and later (after Italy's entry into the war in 1916) "neither support nor sabotage." Due to the PSI's *social-pacifist* policy, when after the ignominious Italian defeat at Caporetto in October-November 1917 the possibility opened of "turning the imperialist war into a civil war" (Lenin's formula) against Italy's capitalist rulers, rather than turning their weapons on the military brass who led them into the slaughter, soldiers instead threw their guns down and deserted. Today, by refusing to organize workers' class struggle against NATO's war, and simply holding ritual marches and "general strikes" (in reality, work stoppages with a demonstration), the T.I.R. likewise fails to prepare the working class for revolutionary action. ■

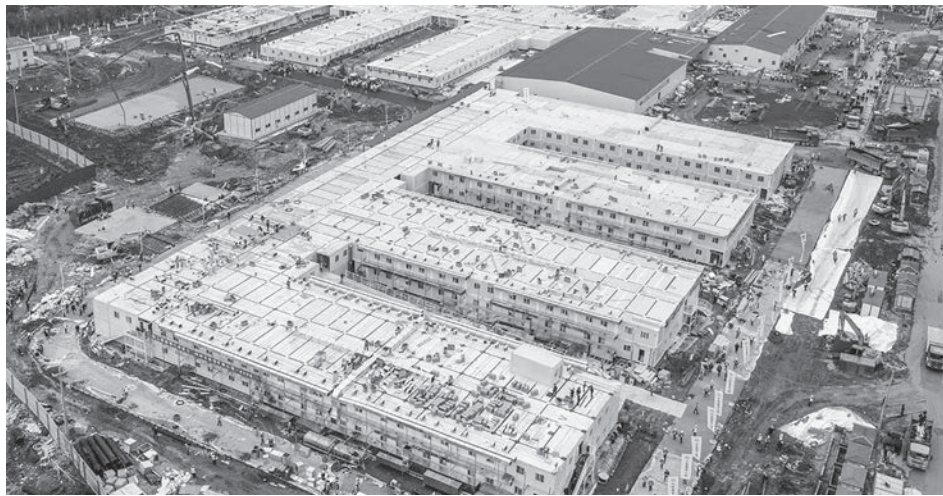
⁸ "The Three Demonstrations...."

Defend the Chinese Workers State Against Imperialism and Counterrevolution

That China is not capitalist was dramatically demonstrated by the fact (a) that China's economy *uniquely* grew substantially in the wake of the 2007-08 market collapse when *all* capitalist economies were thrown into deep crisis; and (b) that China *alone* was able to contain the 2020+ coronavirus pandemic for three years, keeping deaths to a little over 5,000 and saving millions of lives. How? By mobilizing the resources of its collectivized economy (and private firms) on the orders of the CCP. While the People's Republic of China (PRC) is not capitalist, nor is it socialist, lacking any semblance of workers democracy and a revolutionary leadership. A good introduction to the workings of the PRC *bureaucratically deformed workers state*, is the 2017 article by the Marxist economist Michael Roberts, "Xi Takes Full Control of China's Future."¹

On COVID-19: the imperialist media have portrayed China's abandonment of stringent quarantines in December 2022 as proof of the "failure" of its policies of containing the deadly virus. Dead wrong. Even after deaths in China increased in recent months, after it had to abandon the policy of stringent quarantines, *if the death rate in Italy from COVID-19 and related "excess mortality" had been kept as low as in China, the total number number who died here in the pandemic would have been less than 5,000 instead of 191,000* (Our World in Data, as of 21 June 2023). But, of course, Rome could not replicate Beijing's policies because a capitalist country cannot provide the comprehensive health care and food sup-

¹ <https://thenextrecession.wordpress.com/2017/10/25/xi-takes-full-control-of-chinas-future/>.



Huoshenshan Hospital in Wuhan, China. In just ten days, China built two hospitals with 2,500 beds total, to treat coronavirus patients at the epicenter of the epidemic. No capitalist country has been capable of such a feat, which was the product of a planned economy.

ply in emergency conditions that China's socialized economy could and did in 2020-22.

Another favorite theme of pseudo-socialist, anarchist and syndicalist tendencies is to label China "the sweatshop of the world." It is particularly grotesque to equate China with the capitalist-imperialist countries, or to talk of "super-exploitation" of workers in China, *in Italy, the only country in Europe where real wages* (adjusted for inflation) *have fallen from 1990 to 2020.*² In contrast, *real wages in China rose by 260% from 2008 to 2022*, while *real wages in Italy fell by about 13% over the same period*, as can be seen in a dramatic graph in the report by the International Labour Organisation, *Global Wage Report 2022-23*.

This was after real wages in China rose by 500% – *quintupling* – between 1995 and 2010, *Nowhere* in the capitalist world has there been such a dramatic increase in workers' standard of living in such a short period.

The commander-in-chief of U.S. imperialism, Joe Biden, and other imperialist powers have made clear their ultimate objective is to restore capitalism in China, as they escalate their military provocations and economic warfare against it. They see their imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine as a step in this direction. We of the LFI stand for the unconditional defense of China against imperialism and internal counter-revolution. At the same time we fight for a proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy and institute workers democracy based on workers councils on the road to international socialist revo-

² "Analysis: Why us? Italy seeks way out of low-wage economy trap," Reuters, 16 June 2022.

lution. It is a basic duty of communists to defend the socialized planned economy and the enormous gains that still exist from the 1949 Chinese Revolution, despite bureaucratic mismanagement and large inroads of private capital (see our article "Imperialist Hands Off China," September 2022).

In contrast, the political groupings in the T.I.R.'s propaganda bloc, notably the FGC that claims the political heritage of Stalin, all label China "capitalist," and even "imperialist," and do not defend it. Instead, they parrot anti-communist anti-Chinese propaganda. The websites of *Pungolo Rosso* and the S.I. Cobas are full of articles written by *China Labour Bulletin* and often cite it as the source of information. Thus in the introduction to an article by the *CLB* on the *Pungolo Rosso* and S.I. Cobas websites, we read:

"The following is some information taken from the website of the *China Labour Bulletin*, which has commendably been dealing with the condition of Chinese workers for several years with a series of accurate documentation, and promoting campaigns in their defense."

–"Anti-Worker Reforms, Employer Tyranny and Workers Resistance in Today's China," *Pungolo Rosso*, 24 July 2021

China Labour Bulletin is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED – a front for the CIA) that sponsors counter-revolutionary forces all over the world and is a mouthpiece for U.S. imperialism and vile anti-communist propaganda.

The author of this article, Giulia Luzzi, a regular contributor to *Pungolo Rosso*, repeats and praises the propaganda of this agency of U.S. imperialism, vouching for its "accuracy" and claiming that this outfit champions the cause of Chinese workers. Since when has U.S. imperialism been an ally of the working class?! Her introduction to this *CLB* article begins: "When China is mentioned in the West-

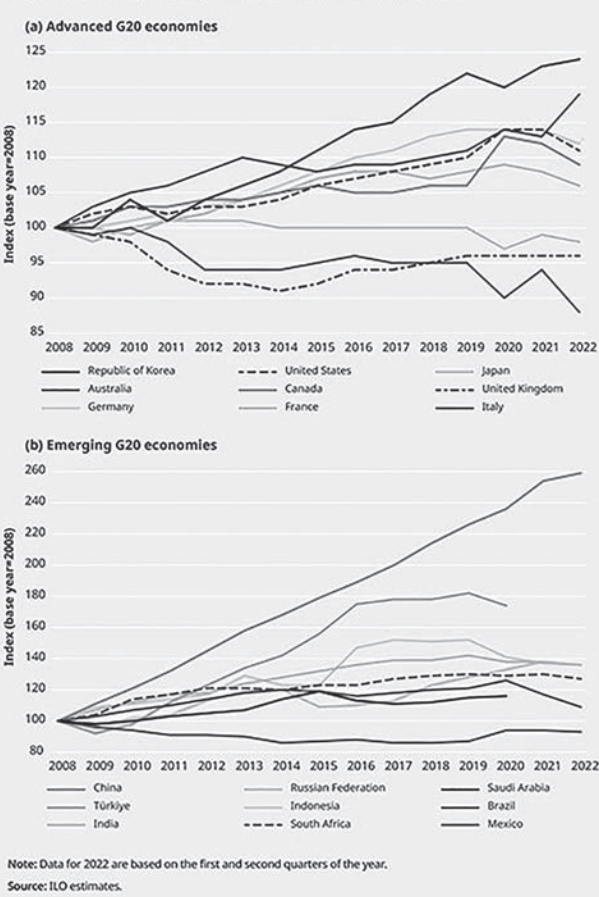
ern media, it is spoken of as an aggressive economic power, while at the same time the violation of human rights of minorities, repression against dissent in Hong Kong etc. is denounced. These denunciations are of real facts." So the T.I.R. et al. support the anti-communist, racist, pro-Trump riots in Hong Kong in 2019.³

Another example. On the same websites a recent article was posted: "China: Youth Unemployment, Worked to Death." One of the sources cited for the information for the anti-communist anti-Chinese diatribe in this article is Craig Simpleton of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (FDD). The FDD website says that this outfit was founded "to provide education to enhance Israel's image in North America" and that its "mission" is "counterterrorism education" and to "defend democratic values". Craig Simpleton was a consultant for the U.S. government for "national security." *Q.E.D. Pungolo Rosso* is fronting for anti-communist propaganda in the service of imperialist war on China, and its articles are republished verbatim by S.I. Cobas. This can only serve to disorient Italian workers.

To be sure, not everyone in this propaganda bloc has identical policies. While the T.I.R. (which has Marxist pretensions) tip-toes around the issue, the liberal/anarchoid Centro di documentazione contro la guerra refers straight out to "Russian imperialism." The Stalinist FGC, for its part, claims that "Russia plays a leading role in the international imperialist pyramid"; that "in China the return to capitalism is almost complete," hence it, too, is imperialist; and that it is necessary to understand "the imperialistic nature of the BRICS countries" – which would make Brazil and South Africa imperialist as well! ("China and Imperialism: A Historical-Economic Analysis," *Senza Tregua*, 15 April 2017). Such absurd claims make a mockery of any semblance of Leninism, turning "imperialism" into a curse word rather than a scientific analysis. ■

³ See "Hong Kong: Defeat Pro-Imperialist Riots With Revolutionary Workers Mobilization," *The Internationalist* No. 57, September-October 2019.

► Figure 3.5. Average real wage index for the G20 countries, 2008-22



China as the "sweatshop of the world"? On the contrary, real wages in Italy declined by 13% from 2008 to 2022 (top diagram, bottom line), while wages in China increased by 260% over the same period (bottom diagram, top line).

How is CLB funded?

CLB receives grants from a wide range of government or quasi-governmental bodies, trade unions and private foundations, all of which are based outside of China. Some grants are for specific projects, while others cover CLB's operating costs.

Who funds Friends of China Labour Bulletin

Federal agency	CFDA code	Program name	Amount
Department of State	19.345	INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR	\$390,356
Department of State	19.345	INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR	\$316,089
Department of State	19.345	INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT DEMOCRACY HUMAN RIGHTS AND LABOR	\$74,995

Fact: China Labor Bulletin is funded by the U.S. government. CLB admits it is financed by "a wide range of governmental or quasi-governmental entities." Above report shows show it received hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly from the U.S. Department of State and the National Endowment for Democracy.



Communist Youth Federation contingent at anti-war demonstration called by S.I. Cobas in Milan, February 25.

Italy: Workers...

continued from page 8

ports against the war in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁰ And it defended Yugoslavia against the 1999 U.S./NATO war while denouncing the Serbian nationalist regime of Slobodan Milosević.¹¹ Italy was directly involved in these wars. Where did, or does, the T.I.R. stand? Did or does it defend those countries attacked by imperialism?

These are not abstract or academic questions. At issue here is whether those who profess to be communists have the program to prepare the working class for the revolutionary struggle for power, or not. The propaganda bloc led by the T.I.R., with its passive propagandist neutrality on the war in Ukraine, as indicated above, recycles the policies of the centrist Italian

¹⁰ See “May Day Strike Against the War Shuts Down All U.S. West Coast Ports,” *The Internationalist* No. 27, May-June 2008. Also see *The Internationalist* special supplement *Why We Fight for Workers Strikes Against the War (and the Opportunists Don't)*, October 2007.

¹¹ See “Defend Yugoslavia, Defeat the Imperialist Attack!” *The Internationalist* No. 7, April-May 1999. Our Mexican comrades also put forward and won a motion by striking students at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) to make a donation through the fund initiated by SLAI Cobas of Alfa-Romeo to aid Yugoslav workers in the Zastava factory, destroyed by the NATO bombs when it was occupied by the workers. See “Mexican Student Strike Sends Aid to Yugoslav Workers,” *The Internationalist*, April 1999.

Socialists in World War I that prevented the PSI (and the nascent PCI) from playing a revolutionary role at the end of the war, and thus set the stage for fascism. Those who refuse to defend the targets of imperialism, who try to duck the issue by declaring all sides imperialist, cannot lead the fight for international socialist revolution. Today they act as an obstacle to militant class struggle against the real imperialists and their war drive against Russia and China careening toward World War III.

What is behind these blinders that the propaganda bloc around the T.I.R. and S.I. Cobas have put on to hide the nature of the U.S./NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine? At the June 11 meeting in Milan, the Fronte Comunista declared that the public has been “bombarded by years and years of propaganda from one camp or the other.” Nonsense! The general public, working people and the left have been bombarded for years, in Italy and throughout Europe, by relentless imperialist anti-Russia war propaganda, to which, over the war in Ukraine, most of the left has capitulated. *What the T.I.R., FC, FCG et al. are combatting is the sentiment in the working-class and immigrant ranks of S.I. Cobas and other combative unions to oppose the U.S./NATO imperialist war.* Just read:

“We must clearly denounce the fascination with the hypothesis of a new multipolar world.... Supporting such positions are the nationalist, sovereigntist and campist forces in Italy that directly or indirectly support the interests of Russia, China and all countries that are competitors or opponents of the U.S.-driven world order....

“The calls for international equality, for rescuing the oppressed from hundreds of years of exploitation and for democratization, are weapons perfectly calibrated to appeal to the sentiments of payback of those who have themselves experienced the U.S., EU and NATO brand of capitalist exploitation.... In the name of proletarian internationalism, we have the task of denouncing and not promoting such war propaganda. Those in Italy today who stand for a multipolar world are hindering, more or less consciously, the birth of a real war-on-war movement.”

– Intervention of the Fronte Comunista at the June 11 Milan meeting.

The T.I.R. et al. portray all those who “directly or indirectly” side with Russia and China as supporters of a “multipolar world order.” This may apply to the Rete dei Comunisti, Potere al Popolo and other reformist and bourgeois populist forces who hark back to the Stalinist illusion of impossible “peaceful coexistence” with

Italian Navy Heading to the Indo-Pacific

Italy, like Germany and other members of the Western military alliance, is sharply increasing military spending and stepping up its engagement in the mounting imperialist war drive. The Italian navy aircraft carrier *Cavour* and at least four supporting ships are slated to take part in joint military exercises in late 2023/early 2024 with United States and allied forces in the Persian Gulf and Indian and Pacific Oceans. These maneuvers, extending well beyond the “Enlarged Mediterranean” area, are clearly directed against China, which is seen by the U.S. imperialist overlord as the main enemy. Meanwhile, fascist prime minister Meloni continues to clamor for a more aggressive and active role for Italian imperialism in North Africa.



In March, the Italian frigate *Carlo Bergamini* participated in the first joint U.S.-EU naval exercise in the Indo-Pacific region.

Already in March, the Italian frigate *Bergamini* participated in a first-ever U.S.-EU naval exercise somewhere in the Indo-Pacific region. This followed Italian participation in the Neptune Strike 23 exercise in the Mediterranean Sea in February under the STRIKFOR-NATO command. In a sign of how this growing militarization is extending into civil society, students from 15 Italian universities participated in the large-scale NATO “Mare Aperto” (Open Seas) exercises in April involving 23 countries in the Adriatic, Ionian and Sardinian seas and the strait of Sicily. And in June, some

350 high school students are scheduled to spend part of their unpaid school-work alternation at the NATO naval aviation base of Signorello.

To be sure, the contribution of the Italian navy to battles in the “Indo-Pacific theater” will be precisely zero. So why do U.S. rulers and the Pentagon/NATO brass care? Like the participation of university and secondary school students in naval exercises in the Mediterranean and on bases in Italy, the purpose is to land a peremptory blow against future protests over the terrible human and economic toll of world war. They want to make broad sectors of Italian society complicit in the crime beforehand, so it’s harder to back out later. In *defending China and Russia against the U.S./NATO war drive*, opponents of capitalist militarism should mobilize to “Shut down all imperialist ‘war games,’” and to “Kick the military out of the schools!” ■

imperialism. It is certainly true of the bourgeois nationalist and Stalinist nationalist rulers of Russia and China, respectively. But it is a gross distortion when referring to the several thousand youth and workers who marched in Genova on February 25 to stop arms to Ukraine and “block NATO’s war.” And it is a slander when referring to those who call for a revolutionary internationalist, proletarian struggle to defend Russia and China against the imperialist war drive and to defeat the U.S./NATO proxy regime in Kiev.

Revolutionary Marxists are not pacifists. We do not build “peace movements,” which as Trotsky wrote in 1917, invariably turn into pro-war movements, as is the case of the pro-Ukraine “peace” demos currently. Genuine Trotskyists intervene in popular-front “antiwar” movements as a revolutionary opposition to the reformist/bourgeois organizers, to bring to the masses the program of defeating imperialist war through international socialist revolution. The pseudo-leftists who refuse to defend Russia and China against imperialism have been seduced by the siren song of “human rights imperialism.” The whole “human rights” business was invented at the dawn of the imperialist Cold War as a weapon against the Soviet Union, and is now being blasted at top volume in defense of the fascist/nationalist coup regime in Ukraine.

The decaying capitalist system generates endless wars. Lenin insisted that any talk of “peace” without mass revolutionary proletarian struggle is pure illusion. The attacks on workers’ living standards and social programs, the repression of workers’ struggles and assault on immigrants are all part of the imperialist war drive. In order to defeat them and stop the imperialists rush toward WW III it is necessary to fight to *defeat the U.S./NATO war on Russia and defend the Chinese deformed workers state* against imperialism and counterrevolution. This is, in fact, the *only* basis to fight for *socialist revolution in Russia* and for a *proletarian political revolution in China*. To refuse to defend them against the imperialist assault seeking to crush and dismember them is nothing less than a *stab in the back of Russian and Chinese workers*.

The present fascist-led government in Italy and increasingly dire situation of working people throughout Europe and the entire capitalist world, underlines the unreformability of decaying capitalism and the urgent need to forge a genuinely communist party. This party cannot be built on the basis of capitulation to imperialism or the politics of class collaboration, but must be based on a solid Leninist-Trotskyist program. We of the Nucleo Internazionalista d’Italia/Lega per la Quarta Internazionale are dedicated to forging this party. ■

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German Far Left in Crisis

Nationalist “Peace Movement” or Internationalist Class War?

Turmoil in the left internationally over the imperialist proxy war against Russia over Ukraine has not only led many left social democrats, including pseudo-Trotskyists, to become “NATO socialists,” it has also shaken the Stalinist milieu. In Germany, the Kommunistische Organisation split down the middle, with one side denouncing “Russian imperialism” while the former leadership has taken a soft pro-Russia stance in the war. The latter held a “Communism Congress” in Berlin in early October, attended by several hundred people, where our comrades of the Internationalistische Gruppe distributed the article translated below as a leaflet.

The disarray and all-round crisis in the left triggered by the Ukraine war, as we have previously noted, have led the overwhelming majority of the left to side, openly or de facto, with Ukraine. This is notably the case in the Left Party (Die Linke), where the leadership and party celebs like Gregor Gysi loudly denounce the Russian invasion and refuse to oppose the delivery of military equipment to Ukraine, as left-wing dissidents also declare that they oppose “Putin’s War.” While the leadership replaced the party program’s plank for “dissolution” of NATO with the even more meaningless call for “overcoming all military alliances” such as NATO, none of the four “left” countermotions at the Die Linke’s June 2022 congress opposed NATO itself, only its “eastward expansion” or the “escalation” of the war by this imperialist military alliance.¹

The pseudo-Trotskyists, most of them in or around Die Linke, almost all belong to this camp, some demanding “all NATO troops out of Eastern Europe” as a fig leaf to hide their betrayal (a little late, as there are already a good dozen East European member countries of NATO). We say “pseudo” because the opportunist policies of these groups are the exact opposite of Trotsky’s intransigent struggle against imperialism. But in the Stalinist milieu – which generally refers to itself as “Marxist-Leninists” or simply “communists”² – a bitter split is underway between those, led by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), who denounce Moscow’s invasion (while dutifully distancing themselves from NATO), and on the other hand, those who focus on the struggle against U.S./NATO imperialism, for the most part softly siding with Russia.

In Germany, where the DKP (German Communist Party)³ takes the latter position while the MLPD (Marxist-Leninist Party

¹ See the article “German Left in Lockstep in ‘Changed Times’” *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.

² We use the term “Stalinist” with respect to the various “ML” groupings not because of glorifying Stalin – some do, some don’t – but because their policies are based on Stalin’s anti-Marxist dogma of “building socialism in one country” (leading to its logical corollary, class collaboration in other countries by means of the popular front).

³ The DKP was the traditional pro-Moscow Stalinist party in West Germany.

**Defend Russia and China Against the Imperialist War Drive!
Defeat the U.S./NATO Ukraine Proxy War Against Russia!**

of Germany) and various KPDs support a “third camp” position, the dispute has led to a formal split in the Kommunistische Organisation (KO). The KO split off from the DKP and its youth group in 2017 accusing its former party of revisionism for seeking a “peaceful transition to socialism.” For purposes of political geolocation, using their own self-descriptions, one could say that KO-ZL (Central Leadership) belongs to the anti-NATO camp, while KO-“ML” (Marxist-Leninist) belongs to the neither-Moscow-nor-NATO “third camp” and rages against “Russian imperialism” – a position that is quite definitely neither Marxist nor Leninist.

In early January [2023], when the two factions held simultaneous counterposed special membership congresses, KO-ZL decided “against taking a position on the Ukraine war at this time.”⁴ This non-position soon proved untenable, not least in the dispute with the “other KO.” How, after all, can one pose as a communist without offering concrete guidance on the most burning issue of the day? So in the pacifist Easter Marches,⁵ the KO-ZL raised demands such as, “For the Defeat of NATO – in Ukraine and Worldwide!” and “Stop the War Against Russia – NATO Out of Ukraine!” They also raised “Germany Out of NATO – NATO Out of Germany!” and as an overall slogan, “For Building an Anti-NATO Peace Movement in Germany!”⁶

The article lamented that “pacifism was in the forefront” in demo calls and speech-

⁴ “Report on KO Extraordinary Membership Congress,” KO-ZL, 8 January.

⁵ Going back to the 1960s and ’80s, since the capitalist reunification of Germany in 1989-90 there have been yearly pacifist marches on Easter weekend, with differing themes according to current events. Following the outbreak of the Ukraine war, in addition to the official march, in 2022-23 there have been “alternative” Easter marches that explicitly do not criticize German arms deliveries to Ukraine.

⁶ KO-ZL Statement, 5 April.

es, which is to be expected in a “peace movement.” It also regretted that “central figures and groups of the old peace movement have defected to the NATO camp,” that “almost all” the demo calls begin with “rejection of Russia’s war of aggression in violation of international law,” that “the demand to stop arms deliveries is missing” and that “space in the peace movement” is given to those who would support NATO’s war. All this is natural enough, as a peace movement is based on the existing social order, i.e., on the grounds of German imperialism. As we have written:

“The fact is that pacifist rhetoric often leads to military action, much as the Social Democracy in 1914 suddenly forgot its ringing antiwar resolutions with the outbreak of the imperialist World War I, and as can be observed with the pacifist German left today.”

–“German Left in Lockstep in ‘Changed Times’”

And, of course, it is well known that Lenin did not call for a “peace movement” in World War I, but rather for transforming the imperialist war into a civil war against the bourgeoisie.

On May 1, comrades of KO-ZL in Frankfurt am Main were violently attacked and their banner with the slogan “Stop the War Against Russia – No Arms to Ukraine” was grabbed by security squads of the “revolutionary” May Day demonstration, among them supporters of “red” groups (Young Struggle, Kommunistischer Aufbau and Aurora⁷). For its part, the KO-“ML” immediately distanced itself on Twitter from the banner slogans. A few days later in Duisburg, the same forces again tried to remove the KO-ZL banner, which this time also included the slogan “For the Defeat of NATO.” These incidents illustrate how third-camp leftists serve as the shock troops of the “NATO socialists” against those who oppose the

⁷ Smaller Mao-Stalinist groups.

imperialist warmongers. And KO-ZL’s refusal to buckle only underscores the urgent need for a *program of revolutionary class struggle* against imperialism.

“Germany Out of NATO”: Slogan for a Nationalist Peace Movement

Imperialist war is an acid test for all would-be revolutionary tendencies. As a year and a half of “peace demonstrations” over the Ukraine war has shown, having a few hypocritical criticisms of NATO only serves to camouflage the left’s capitulation to the imperialist military alliance. So in a statement issued on August 30, KO-ZL sought to further concretize its positions on the war. In addition to demands to stop the war against Russia and not to supply arms to Ukraine, it repeated the slogan “Down with NATO – Germany Out of NATO, NATO Out of Germany!” and added a new one, “Disarm German Imperialism: Expropriate Rheinmetall & Co.!” (Germany’s largest arms manufacturer). These demands pose the question: who should stop the war, who should put a halt to arms deliveries? And concretely, who is supposed to disarm, or expropriate whom? It’s the famous question first posed by Lenin: *Kto-kogo*, who - whom?

As Leon Trotsky pointed out in the *Transitional Program* (1938), “Disarmament”? But the entire question revolves around who will disarm whom. The only disarmament that can avert or end war is the disarmament of the bourgeoisie by the workers.” Yet, the KO-ZL article in advocating expropriation/disarmament, with no mention of the working class, is clearly raising this slogan as a demand on the government. The idea that the imperialist bourgeoisie would disarm itself makes no sense at all, and blatantly contradicts the Marxist analysis of the nature of the capitalist state. And if Rheinmetall were to come under “public ownership,” would that somehow reduce the power and threat of German imperialism? Obviously not. These slogans do not provide a basis for mobilizing the power of the working class against the imperialist war drive. Instead, they are a diversion from that necessary task.

The same is true of another of the above-mentioned slogans. A KO-ZL discussion article (June 16), “Germany out of NATO?”, explains that this slogan was frequently used by KO and by “many organizations in the peace movement, including the DKP.” But to what end? The article actually raises a number of strong arguments against the slogan, such as: “German monopoly capital is pushing for world power and, in order to do so, will sooner or later also adjust its attitude toward U.S. imperialism and NATO.” Raising the demand would favor sections of the German bourgeoisie “which are increasingly pushing for autonomy, and want to develop the European Union into an independent military instrument. It is a position against



Contingent of KO-ZL at “revolutionary” May Day 2023 march in Frankfurt, Germany, calling to “Stop the War Against Russia” and for “No Arms for Ukraine.” A demonstration security squad violently attacked the KO contingent and grabbed the banner. “Third camp” leftists act as shock troops for the “NATO socialists” against those who oppose the imperialist war on Russia.

Kommunistische Organisation (ZL)



In Germany most of the left have become “NATO socialists,” so that the only “peace” protests that aren’t in reality pro-Ukraine war mobilizations have been led by rightists or by populist Sahra Wagenknecht, shown here at 50,000-strong Berlin antiwar demo on February 25. (The former Communist recently quit the social-democratic Left Party to found her own, non-socialist electoral party.)

U.S. imperialism, but not against German finance capital. De facto, the U.S. would be declared the main enemy.” Quite right!

The author (Max) notes that the slogan is in line with “‘sovereignist’ representatives of social democracy,” such as Oskar Lafontaine (we would instead classify him as a bourgeois populist) with his book *Ami, It’s Time to Go! - Plea for the Self-Assertion of Europe* (2022). The article also cites a trenchant analysis of the nationalist peace movement of the 1980s:

“German nationalism burgeoned almost imperceptibly among masses that had not previously been amenable to outright reactionary aspirations. Huge ‘peace’ rallies indicted the U.S. and the Soviet Union and acted as a cover for the main enemy at home, which kept on continually destabilizing the DDR [East Germany] in the name of fostering ‘German-German relations’.”⁸

–Erika Wehling-Pangerl, in *Neues vom Hauptfeind* [News from the Main Enemy] (2012)

And that is what happened with the annexation of the DDR in 1989-1990, when the Social Democracy with its *Ostpolitik* (Eastern policy) served as a “Trojan horse” of German capital, camouflaging its reactionary “drive to the East” under pacifist phrases. Reunified capitalist Germany was then in a position to wage a land war in Europe – the imperialist attack on Serbia in 1999, under the Red-Green government⁹ – much more effectively than a Christian Democratic government could have. Today, Social Democratic Party (SPD) chancellor Scholz is targeting the Western Balkans as he ramps up the profile of Germany as the predominant power in Europe.

Not a “Multipolar World,” But World Socialist Revolution

The discussion article claims: “‘Germany out of NATO’ is not currently advocated by the administrators of German finance capital.” True, but that may be different tomorrow. Everyone knows that the economic war of attrition against Russia is at the same time a U.S. economic war against Europe under the domination of France and Germany, and this is not lim-

⁸ The SPD sought to “peacefully” pave the way for counterrevolution in the East German deformed workers state by promoting “German unity” through making the DDR dependent on economically stronger imperialist West Germany.

⁹ The coalition of the SPD and the Green Party that governed Germany from 1998 to 2005.

ited to sabotage of the Nord Stream gas pipeline. Whole sectors of German industry are no longer competitive without access to cheap Russian gas. The forces for a political about-turn are ready to take off. KO-ZL itself warns:

“But right-wing forces, such as the [fascist] Free Saxons and the [fascistic] AfD (Alternative for Germany), who like to present themselves as resolute opponents of NATO, want to lead the peace movement down the wrong path. Their criticism of NATO turns out to be for an independent German great power policy that is no longer inclined to subordinate itself to U.S. interests. This includes arming the Bundeswehr [the German army] as well as a ‘sovereign’ path to bloody world domination by German imperialism.”

–“Stop Air Defender 2023 – No to War Means No to NATO!” (June 12)

The slogan “Germany Out of NATO!” plays into the hands of the AfD, just when it is necessary to fight this fascist party as a misleader of the East German masses, which it is trying to divert into the dead-end of a *völkisch* (ethnic German) nationalist opposition to NATO.

According to the KO-ZL article, “It is in the interest of the German working class that Germany withdraw from NATO, weakening it and narrowing the Federal Republic’s aggressive room for maneuver.” Not at all. History has already answered this question. In 1959-63, France under de Gaulle partially withdrew from NATO. NATO was not weakened by this. France eventually returned and became the vanguard of anti-Sovietism in the 1980s. We see something similar occurring today. Upon his return from Beijing, French President Macron warned against becoming a “vassal state” of the United States and called for European “strategic autonomy.” However, this did not stop him from increasing French arms supplies to Ukraine, nor did it diminish the oppressive nature of French imperialism in Africa, for example.

A (highly unlikely) German withdrawal from NATO would neither diminish the aggressiveness of German imperialism nor its longstanding “drive to the East.” The view that the imperialist assertion of world domination could be weakened in a “multipolar world” as envisioned by the BRICS states (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is a pure illusion, like the pacifist claptrap about complete “disarmament.” It resembles the Bernstein/Kautsky dream of

a gradual reform of capitalism.¹⁰ Even intermediate capitalist countries like Russia are subject to imperialist economic blackmail, for example through U.S./European Union/NATO sanctions. The imperialist stranglehold can only be broken by an international socialist revolution.

The pseudo-leftists who refuse to defend Russia and China against imperialism are seduced by the siren song of “human rights imperialism.” The whole “human rights” business was invented at the onset of the imperialist Cold War as a weapon against the Soviet Union, and is now being blasted out at top volume in defense of the Ukraine regime that arose out of the fascist/nationalist 2014 coup. Yet Lenin insisted as a condition for parties to join at the time of the founding of the Communist International:

“not only to expose open social patriotism: to systematically demonstrate to the workers that without a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism no international arbitration, no ‘democratic reorganization’ of the League of Nations will be able to save mankind from new imperialist wars.”

–“Conditions for Admission to the Communist International” (July 1920)

Revolutionary Marxists are not pacifists. We do not build “peace movements” which, as Trotsky wrote in June 1917, turn into pro-war movements, as is the case with the pro-Ukraine “peace” demonstrations today. Genuine communists intervene in “antiwar” movements as a revolutionary opposition to the reformist/bourgeois popular-front leadership, whether of individual celebrities (Sahra Wagenknecht¹¹) or ongoing organizations (Friko¹²), in order to bring to the masses the program of class struggle against imperialist war through workers action.

How to Fight Against the U.S./ NATO Imperialist War? Leninism/Trotskyism vs. Stalinism

The war against Russia by the U.S./NATO imperialists – and in fact by all the imperialist countries, large and small – poses the issue point-blank: Is today’s capitalist Russia imperialist, as the third-camp opportunists (imitating warmongers like German chancellor Scholz) claim today? Already when it left the DKP, the Communist Organization pointed to this crucial question as something it had to investigate. Six years later, it still has no answer. We Trotskyists of the League for the Fourth International, on the other hand, examined the matter in detail in 2014, and based on the criteria laid out in Lenin’s *Imperialism* and on an analysis of current economic data, gave the Leninist, scientific verdict:

¹⁰ Both the openly reformist Eduard Bernstein and the “orthodox” Karl Kautsky put forward programs in pre-WWI German Social Democracy focusing on reforms eventually leading to socialism. As opposed to this, see Rosa Luxemburg’s *Reform or Revolution* (1900) on how revolutionaries intervene in struggles for reforms under capitalism, linking this to the fight for socialist revolution.

¹¹ Sahra Wagenknecht, who started out as a spokesperson for the Communist Platform (Komplatt) of the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism, the successor to the East German Stalinist ruling party), took up the banner of left populism inside (and outside) the Left Party, from which she just resigned.

¹² The Peace Coordination, the traditional umbrella group for pacifist demonstrations in Germany since 1980, mostly led by the DKP.

post-Soviet Russia is an intermediate capitalist regional power.¹³

The war over Ukraine inevitably poses the question: Leninism/Trotskyism vs. Stalinism, and more fundamentally, class struggle vs. class collaboration. Slogans like “Stop the War Against Russia” and “No Arms to Ukraine” – while they don’t line up on the side of the imperialists as the “NATO socialists” do – are, explicitly or implicitly, raised as calls upon the bourgeois government. Likewise with the demand “Germany out of NATO.” The policy of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in World War I was to mobilize the working people in revolutionary struggle against their “own” imperialist bourgeoisie. So today we call for defending Russia and China and for defeating NATO’s proxy war over Ukraine, and at the same time call for workers revolution against the capitalist rulers, both in Kiev and Moscow, and against the imperialist warmongers of the NATO countries.

No national/reformist “peace movements” will achieve that, because they are necessarily built on the basis of class collaboration – i.e., popular-front politics. In fact, although sentiment against the Ukraine war and its consequences is growing, the absence of massive protests against the NATO war is due to the fact that most of the left has lined up with the warmongers, and there is no potentially governing faction of the bourgeoisie available to lead such demonstrations into “safe” channels. That is why the biggest antiwar actions today are led by right-wing forces, as was the case with the 100,000 people who took to the streets in the east on 3 October 2022, “German Unity Day,” with slogans protesting the anti-Russian sanctions and high gas prices and against arms deliveries to Ukraine.

Italian Workers Point the Way – Block Arms Deliveries to Ukraine with Workers’ Action!

Revolutionary Marxists who follow the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky – of the October Revolution of 1917, which proclaimed itself the prelude to international socialist revolution – look to mobilizing the power of the workers movement to smash the imperialist war drive, not to an amorphous bourgeois peace movement pleading to the warmongers to please stop the war. Thus we call for workers actions against arms deliveries to Ukraine. And there have been such actions. On February 25, the Autonomous Committee of Dockworkers (CALP) in Genova, Italy, supporters of the USB “rank-and-file union,” shut down the port and organized a demonstration of 10,000 people who marched through the docks calling to block arms shipments to Ukraine, to lift sanctions against Russia, and for resistance to “NATO’s war.”

Even before that, on 14 March 2022, workers at the airport in Pisa, Italy (also affiliated with the USB), discovered an arms shipment to Ukraine disguised as humanitarian aid and refused to load the cargo. Dockworkers from nearby Livorno and about 2,000 people flocked to the airport in solidarity with their action. Elsewhere in Europe, the Greek KKE has organized rail blockades against NATO arms shipments, even though this reformist, social-patriotic party has labeled Russia “imperialist.”

continued on page 26

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

Recent Exchange of Correspondence Between the International Communist League and the League for the Fourth International

We print below a recent exchange of letters between the International Communist League (ICL, represented in the U.S. by the Spartacist League) and the League for the Fourth International (LFI). The Internationalist Group, which publishes *The Internationalist*, is the U.S. section of the LFI. The ICL and LFI have now agreed to hold a debate on January 13 in New York City, with further details to be decided soon.

Letter from the ICL to the IG/ League for the Fourth International

2 September 2023

Dear comrades,

The recent international conference of the ICL has reoriented our party on fundamental questions (see link to *Spartacist* [https://iclf.org/english/esp/68/spartacist-en-68.pdf]). This includes a review of our differences with the IG/LFI. As a result, the conference tasked the ICL to conduct “serious political clarification and debate with the IG” and to engage “as much as possible in common action to defend the basic interests of the workers movement.” In line with this, we propose opening formal discussion between our organizations.

On several important counts, the International Conference recognized that the criticisms made by the IG of the ICL were correct. The fights that led to the expulsions of the IG’s founding members from the ICL were characterized as unprincipled, as was the break in relations with Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil. We are currently investigating the disciplinary measures taken at the time. The conference also described the central critique of the ICL made by the IG at its founding as “essentially correct” – that is, that the ICL had reduced the task of Marxists in the post-Soviet period to “keeping the flame alive against attempts to squelch it.”

However, when it comes to the courses taken by our two organizations in the post-Soviet period, we believe that overall they were qualitatively similar. When it came to orienting the working class, neither organization had a correct perspective because neither had as its central objective to break the hold of liberalism on the workers movement – the dominant ideology of the period and the main ideological brake on the struggles of workers and the oppressed.

Our proposal to open discussion is not to paper over our differences. Rather, it is intended to raise the level of political discussion between our organizations, starting from the central questions of revolutionary strategy for the current period. We are hopeful that engaging in such discussions can bring our organizations closer. The split provoked by the expulsion of your founding members from our party has been detrimental to the workers movement. The relations between our two organizations have been extremely hostile, while on most questions the political differences have been shallow at best. We believe there has always been – and remains – a significant overlap in the views of our memberships.

If we are to stay divided in two rival organizations, it is our respective duty to ensure that this division is based on crystal-clear differences over the most important questions facing the workers movement today.

The world is rapidly changing and the fight to reforge the Fourth International is posed with burning urgency. Events are shaking the left. Theoretical and political debates among the most advanced layers of the workers movement are crucial to reforging the Fourth International. But fundamentally it is fighting to provide revolutionary leadership in great world events that will be decisive. Doctrinal differences within the left can and will be overcome through common struggle.

In this sense, it is essential to engage as much as possible in common work when appropriate. The capitalists are keenly aware of the precariousness of their current situation; their response is to crack down on dissent and target minorities. There can be no excuse for disunity in the face of such attacks. Common fronts in defense work would be a modest but important contribution to advancing the interests of the workers movement and would put pressure on the rest of the left to do the same.

We expect that this letter will be met with a certain amount of skepticism on your part. As a first step, we simply propose to hold a private meeting between leadership delegations of both our organizations. The purpose would be to have an initial exchange of views and to consider options for further discussion. We place no preconditions on this meeting. On our part, we commit to seeking the utmost political clarity as opposed to the demagoguery and slander that have characterized our relations thus far.

We look forward to your answer.

Communist greetings,

Perrault

For the International Secretariat of the ICL

* * *

Letter from the League for the Fourth International to the International Communist League

27 September 2023

Dear comrade Perrault,

We have received your 2 September letter to the IG/League for the Fourth International and analyzed it in conjunction with the issue of *Spartacist* (No. 68, September 2023) that you refer to, containing documents from the ICL’s eighth international conference. Most fundamental for us as Trotskyists are the programmatic issues. It is these that guide our response to your proposal for “opening formal discussion between our organizations,” which we will address below.

In your letter, you write: “On several important counts, the International Conference recognized that the criticisms made by the IG of the ICL were correct.” Several passages in the recent *Spartacist* make similar statements. In the interest of basic political housekeeping, we must pose some necessary questions.

1) You state that “the fights that led to

the expulsions of the IG’s founding members from the ICL” were “unprincipled.” Yes they were. The question is, what specifically about them does the ICL now characterize as unprincipled?

2) You state that you are “investigating the disciplinary measures taken at the time.” Does this investigation include the travesty of a “trial” of a comrade centered on outright fabrications, and the preparation of a second frame-up trial shortly thereafter? Does it include the flagrantly chauvinist campaign against North African comrades who opposed the ICL leaders’ abandoning the commitment to publish an exile publication? Or coming clean about the unspeakable witch hunt by the ICL in 1999 against the leaders of its Italian section?³

3) Your letter now also characterizes as unprincipled the ICL’s June 1996 “break in relations with Luta Metalúrgica/Liga Quarta-Internacionalista do Brasil,” and *Spartacist* calls for the ICL to carry out “a reckoning” on this unilateral break. But, again, what exactly about its actions does the ICL now characterize as unprincipled? The fact that, at the height of the heated struggle the Brazilian comrades were waging to oust *guardas* (police) from the municipal workers union in the steel city of Volta Redonda, the ICL stabbed the struggle in the back? It called to “pull our hands out of that boiling water” and demanded that the comrades resign their union positions, quit the union and leave town, and then, when they refused this shameful demand, the ICL broke relations. To cover its tracks, it launched a smear campaign which went so far as to brand the black Trotskyist steel workers as “dangerous hustlers,” and sought to sabotage their international defense campaign, calling it a “cynical sham” after the courts ordered the “search and seizure” of all copies of a leaflet their Comitê de Luta Classista issued, based on a suit demanding a list of all CLC members.⁴

The recent *Spartacist* claims that the ICL and IG engaged in “almost three decades” of “mutual slander.” For the record, the IG/LFI never slandered the ICL. Our critiques have been scrupulously political and always based on fact. In contrast, the ICL unleashed a decades-long torrent of slanders against us, seeking to brand the IG as “anti-American” at the height of post-9/11 hysteria for our call to defeat U.S. imperialism in Afghanistan,⁵ “provocateur”-baiting,⁶ and much more. You mention in pass-

¹ See our July 1996 pamphlet *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*.

² See “‘Chauvinist Hydra’ Devours SL/ICL: Some History Ex-Trotskyists Would Like to Keep Hidden,” *The Internationalist* No. 59, March-April 2020.

³ See *Back to Trotskyism!* (May 2016).

⁴ See “ICL Seeks to Sabotage Defense of Brazilian Trotskyist Workers,” reproduced in *Responses to ICL Smear Campaign Against Brazilian Trotskyists* (2010) and *Class Struggle and Repression in Volta Redonda, Brazil* (1997). Also, “Army Death List Targeted Brazilian Worker Militants,” *The Internationalist* No. 8, June 2000.

⁵ See “ICL Refuses to Call for Defeat of U.S. Imperialism, ‘Anti-American’ Baiting the Internationalist Group,” *The Internationalist* No. 12, Fall 2001.

⁶ See the denunciation of this smear by Esteban Volkov, Trotsky’s grandson, in “Poisonous ‘Provocateur’ Baiting from the SL,” *The Internationalist* No. 16, May-June 2003.

ing (in a parenthesis) the “2010 Haiti betrayal,” without saying what that was – the ICL’s scandalous support for U.S. occupation troops – and its refusal to fight for independence for Puerto Rico, but not that it denounced the LFI for our principled opposition to imperialist domination. And as for the latter-day ICL’s chauvinist line on refugees,⁷ the word does not even appear in the latest issue of *Spartacist*.

Proceeding to the proposal put forward in your 2 September letter, you call for “opening formal discussion between our organizations,” to “engage as much as possible in common work,” and, “as a first step,” to “hold a private meeting between leadership delegations of both our organizations,” in order to “have an initial exchange of views and consider options for further discussions.” There is *no principled programmatic basis* for such formal discussions, private leadership meetings or common work. This is, of course, distinct from united-front actions (as opposed to the political bloc you are effectively proposing) when the class struggle calls for it, which we have participated in (and often initiated) with a range of political tendencies, including the ICL.

Such discussions, common work, etc., are the kind of steps that left organizations undertake when there is some process of political convergence. Some might think that since the LFI upholds the programmatic heritage of the Spartacist tendency when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism, and you still call your international organ *Spartacist* (for how long?), that might indicate a degree of commonality. But under its new leadership, and for years before then, the ICL has turned its back on and increasingly formally renounced one fundamental Spartacist position after another. You claim that “the courses taken by our two organizations in the post-Soviet period ... were qualitatively similar.” In reality, the political differences have continued to grow since the 1996-98 expulsions, and are rapidly accelerating.

You state in the current issue of *Spartacist* that the Spartacist tendency was supposedly “Deformed at Birth” on the question of permanent revolution – a central issue for Trotskyists. To advance this claim, the ICL (new epoch) performs a sleight-of-hand, seeking to turn Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution into a *stagist* program, in which the first stage is national liberation, even under capitalism, and even in the imperialist countries. On the contrary, Trotsky emphasized that in the present epoch, the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries can only be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry.⁸

In the same vein, you now embrace

⁷ See “Strange Encounters with the ICL,” *The Internationalist* No. 44 (Summer 2016); “Spartacist League vs. Refugees,” *The Internationalist* No. 47, March-April 2017; “The ICL vs. Asylum for Refugees in Quebec,” *The Internationalist* No. 56, May-June 2019.

⁸ Your claim that Trotsky’s program of permanent revolution put forward in 1905 was essentially identical with Lenin’s formula at that time of a “revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” directly contradicts Trotsky’s own presentation in “Three Concepts of the Russian Revolution” (August 1939), which contrasts them.

the “Anti-Imperialist United Front” which in practice means political blocs with the bourgeoisie in colonial and semi-colonial countries, the formula used to subordinate the Chinese Communist Party to Chiang Kai-shek’s Guomindang, leading to the 1927 Shanghai Massacre. In line with that you vilify the Spartacist tendency’s record on Iran, when we warned against the catastrophic consequences of tailing the mullah-led “Islamic Revolution” as some kind of anti-imperialist movement, which led to the jailing and execution of thousands of leftists. In Mexico, you essentially prettify the government of Andrés Manuel López Obrador as anti-imperialist. A question: do you advocate that the “anti-imperialist united front” in Mexico include AMLO’s party, MORENA? Of course, everyone in Mexico knows that AMLO is acting as a border guard for *yanqui* imperialism.

“Nation-building” bourgeois nationalism is the political motor force of the ICL’s escalation of its abandonment of the Spartacist programmatic heritage, publicly announced with the 2017 “Hydra” document.⁹ A key aspect of “Hydra” was its embrace of anti-democratic language laws in Quebec and Catalonia, which means repudiating Lenin’s crucial position against compulsory official languages.¹⁰ The ICL’s new, blatantly anti-Leninist line on the national question paved the way for a blizzard of further revisions, predictably now leading to repudiating the Spartacist tendency’s crucial position that in the case of interpenetrated peoples (such as in Palestine), a just and equitable solution to competing national rights is only possible through establishing workers rule.¹¹ This is essential to the struggle to defend the Palestinian people and overthrow the Zionist regime, for example. Today the ICL’s embrace of nationalism is extended, both retrospectively (on the USSR, Poland and the other East European deformed workers states) and currently on China.

The basic disagreements between us not only concern what you call “abstract doctrine” but also burning issues of the present day. Thus on the war of the U.S./NATO imperialists and their proxy regime in Ukraine against Russia, a way station toward imperialist war against China, the policy of the LFI is directly counterposed to that of the ICL. While the ICL admits that capitalist Russia is not an imperialist power, you denounce the LFI for upholding military defense of Russia against the imperialists. And while claiming in the latest *Spartacist* that “the ICL and IG are relatively close” on issues like China, in your previous issue (August 2022) you denounce us for characterizing the “Wuhan lab leak theory” as what it is: imperialist war propaganda against the Chinese deformed workers state.

As for the imaginary scenario of “common work,” again there is no principled basis. From your blanket “Down with lockdowns” line (including in China, where they

⁹ Editor’s note: This refers to “The Struggle Against the Chauvinist Hydra,” central document of the ICL’s previous international conference, published in *Spartacist*, Summer 2017.

¹⁰ See Lenin’s “Liberals and Democrats on the Language Question” (September 1913), his seminal “Critical Remarks on the National Question” (October-December 1913) and related works.

¹¹ This was not some Spartacist invention, as you portray it, but was directly based on the Bolshevik experience in areas of mixed populations in Ukraine and the Caucasus.

were very effective) to your recent articles and leaflets, each is more opportunist than the last. This includes calling to join the Australian Labor Party, the governing party that enforces racist immigration laws; the SL/U.S. statement on the ILWU and UPS (19 August) declaring that the “real battle” is “workers vs. the Establishment”; and the openly class-collaborationist “Proposal to Rebuild the Movement” (28 August), calling to “unite the broadest possible forces” to “bring pressure down on all the liberal and progressive politicians who claim to stand for workers and for black rights” to fulfill the “doable” call to “open the police archives,” which, it states, “can be done by any politician in office that is really on the side of black people.” And then there is your abhorrent leaflet on the subway murder of Jordan Neely.

Having declared that the Spartacist tendency was deformed at birth, you deride Jim Robertson¹² as a revisionist and have undertaken the wholesale junking of the programmatic arsenal crucial to revolutionary struggle today. We of the LFI, having fought over the course of decades to defend this legacy and carry it into the living class struggle, will not join you in your endeavor. With the ICL’s consolidation of its break with the “old” Spartacism, you are now junking just about every distinctly Spartacist position from the days when it stood for revolutionary Trotskyism. This underscores an undeniable political reality: it is the League for the Fourth International that upholds the revolutionary continuity of the communist program of Lenin and Trotsky.

Having explained why there is no principled programmatic basis for the LFI to hold private “discussions” with you, we instead challenge the ICL to a public debate. We propose that the two organizations work out the date and other details for such a debate, and that it be held in New York City, where both have their largest concentration of members.

Communist greetings,

Jan Norden
for the Executive Committee of the
League for the Fourth International

* * *

Letter from the International Communist League to the LFI

11 October 2023

Dear Comrade Norden,

We regret that you have turned down our proposal for a formal meeting. In our opinion holding a frank discussion with another organization claiming the mantle of Trotskyism does not require any prior political agreement. In fact, we believe that such discussions can play an important role in clarifying differences and eventually forging political agreement.

In my September 2 letter I proposed “common action to defend the basic interests of the workers movement” and “common work when it is appropriate.” You reject this arguing that this is a proposal for a political bloc as opposed to united-front actions. We think this is a false distinction. Whether it is to “stop the fascists,” “free political prisoners” or the 1921 UKPD “open letter,” every united front requires some form of political agreement or bloc at least on a limited set of objectives. We think that we can possibly find a principled basis to work with you on defense work against political repression. Of course, we cannot

¹² Editor’s note: James Robertson (1928-2019) was the founding leader of the SL.

have a united front on something we don’t agree with. For example, it seems you do not agree on the desirability of throwing the AUKUS hawks out of the ALP or the fight to open police archives. If you did—and we certainly hope you change your mind—it would be entirely possible to work together on these limited objectives while still defending our respective strategies toward the ALP and black liberation in the U.S.

Now in response to your questions.

1) We believe that everything about the fight which led to your expulsion was unprincipled. Back in 1996 you agreed with the ICL’s overall orientation. However, the fights with you and your comrades, whether over Germany, Brazil or Mexico, were all based on trying to show that you were in opposition to the rest of the ICL leadership. Since this was not the case, existing differences had to be exaggerated or simply manufactured through demagoguery and distortions.

2) Yes, our investigation does include the trials. There is a very long list of fights that were had in the last 30 years which we know to be wrong and damaging. We have prioritized the 1996 expulsion because of its political significance as well as the precedents it set. We are not currently reviewing the 1997 fight in the LTF.¹³ That being said, it was unquestionably a despicable fight, including its blanket rejection of an “iskrist perspective” for Algeria. As you know, the 1999 witchhunt of comrades Giulia and Carlo was reviewed in a 2004 ICC investigation.¹⁴ We have not re-examined the question but can certainly state that it was inexcusable to not communicate the result of the investigation to them.

3) On Brazil it is clear to us based on our own published account of events that we had no legitimate political grounds to break off relations when we did. That said, as you note there is much more to the question. We are currently investigating the claims you have made about the actions of our tendency in Brazil and are determined to account for the full truth, no matter how bitter.

In addition to the questions addressed above, your response raises several substantial political differences over the content of *Spartacist* No. 68 and our recent work. I will not respond to all of these in the present letter. On most points we believe that you either distort or caricature the actual arguments we make and/or present our position as somehow being self-evidently opportunist without providing any serious motivation or explanation.

To give only one example, you claim that we seek to “turn Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution into a stagist program” and supposedly repudiate that “the tasks of the bourgeois revolution in colonial and semi-colonial countries can only be achieved through the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on the peasantry.” However, even a superficial glance at our article “In Defense of Permanent Revolution” will show that this isn’t true. Far from endorsing a “stagist program,” we reaffirm that “only the proletariat, rallying behind it the peasant masses and the urban petty bourgeoisie, is capable of breaking the yoke of foreign capital, finishing the agrarian revolution and establishing full democracy for the toilers in the form of a workers and peasants government.”

Finally, we will gladly accept the chal-

¹³ Editor’s note: Ligue Trotskyiste de France, the ICL’s French section.

¹⁴ Editor’s note: ICL International Control Commission.

lenge to a debate. We agree to hold it in New York City. In terms of the time, we are relatively flexible. Our tentative proposal is to hold it in December. Would Saturday, December 9 work for you?

In our opinion, the best way to have a productive and clarifying debate would be to hold a full-day event where we can divide some of the various questions in dispute. We think this can be justified by the fact that this debate is almost 30 years in the making and numerous comrades from outside New York will surely want to attend.

Our proposal is as follows:

Main theme: The Fight for the Fourth International Today

Point 1: Revolutionary Leadership from 1990 to 2023

Point 2: Permanent Revolution

Point 3: The Task of Communists in the U.S.

We propose that the first point be longer than the two others given the breadth of the question and the fact that revolutionary leadership is at the heart of our differences. It is in this point that we propose to take up the question of China and the war in Ukraine. Permanent Revolution seems to us an obvious theme. As for the point on the United States, we think it makes sense given that the event will take place in New York and we both have most members in the U.S. We are of course open to a counterproposal on your part if you have a problem with any of the above proposals. Once we have agreed on a date and questions to debate, we should proceed rapidly in arranging the other details such as a venue, a chair, the format, etc.

Communist greetings,

Perrault

For the International Secretariat of the ICL

* * *

Letter from the League for the Fourth International to the ICL

15 October 2023

Dear comrade Perrault:

We have received your 11 October letter. First, regarding the response to our queries about the ICL’s investigation of its actions in the period that gave rise to our organization:

Your initial letter (2 September) noted that the ICL now characterizes as “unprincipled” the “fights” that led to the expulsions of the founding members of the Internationalist Group. As our 27 September reply highlighted, that statement, while true, is strikingly general. A much more specific accounting from the ICL is required if the intent is not merely to make do with a quick “confession” but to seriously evaluate the *meaning* and lessons of events that both you and we describe as highly relevant for would-be Trotskyists.

Your 11 October answer, that “everything” about the 1996 “fight” against us was unprincipled, is based on the claim that both sides shared the same mistaken political outlook. In reality, the ICL purged us for fighting to implement the Trotskyist program, which it was abandoning – as shown dramatically when, after (and closely connected with) our expulsions, it stabbed in the back the struggle to expel police from the municipal workers union in Brazil’s “Steel City.” It was far from just a matter of “distortions,” exaggerations or specious arguments.

In the course of the cynical 1996 purge, the ICL ripped up one basic Leninist norm and party statute after another, launched a

continued on page 26

Esteban Volkov Fought to Uphold Trotsky's Revolutionary Legacy

The following obituary of Leon Trotsky's grandson Esteban Volkov was published by the Washington Post on 22 June 2023. It is rare that a major bourgeois newspaper gives a reasonably accurate account of a prominent figure who dedicated his life to keeping the flame of revolution burning.* Of course, this account barely touches on Trotsky's role together with Lenin in leading the 1917 October Revolution, and leaves unmentioned his founding and leading of the Red Army in the ensuing Russian Civil War, as well as his struggle to build the Fourth International. Nevertheless, the author did a conscientious job in researching and portraying Esteban's life and achievements, notably in turning Trotsky's home at Viena 39 in Coyoacán into a vibrant museum portraying the Bolshevik leader's fight to carry forward the internationalist program of Red October. The founders of the League for the Fourth International worked with Esteban in supporting his efforts to preserve and maintain the Trotsky home (including the funeral monument) and its transformation into a museum, and counted him as a friend and revolutionary comrade.

Following this obituary, we reprint a speech by Esteban Volkov at Trotsky's grave on the 69th anniversary of his assassination.

Esteban Volkov, Trotsky's Grandson and Keeper of His Flame, dies at 97

He preserved the memory of his grandfather through a museum he started in a suburb of Mexico City — in the home where his grandfather was assassinated

By Phil Davison

Esteban Volkov, who witnessed the dying breaths of his grandfather, Leon Trotsky — the exiled Russian revolutionary leader whose assassination in Mexico in 1940 had been ordered by archrival Joseph Stalin — and who devoted his final decades to preserving Trotsky's legacy, died June 16 in Tepoztlán, Mexico.

He was 97 and had lived in the Mexico City suburb of Coyoacán since coming under the guardianship of Trotsky at age 13. His daughter Nora Volkow, who uses a different spelling of the family name, confirmed the death but did not provide a specific cause. She said her father became blind earlier this year and entered a nursing home in Tepoztlán, a town south of the capital.

Mr. Volkov was a retired chemical engineer when, in 1990, he opened a museum in the house on Calle Viena where he had lived with his grandfather. The timing of the museum coincided with the end of the

* On Leon Trotsky's assassination, the *New York Times* (22 August 1940) headlined its article "Trotsky Dies of His Wounds; Asks Revolution Go Forward," but then added a subhead repeating the Stalinist lies spouted by his murderer: "Assassin Says He Broke With Victim After Exile Asked Him to Carry Out Acts of Sabotage in Russia." Recognizing the threat to capitalist rule that Lenin's comrade-in-arms represented, this was a continuation of the *Times'* coverage during the infamous Moscow Frame-Up Trials of 1936-38. At the time, this semi-official voice of U.S. imperialism, through its Moscow correspondent Walter Duranty, regurgitated the Stalinist slanders against Bolshevik leaders including Nikolai Bukharin, Lev Kamenev, Grigori Zinoviev, Yuri Pyatakov, Karl Radek and Trotsky, all of them killed by Stalin's henchmen.

Cold War and a year before the collapse of the Soviet state that Trotsky, along with Vladimir Lenin, had helped create.

The purpose of the exhibition space was to bring renewed attention to the man whom Stalin had sent into exile amid a power struggle to lead the Soviet Union after Lenin's death in 1924. Stalin painted Trotsky as a subversive and tried to erase him from Soviet history.

"We don't ask for political rehabilitation because he doesn't need political rehabilitation," Mr. Volkov told the *Los Angeles Times* of his grandfather, who was granted asylum by Mexico's left-wing president and moved there in 1937. "We want historical truth. ... Truth is a basic element of progress. We cannot go anywhere without the truth."

The Leon Trotsky House Museum is now run by the Mexican state and has more than 50,000 visitors annually.

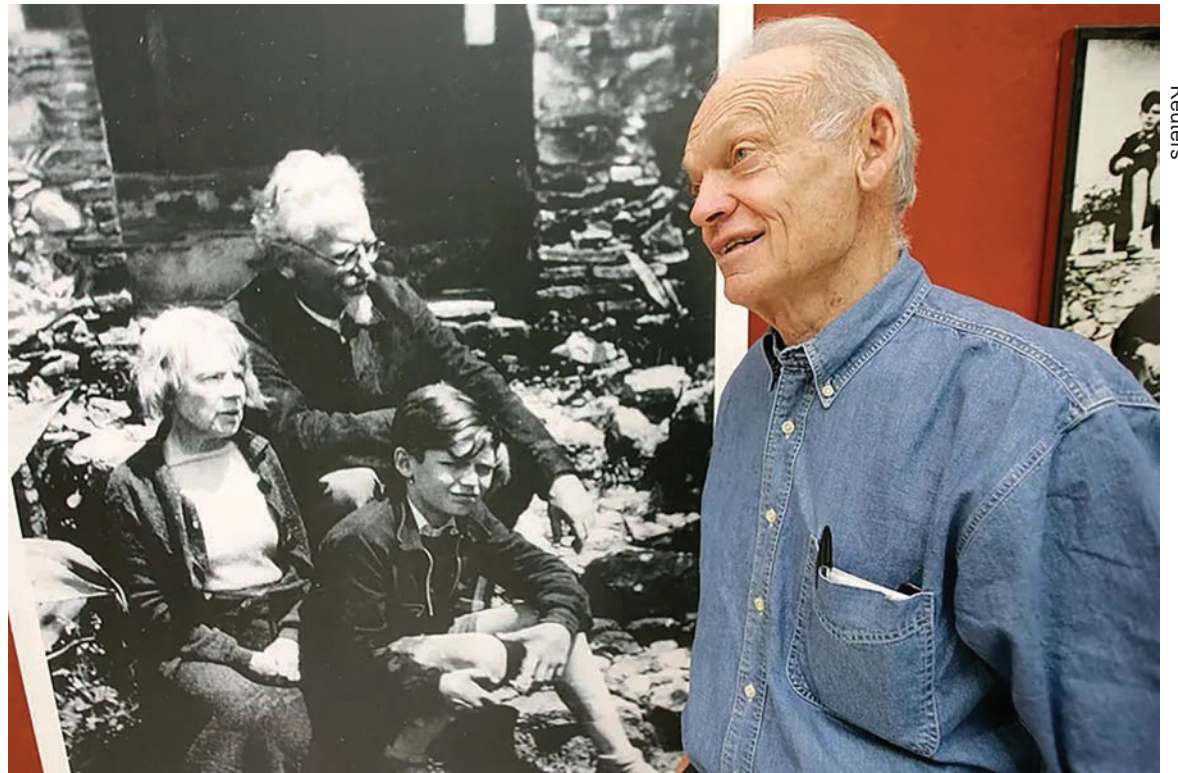
Trotsky warned his grandson to stay out of politics for his own safety, and he obeyed. The museum is not meant to serve as a temple to his grandfather's politics but to elaborate on the political journey of a man who had been born Lev Davidovich Bronstein and came from a wealthy Jewish family.

Mr. Volkov was born Vsevolod Volkov Platonovich Bronstein on March 7, 1926, in Yalta on the Crimea peninsula that had been part of the Russian empire and remained so under the Soviets. After Ukraine gained its independence from the shattered Soviet Union in 1991, Crimea became part of Ukraine and still is, although it

has been occupied by invading Russian forces since 2014.¹

Mr. Volkov's mother, Zinaida, was one of Trotsky's two daughters. Mr. Volkov's father, Platon Volkov, was a Trotsky supporter who was later arrested and disappeared into Stalin's prisons, reputedly murdered by the regime.

¹ Crimea was historically part of Russia from 1783 until Khrushchev attached it to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1954. In 2014, following the imperialist-sponsored coup d'état in Kiev led by Ukrainian ultra-nationalists and fascists, the people of Crimea (more than three-quarters of whom listed Russian as their native language) voted overwhelmingly in a referendum to join the Russian Federation. The Kiev coup regime and its Western godfathers label this exercise of self-determination "Russian occupation" and vow to undo it by force of arms, ignoring the will of the Crimean population. The *Washington Post*, as one of the leading drumbeaters for war on Russia, naturally presents this distorted version.



Esteban Volkov, grandson of Leon Trotsky, in front of photo of him as a youth together with Trotsky and Natalia Sedova on display at the Museo Casa de León Trotsky in Coyoacán, Mexico City.



Esteban with his grandparents on a rare outing, to Taxco, Guerrero in 1939.

Zinaida was allowed to leave the Soviet Union with her son, then 5 years old, to visit her father, who had been exiled to an island in the Sea of Marmara near Istanbul. For reasons that only became clear to Mr. Volkov decades later, his slightly older half-sister, Aleksandra, was left behind — not to be seen again by him for 57 years.

In 1932, fearing for the safety of his daughter and grandson, Trotsky told them to go to Berlin. Within a few weeks, Zinaida fell ill with tuberculosis. Grief-stricken and suffering from depression, she killed herself, according to her son, by leaving her head close to an unlit gas oven in their apartment.

Friends sent the child to a school in the Austrian capital, Vienna, run by self-styled "disciples" of psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, before his uncle Lev Sedov took him to Paris in 1934. Four years later, Sedov was found dead in a Paris hospital while being treated for appendicitis, with many historians concurring he had been poisoned by Stalinist agents.

Mr. Volkov later reckoned that, in all, 30 of his relatives were killed or disappeared by Stalin's regime or, like his mother, took their own lives. He was soon sent to Mexico to join his grandfather, who called him Esteban in the Spanish-speaking country.

Although he was a world away from Europe, Mr. Volkov was not entirely safe. In May 1940, he was shot in the foot during an attempt to kill Trotsky in his home. Gunmen, reportedly led by Mexican muralist and Stalinist sympathizer David Alfaro Siqueiros, broke through the security team and riddled Trotsky's bedroom with bullets from automatic weapons.

Trotsky's wife pushed her husband into a corner, and they both survived. But the gunmen then fired into the neighboring bedroom, where young Mr. Volkov had been sleeping. "I was very, very lucky," he recalled in a 2012 interview with the Spanish newspaper *El País*. "A gunman shot six times into my mattress, but I'd jumped under the bed. I remember the terrible noise and the smell of gunpowder."

Just months later, on Aug. 20, Mr. *continued on page 27*

SAG-AFTRA + WGA + IATSE + Teamsters = Power

Hollywood Strike: Stay Out Together to Win

The following article was issued by the Internationalist Group as a leaflet on August 29, with a subhead “No One Goes Back Until Everyone Goes Back!” Thousands of copies were distributed on picket lines in New York and Los Angeles. On September 25, after 148 days on strike, the Writers Guild leadership reached a tentative agreement with the producers, which was ratified by the members a week later. As we go to press (October 31), the actors are still out after 110 days on strike. The strikers’ determination to wage this crucial battle underscores the importance of our call for a single union of media workers, including as well the stage hands and all the blue-collar workers without whose labor the entire industry cannot function.

AUGUST 29 – It was more than 100 days into the strike by 10,000 Hollywood screenwriters that the employers in the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) made a new offer to the Writers Guild of America (WGA), which walked out on May 2. It’s now been over six weeks since the 160,000 actors of SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) officially joined the writers on the picket lines, and the AMPTP has yet to respond to the union’s demands. Production at the major studios is basically shut down. But as the Hollywood cartel seeks to drag out the battle, bold action by the unions is needed to break the stalemate.

The studios are hard-lining it, seeking to starve out the writers and actors, and eventually to pick off one union at a time. That is a standard employer tactic, facilitated by the division of the workforce into many craft unions. But it comes at a time when technological change – the dominance of streaming, introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) – poses an existential threat to entertainment workers. And while Wall Street financiers are pushing to milk short-term profits from a notoriously fickle and unpredictable industry, tens of thousands of “below-the-line” movie crew workers in

IATSE (stage hands), Teamsters, musicians and others whose labor is crucial to any production, are out of work. This is a crucial battle, and to win it, the dual strike should become one strike by all the entertainment industry unions together.

SAG-AFTRA finally declared a walk-out on July 14 after negotiations collapsed as the movie industry bosses refused to engage on actors’ key demands, on residuals (payments for reruns of shows) for streaming and limits on AI. The AMPTP’s response to the union’s already pared-down wage demands (11% in the first year) was an insulting “offer” (5%), which after last year’s record inflation would amount to a wage cut. As thousands of actors joined with their WGA colleagues, there were large and energetic picket lines outside major film and TV studios, including Netflix, Amazon and Universal Studios. These have continued, week after week, and this show of determination and unity has not been lost on the media moguls.

But that alone is not enough to make them back down. The studios were gearing up for months for a strike, stockpiling scripts and shows. After the WGA had been out for over two months, a studio executive told *Deadline* (11 July), “The endgame is to allow things to drag on until union members start losing their apartments and losing their houses.” The “plan to grind down the [writers’] guild has long been in the works,” the paper reported, quoting an industry insider saying “they’re going to let it bleed out.” Even if this was just scare talk, trying to intimidate strikers into submission, it hasn’t worked. Three days later, SAG-AFTRA went out. It is the first time actors have staged a major walkout since 1980, over four decades ago, and the first time both unions have struck simultaneously since 1960.

The *New York Times* (14 July) wrote, “the actors’ uncharacteristic resolve caught senior executives and producers off guard.” The SAG-AFTRA leadership had given plenty of indications



Actors officially join screen writers on strike picket lines, Los Angeles, July 14. Internationalists said: One out, all out, and stay out together until all Hollywood unions win big!

it was ready to compromise, from the disclaimer on the bottom of its “solidarity” picket signs saying it wasn’t asking anyone not to cross¹ to a video message to the members saying that talks had been “extremely productive” and suggesting a settlement was at hand. Alarmed actors put together a letter to the union tops saying “we are prepared to strike” and “we are concerned by the idea that SAG-AFTRA members may be ready to make sacrifices that leadership is not” (*Variety*, 27 June). Over 1,000 actors signed the letter, including Oscar winners Meryl Streep, Jennifer Lawrence and Rami Malek.

Its spine stiffened, the actors union leadership went back to its 48-page list of proposals, whose key demands the studio bosses either rejected outright (revenue-sharing on streaming) or didn’t address (AI). But even as the studios haven’t budged, inside of a couple of weeks SAG-AFTRA began making “interim agreements” with smaller studios and independent productions (currently 286 and counting) granting permission for actors to work on them. This provoked a lot of heat, including from comedian Sarah Silverman who called this by its right name: “It’s scabbing,” at a time when “writers, actors, crew people” are “sacrificing their livelihood for this cause.” After the WGA raised a stink, the SAG-AFTRA tops said no *future interim agreements*

¹ See our May 15 leaflet, “To Win the Strike, All Out to Shut Down Hollywood!” in *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.

would be made for projects being struck by the writers – but nothing about *rescinding the already granted permissions*.

On top of which, the whole pretense that these are productions independent of the top studios is a hoax. The list of “indie” productions going forward in the middle of a strike include such big-budget movies as the sci-fi horror show *The Watchers*, which will go to Warner Brothers for theatrical release; and 15 series including the Israeli spy thriller *Tehran*, whose first season featured a Mossad agent tasked with preparing an Israeli air force strike on a nuclear plant. This piece of blatant war propaganda is being shot in Greece and will be broadcast, like the previous two seasons, on Apple TV+. Various other “interims” will also be broadcast and distributed by AMPTP majors, who in this way can keep production rolling, strike or no strike.

The interims undercut the impact of the strikes, which should *shut down all film production solid!* Although the



WGA and SAG-AFTRA join with hotel workers of UNITE-HERE in march of striking unions, Los Angeles, July 21. If all Hollywood unions struck together they could win, hands down. For a single union of all media workers!



On the picket line outside HBO/Amazon offices in New York City, August 18. WGA asked for contract clause to respect picket lines. You don’t need the bosses’ okay to uphold this fundamental union principle.

Megan Jamerson/KCRW

USA Today

Internationalist photo

Wall Street Puts the Screws to Hollywood

In her press conference announcing the strike, Fran Drescher gave what was widely deemed a fiery performance. To many labor activists it sounded more like the star of the TV series *The Nanny* was reading a script for her latest role, as militant union leader: “The jig is up, A.M.P.T.P. We stand tall. You have to wake up and smell the coffee. We are labor and we stand tall.... We are being victimized by a very greedy entity. I am shocked by the way the people that we have been in business with are treating us.”

Any class-conscious trade-unionist knows that capitalism without greed is impossible. And the idea that the workers in the industry are “in business” with the bosses speaks volumes about the SAG-AFTRA leader’s consciousness, though not unexpected for someone whose latest gig was as a “brand ambassador” for the luxury fashion house Dolce & Gabbana. But, to be fair, when Drescher denounced “employers [who] make Wall Street and greed their priority,” she was pointing to something real. And it’s not just that “they plead poverty ... when giving hundreds of millions of dollars to their CEOs.”

There has been a significant change in the entertainment industry as the traditional studios are dwarfed by, or have been swallowed by, media monsters like **Apple** (market capitalization, \$2.8 trillion, owner of Apple Studios), the e-commerce giant **Amazon** (market cap

\$1.4 trillion, owner of Amazon Studios/Amazon Prime Video and MGM), conglomerates like **Walt Disney Company** (\$238 billion) and **Comcast** (\$214 billion, owner of NBCUniversal), etc. These mega corporations are not focused on filmmaking; they produce and distribute “content,” and making movies is only a small part of their businesses. In fact, some writer-producers report that they have been told their work isn’t “second screen enough” – i.e., that it is too compelling, and would distract from viewers scrolling on their phones. So in the quest for “content,” the bosses are demanding the visual equivalent of Muzak, or elevator music!

Moreover, during the pandemic, when streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime exploded as millions watched while stuck at home, many studios borrowed heavily from Wall Street to launch a wave of mergers and quickly expand production, at a time when interest rates were rock bottom. In the center of international banking, the particular sector that latched onto media production was private equity capital, the far-less-regulated financial and investment houses known for ruthlessly shuttering properties deemed insufficiently profitable. In the middle of the current strikes, *Insider* (26 July) reported “17 private-equity players making big bets on Hollywood, even as economic uncertainty and strikes roil the entertainment business.”

These are cutthroat capitalists, and

some are pushing AI big time. Like the venture capitalists of Kyber-Knight Capital, which says that generative AI (creating new text and images by mining all accessible existing material) “will let filmmakers work faster and cheaper” (*Variety*, 16 August).

That is the point, isn’t it? Return on capital. Not that Hollywood hasn’t always been focused on the bottom line, but these behemoths are only interested in short-term profits. Early in 2023, the Wall Street analysis firm MofettNathanson issued a research note concluding that “streaming is, in fact, not a good business.” It went on: “Cash flows are sorry ghosts of their former selves. Balance sheets are loaded with debt in a higher interest rate environment.” It concluded: media companies must introduce “a new age of rationalization” with “a focus on driving profitable growth” (*Hollywood Reporter*, 19 January).

In this fight, WGA and SAG-AFTRA are going up against both Hollywood and Wall Street. That is precisely why, as studios try to drastically cut production costs, the striking unions have to hang tough in demanding a huge increase in pay. Otherwise, writers’ and actors’ livelihoods will end up on the cutting room floor. Only sharp **class struggle** for **socialist revolution** can defeat the monopoly power of the media giants. ■

AMPTP restarted talks with the Writers Guild – perhaps figuring it is the weaker of the two unions – to give the appearance that bargaining is going on, it hasn’t agreed to key demands. The WGA now says it wants the right to honor other unions’ picket lines as provided for in Teamsters contracts. Yes, the WGA – and SAG-AFTRA – should demand contract language affirming members’ right to refuse to cross a picket line. *They should also get rid of no-strike clauses.* It will take an all-out strike to win such demands. But for one of the unions to go back before the other would be a huge betrayal. *Enforcing* the labor principle that **picket lines mean don’t cross** requires collective action.

When studio bosses summoned

WGA negotiators to talk on August 22, it was not to respond to the union’s counterproposal, given to them a week earlier, but instead to announce that they were going to bypass the union leadership and try to stampede the members into accepting the AMPTP offer. It was, the WGA said in a statement, “a meeting to get us to cave.” The companies’ strategy is “to bet that we will turn on each other.” Yes, and it is the responsibility of the union leaderships to see that doesn’t happen.

As the networks gear up for the fall season with plans to draw on backlogs of completed series, plus a slew of unscripted “reality TV” shows, the unions, rather than hinting at settling on their own, should **escalate the strike** to include television,

radio and digital media programs covered by the Network TV Code, and then on to broadcast news. That would violate no-strike contract provisions? You bet – shred them with militant union action! Above all, with two unions fighting the same bosses over many of the same demands, **it is critical that the actors and writers stay out together until both unions’ demands are won.** That means a fight against the WGA and SAG-AFTRA union bureaucrats who are preparing to hang separately. Militant strikers should insist: **No one goes back until everyone goes back!**

And that would point the way to a **single media workers union** covering the entire industry. More on that below.

As Studios Hard-Line It, Unite the Strikes!

A Hollywood strike is different in many ways from a Teamster trucker, auto worker or hotel worker strike. In this petty-bourgeois sector, you have A-list stars walking a picket line (or not), bizarre pay formulas and vast differences in income between those with a steady gig or role in an ongoing series, for example, and background actors whose pay barely amounts to minimum wage. There are also the thousands of workers – stage hands, camera crews and other categories in the TV and film industry toiling behind the scenes to bring the production to life. They live paycheck to paycheck and are now out of work. Plus there’s a whole lot of nepotism and not a lot of diversity at any level. **But at bottom, this strike is a showdown between capital and labor.**

A key issue for the Writers Guild is minimum staffing levels. The union had

proposed a minimum of six writers for ten weeks in writers rooms for TV series as they develop episodes prior to receiving a go-ahead (“pre-greenlight”). The AMPTP’s counteroffer agreed to the ten weeks, but no staffing minimum. The WGA had demanded that AI not be used by the studios to write/rewrite literary material or as source material. In their August 11 offer, the bosses trumpeted “landmark protections” on “generative artificial intelligence” (GAI) material. Which are? Written material generated by AI “will not be considered literary material,” and writers would be paid and credited as before for the material they produce. *So the studios would use GAI scripts however they want, just not call them “literary”!* It’s even possible that the AMPTP language would enable studios to copyright GAI scripts, which under present court rulings they can’t do.

The WGA proposed to establish weekly pay during pre-greenlight and post-greenlight writers rooms, a big issue for writers being paid the minimum, who depend on this income to cover rent, food and other necessities. The AMPTP has refused outright to even discuss this. For both the WGA and SAG-AFTRA, a key demand was to establish residuals based on viewership of streaming videos. Until now, the studios have refused to release any information at all about viewership. In their counteroffer, the bosses now say they will let a handful WGA staffers view limited streaming viewer data (which the studios produce) for three years, and only then would they discuss residuals! So for now, *the studios would continue to pay next to nothing to writers on streaming films and series.* The unions should demand that the studios and streaming platforms **open their books to workers inspection.**

The grotesque injustice of the present Hollywood pay system has been highlighted by the hit series *Orange Is the New Black*, which aired for seven seasons, from 2013 to 2019. It was the longest-running, most-watched original series on Netflix, whose “runaway success” built the brand and the streaming model that now dominates the industry. Yet while some actors eventually received \$200,000 per episode, many earned a pittance. One cast member, Beth Dover, reports that she lost money in her first two seasons, because she was cast as a “local hire,” and therefore was responsible for her own airfare and lodging. Residual payments were no better. Actress Kimiko Glenn posted a video of herself in 2020 looking over a statement of foreign streaming residuals for over twenty episodes, adding up to a grand total of \$27.30 (“Orange Is the New Black’ Signalled the Rot Inside the Streaming Economy,” *New Yorker*, 12 July).

In face of that reality, the weak-kneed response by the WGA to the AMPTP “offer” that offers zilch or close to it on key issues of staffing, weekly pay and streaming residuals was that the “counteroffer is neither nothing, nor nearly enough” (*WGA on Strike*, 24 August). Meanwhile, the union tops tallied up the cost of their proposal for each studio, ranging from 2/10ths of 1% of annual revenues for Netflix to less than 1/100th of 1% for Amazon and Apple. This, and illusory talk of “real discussions” and “movement” by the studios on AI protections, suggests that WGA leaders are just looking to hold on to the present system, in which writers make chicken feed, and



SAG-AFTRA president Fran Drescher and national executive director Duncan Crabtree-Ireland announce actors strike at July 13 press conference.

would be ready to settle for very little indeed. The SAG-AFTRA tops, meanwhile, are begging the AMPTP to talk with them.

SAG-AFTRA president Drescher got rave reviews for her July 13 press conference in part because it was what the ranks and a lot of people wanted to hear, especially against the smug disdain of Disney studio chief Bob Iger (annual salary \$27 million), who dissed strikers' demands as "unrealistic." Yet, as the press noted, the actors union leader's own remark, that "everybody else tinkers around our artistry," was a put-down that "firmly distinguished the actors' cause and claim from the ongoing WGA strike"² – and from all others who make the show go on. The fact is, Drescher (net worth \$25 million) and SAG-AFTRA national executive director Duncan Crabtree-Ireland (annual salary \$1,014,939 last year!) inhabit a different world than the working and auditioning actors who are the large majority of the union's membership.

That is not just true of the actors union leaders personally but of the labor bureaucracy overall, which is a privileged petty-bourgeois social layer that seeks to mediate between labor and capital. They do this mainly by clamping down on union militancy, although they are sometimes forced to go through the motions in order to preserve their position atop a workers organization. At an appearance at the New York City Council, Drescher made the point that 86% of SAG members do not even make the \$26,470 annually from screen acting required to qualify for the union's health insurance. And now a number of strikers are reporting that they are on the verge of losing their health care coverage.

It is high time for the ranks to take charge and *unite the strikes*. One reason the WGA leadership reacted sharply to the AMPTP publicizing its "offer" was that the union tops haven't even told their members or the public what their counteroffer was. They want to bargain behind closed doors, in order to hide their concessions to the bosses. Strikers should demand to know the unions' current demands, and should insist on *elected mass strike committees* of several hundred delegates, recallable at any time, to organize the struggle and decide on demands. Such committees could

² "Fran Drescher Delivered the Performance of a Lifetime as SAG-AFTRA President," *Variety*, 13 July.

meet together (along with reps from IATSE and Teamsters) to give a united response to the AMPTP's divide-and-conquer tactics.

This should be a prelude to a struggle to build a *single trade union of all media workers*. The guild mentality of each profession jealously guarding its bailiwick (and restricting its membership) is an obstacle to defeating the trillion-dollar e-commerce giants and media conglomerates worth hundreds of billions. In 2021, IATSE voted overwhelmingly to strike – and would have if it weren't for a sellout union leadership – over miserable pay and killer job shifts, demanding the right to a good night's sleep and a weekend.³ IATSE members, as well as Teamsters, animators, make-up artists and other guilds also depend on residuals to fund motion picture industry health plans, so *bring them into this strike* now, to lay the basis for common action (including simultaneous expiration of contracts) in the future.

In the meantime, class struggle militants can act together to set up *joint union safety committees* at every studio and on every shoot to avoid tragedies like on the set at *Rust*, where IATSE Local 600 director of photography Halyna Hutchins was killed shortly after camera operators walked off the set complaining of dangerous conditions (and just after scabs had arrived to replace them).

Break with the Democrats, Oust the Bureaucrats – Build a Class Struggle Workers Party!

Leaders of both striking unions have said workers in the industry are facing "existential threats." They got that right, and those threats are coming not only from the studios but from the top levels of international finance capital. To win a brawl against powerful forces who are trying to drag things out in order to starve strikers out, chanting "one day longer, one day stronger" won't cut it. It's necessary to sharply increase the intensity of the struggle, extending the strike to close down broadcasts and enlist the power of the labor movement as a whole in a broad-scale *class-struggle against the movie moguls and titans of commerce, finance and industry*. And that means, like any class struggle, it must be fought politically, against all the parties and politicians of capital.

³ See "IATSE Members Voted to Strike: Let's Do It," *The Internationalist*, October 2021.



(Above) Rally for Hollywood 10 screenwriters and actors in Los Angeles as they are being sent to jail, June 1950. (Below) Democrat Ronald Reagan, then head of SAG, testifying before Democrat-led House Un-American Activities Committee that witch-hunted leftists in Hollywood.

When the WGA balked at the studios' proposal, what was the AMPTP's response? It hired a new crisis response public relations firm, The Levinson Group, one of whose senior advisors is Matt McKenna, former spokesperson for Democratic president Bill Clinton, for the Clinton Foundation and Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential bid. And the WGA? It hired Precision Strategies, led by Stephanie Cutter, who was deputy campaign director for Democratic president Barack Obama's 2012 campaign (*Hollywood Reporter*, 25 August). As for SAG-AFTRA, Fran Drescher is a strong supporter of Hillary Clinton and even eyed her vacated Senate seat in 2008. While Drescher has proclaimed herself "anti-capitalist," this whole fight is being waged within the confines of the capitalist Democratic Party.

Hollywood studio bosses are kingmakers in the Democratic Party, Hollywood stars are prominent campaigners for Democrats. The last time screenwriters and actors were on strike at the same time, in 1960, when Ronald Reagan (who went on to become one of the most notorious union-busters in history) headed SAG, he was a Democrat. (After getting residuals and health care on the strength of the dual strike, Reagan left the writers hanging out to dry.) And the anti-communist witch-hunting of the Hollywood Ten actors, writers and directors was spearheaded by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), led by Democrats, while Reagan named names and the blacklisting was carried out by the studio bosses, also Democrats. This was all long before Republican senator Joseph McCarthy's name became synonymous with "red" purges in the anti-Soviet Cold War.

Today, Hollywood strikers are tremendously popular, as working people are ground down by rampant profiteering driving up gas prices and food prices and driving down living standards. But that popularity needs to be mobilized. To successfully wage an all-out battle against capital, we need to *oust the union bureaucrats*, who see themselves as "in business" with the bosses, a bourgeois concept that is sold to even the most hard-pressed actors; to *break with the Democrats*, who pass strikebreaking legis-



lation against rail workers while waging an ever-escalating proxy war in Ukraine that is careening toward World War III against Russia and China; and to *build a class-struggle workers party*, to lead all the oppressed in the fight for a *workers government*.

Motion picture making is a cruel industry. As generations of talented young people follow their dreams to the dream factory, they audition for bit parts and eke out a precarious existence waiting on tables, or other gig work, trying to make ends meet while endlessly hoping to be "discovered" and have their shot at the big time. Hollywood has always been a dictatorship, as the studio system monopolized production and used the star system to promote and control the headliners. It is where sexual exploitation was not an aberration but an industry standard, as the road to stardom (or just a steady gig) was often via the director's couch. To break out of that mold, to build a system of cultural creation through collaborative effort, making possible artistic works of all kinds far superior in every way to a lot of the garbage being churned out today, will require nothing less than a revolution.

Today we are in the middle of a strike that may go on and on as the bosses threaten to starve out writers, actors and all who join them in solidarity. In our May 15 Internationalist leaflet, we emphasized "the urgent need for *united action across the industry to shut down all the production companies* in the AMPTP." This is all the more true today, as we say: *One Out, All Out, and Stay Out Together Until All Hollywood Unions Win Big!* ■



Internationalists at SAG-AFTRA picket line outside Paramount in NYC, August 18. *Break with the Democrats, build a workers party!*

Next Up: Organize Amazon!

Teamster-UPS Deal: No End to Poverty Pay

The following article was issued as a leaflet on August 6, with a superhead calling to “Vote ‘NO’ and Strike for \$25 – Plus AC – NOW!” On August 22, it was announced that the tentative agreement had been ratified by an 86% “yes” vote of the membership.

On July 25, a week before a strike deadline for which the union had been preparing with a lot of fanfare for more than a year, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), representing 340,000 United Parcel Service (UPS) drivers and warehouse workers, suddenly announced that it had reached a tentative agreement with the company, averting a strike. IBT general president Sean O’Brien proclaimed the deal “the most historic tentative agreement for workers in the history of UPS.” He added, “We’ve changed the game.” But the members still get to vote on it.

Last fall, O’Brien declared, “This UPS agreement is going to be the defining moment in organized labor.” Immediately after the tentative agreement (TA) was announced, various Democratic Party politicians (Bernie Sanders, Nancy Pelosi, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, of course), labor liberals (*Labor Notes*) and reformist leftists rushed to congratulate the Teamsters for their negotiating “victory.” Interestingly, the big business press also hailed the outcome. So after all the hype, what did this defining, game-changing, most-historic-ever TA *actually* win?

Under the agreement, all current Teamsters would get raises of at least \$7.50 per hour, by 2028. For drivers earning top rate, currently \$42 an hour, that would just be an 18% increase. Spread over five years, at the rate prices have been rising lately, that would almost all be eaten up by inflation. Some 7,500 new full-time positions will be opened up, but even for full-time drivers, starting pay will be a miserly \$23/hour, achieving full pay only after a four-year “progression.” And many part-time workers who believed O’Brien when he said the union would fight for \$25 an hour minimum were disappointed to learn that starting pay for part-time new hires would only be \$21, later increasing to \$23.

The fact that for many low-wage part-timers, \$21-\$23 represents a significant raise from the current starting pay of \$16.20 an hour is an outrage in itself. UPS is squeezing fabulous profits from such sweatshop wages, yet *this is the fault of the Teamster leadership which for over four decades has agreed to such miserable pay.* (Actually, starting pay in the current contract is \$15.50, up from the ridiculous \$13 in 2018! The increase to \$16.20 was due to a mandate for companies that contract with the federal government.) But *\$21/hr. is still poverty pay. You can’t live on that.* And with a guaranteed minimum shift of only 3½ hours, part-time workers can only, barely, make ends meet with a second and even a third job.

Union officials are pushing the line

that part-time pay will eventually rise to \$25.75 (by 2028, and not for new hires). But already in a number of areas, UPS uses “market rate adjustments” to raise part-time pay (\$24-25/hr. in the Boston area, \$20.50 in areas of southern California) because they can’t get enough workers at their miserable contractual rate. In New York, with huge numbers of working people desperate to pay the rent and food, the pay is still rock bottom. This is doubly and triply important because at \$21 an hour, UPS wages will only be slightly above Amazon’s, which is now paying \$19, undercutting the IBT’s talk of unionizing the e-retail giant, and therefore the drive to organize the whole of the package delivery industry.

Another “hot” issue at UPS has been air conditioning, particularly after the heat wave last year. Now we are in what could be the hottest year on record. In June, the union and company announced a preliminary agreement. “Air conditioning is coming to UPS,” said O’Brien. So what was in the TA on this? It turns out package cars will get two fans in the cab, while “newer non-electric” delivery vehicles would be gradually retrofitted with induction vents, and starting next January, newly purchased package cars will have in-cab air conditioning. That is supposed to be heat safety?! At UPS, famous for keeping its vans on the road for up to 30 years, it could be 2053 before all its de-



UPS Teamsters demonstrate their power, July 6, at Foster Ave., Brooklyn, New York City.

livery vehicles have AC. As for the warehouses, nothing. Keep on sweating.

Internationalist supporters in the Teamster-UPS division have called for at least *\$30 an hour starting wage*, to break the cycle of poverty pay and give a push to the Teamsters’ campaign – launched two years ago but so far going nowhere – to unionize the more than 800,000 production workers at Amazon. As rumors circulated that IBT negotiators were backtracking on the \$25/hr. demand, at Teamster contract rallies and “practice pickets” in June and July, Internationalist signs declared: *“Teamsters One-Two Punch: 1) \$25+/hr. Minimum for UPS Part-Time Workers, 2) Organize Amazon!”*

Now, in the face of an utterly inadequate Tentative Agreement, we urge UPS Teamsters to: *Vote “NO” and Strike for \$25 – Plus AC – NOW!* To actually wage and win a strike, particularly after the union leadership agreed to a deal that would pre-

serve poverty pay for part-timers, who are the absolute majority of UPS workers, Teamster militants should demand that there be an *elected strike committee*, with hundreds of delegates who can be recalled at any time, representing every local with UPS workers, to organize and decide on the course of the strike.

Despite the push for a “yes” vote coming from Teamster headquarters in Washington about the “historic” contract, it can be voted down. The 2018 UPS contract was defeated, but then imposed by Teamsters president James Hoffa Jr., using a provision of the IBT constitution going back to 1940 requiring a two-thirds majority to defeat a contract agreed to by the leadership.¹ That clause was overturned at the 2021 Teamster convention. The previous (2013) contract barely passed, with only a 53% majority voting for it. In both cases, less than half the membership voted, and a much smaller percentage of part-time workers. Turnout is key. Voting on the contract is from August 3 to August 22.

If the TA is voted down, the logical next step would be an all-out strike. That would be a battle royal between labor and capital, the likes of which the U.S. hasn’t seen for years. To carry out and *win* the kind of struggle that workers at UPS – and elsewhere – need, that battle has to be waged politically. Labor’s power must be unchained from the bosses’ parties. Joe Biden has declared himself to be the most pro-labor president ever, but it was the Democrats – Biden, Pelosi, Sanders and AOC’s “Squad” – who (with lots of Republican support) carried out blatant strikebreaking against the railway workers last December. As union leaders provide cover for Biden & Co., this highlights why workers need to *break completely with all capitalist parties.*

¹ The provision was introduced under Teamster then-president Dan Tobin, as part of a series of measures to grant himself dictatorial powers over the union in the middle of a fight with the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters.



IBT general president Sean O’Brien joins UPS Teamsters and supporters on “practice picket” line at Foster Ave., Brooklyn, July 14. Teamster tops vowed to fight for \$25 part-time wage but delivered poverty pay.

Brittany Newman/AP

Teamsters / Twitter



Solidarity with railroad workers demo against government strikebreaking, at New York City's Grand Central Terminal, 8 December 2022. Democrats: strikebreakers, war-makers – build a workers party!

It also underlines the need to *build a class-struggle leadership of the unions*, and to forge a *workers party* to lead a struggle of all the oppressed to *replace the brutal rule of capital* – UPS, Amazon, the banks, real estate and the rest – *with the liberating rule of a workers government*. For them, we're just a source of profit: they figure they can work us to death in the stifling heat while tossing us a few crumbs to keep us quiet. Their system runs on exploitation, racism and war, but the working class has the power not just to win a strike but to put the wealth we have created in the service of human needs. Only a leadership committed to such a *workers revolution* will be up to the job of decisively defeating UPS and the others who live off our labor.

Bosses' Press Praises Teamster-UPS Agreement

Over the last few years, working people in the United States and internationally have gone through rough times. The COVID-19 pandemic officially killed well over a million people in the U.S. and 7 million worldwide (in reality, much more), while millions lost their jobs and many their homes. This was followed by galloping inflation – driven by rampant profiteering by giant corporations and intensified by U.S. sanctions against Russia – reaching the highest level in 40 years in mid-2022. And as the cost of living shot up, workers' real wages (after subtracting for increased prices) plunged by over 8% last year, the most severe drop in a quarter century. So as 2023 began, many were fed up and ready to fight.

By spring, as Hollywood screen writers walked out on May 2, followed by actors in early July, there was wide anticipation of a "Strike Summer," which could extend into "Strike Fall." In particular, after contracts of powerful rail and dock unions, whose members labored in dangerous conditions through the pandemic, expired last year, the August 1 deadline for the Teamsters' UPS contract looked like it might be the big one. After all, IBT president O'Brien had been talking strike since before he took office in 2021. Some pro-labor media said a UPS walk-out "could be the biggest strike in U.S. history" (*More Perfect Union*, 31 May).

Expectations were sky-high.

On July 5 – after O'Brien had set a deadline to reach a settlement by that date – bargaining broke down. The union said on Facebook that the company "shamelessly" presented an "unofficial offer" that would force "part-time workers at UPS to be left behind." Stressing that part-time employees earn "near-minimum wage" in much of the country, the IBT leader declared, "part-time poverty isn't working for America." Already in mid-June, the UPS members had voted by 97% to authorize a strike, and over the next two weeks, UPS locals around the country held "practice pickets." So, many were surprised when three weeks later, company and union negotiators, after a brief meeting, issued statements that a deal had been reached.

Significantly, the bosses' press praised the UPS settlement. The *Wall Street Journal* (25 July), the voice of high finance, opined in an editorial ("UPS and the Art of the Teamster Deal") that "the UPS wage hikes are catching up with recent inflation more than they are driving more price increases," that "the public" (meaning the money men) "wins when a strike is averted," and that the deal will allow UPS "greater flexibility" in scheduling weekend shifts. The industry publication *Freight Waves* (25 July) was more specific, quoting an analyst who said the agreement could open the door for the UPS and IBT to "negotiate 7 day a week service mid-contract without opening up the entire contract to do so," including working on Sundays.

A perceptive labor reporter, Norm Scheiber, writing in the *New York Times* (26 July), that house organ of the capitalist/imperialist establishment, quoted UPS chief executive Carole Tomé saying on an earnings call with investors last spring that they should not be distracted by the "great deal of noise during the negotiation" on the way to a "win-win contract" by the end of July. A few days prior (22 July), Schreiber noted, which many on the left were blind to, that "for all his pugilistic statements, Mr. O'Brien remains an establishment figure who appears to prefer reaching a deal to going on strike, and he has subtly acted to make one less likely." Which is exactly what happened.

First Rail, Now UPS: Teamster Leader O'Brien Averts a Strike, Again

In 2021, the election of the Teamsters United slate, led by Sean O'Brien and Fred Zuckerman and backed by Teamsters for Democratic Union (TDU), replaced the regime of James Hoffa, Jr., which had led the Teamsters for 24 years. O'Brien was a long-time Hoffa lieutenant at the head of IBT Local 25 in the Boston area. Zuckerman is the former president of Local 89 in Louisville who was narrowly defeated by Hoffa Jr. in the 2016 IBT election. And the TDU is a reputedly left caucus in the IBT going back to the 1970s, when it was started by sellout social democrats who made their mark by appealing to the federal government and suing the union in the courts. *This violates the basic labor principle of independence from the bosses' state.*

Hoffa Jr. replaced the TDU-backed regime of Ron Carey, which led a national strike at UPS in 1997. That two-week strike, very popular throughout the country, won modest gains in pay and pledges to convert some 10,000 part-time workers, then two-thirds of the workforce, into full-timers. But that conversion created a tier of "22.3" workers who are paid \$6.00 less than other full-time employees. That tier has continued through all the UPS contracts since then, including the new TA. (This is distinct from the 22.4 tier created under the 2018 contract who get paid even less, which O'Brien/Zuckerman vowed in their election campaign to get rid of, allowing them to pose as "militants.")

Carey had come to office through government-run elections that resulted from a 1989 Justice Department consent decree which the union-suers of the TDU pushed for in the name of "union democracy." Beholden to the bosses' government, in 1994 Carey caved in to federal "mediation" under Democrat Bill Clinton in the Master Freight Agreement with trucking companies, costing 40,000 Teamster jobs. Also in '94, he called off a strike at UPS after one day. When Carey was forced into a serious strike at UPS in 1997, immediately afterwards the chickens came home to roost as the feds brought charges against him, ordering new elections in which he could not run. Hoffa Jr., representing the old guard of the bureaucracy, became general president in 1998.

The conclusion, as we have written elsewhere, is: "*Bring in the feds and they own you*" ("Unionize Amazon with Class Struggle," in *The Internationalist* No. 65, October-December 2021). For our special supplement on the 1997 UPS strike, see "Teamsters Strike Against UPS: All Out to Win This Fight!" (4 August 1997) in *The Internationalist* No. 2, September-October 1997. For more on how government intervention, aided and abetted by the TDU, wrecked IBT pension funds, see "How Feds Destroyed Teamster Pensions," on page 22 of this issue.

When O'Brien and Zuckerman were elected in 2021, this was hailed by *Labor Notes* (which came out of the late-'70s upsurge of the TDU and similar caucuses in steel and auto) and various reformist leftists. Teamsters for a Democratic Union declared a "new era," and effectively became part of the O'Brien-Zuckerman ("OZ-TDU") administration. O'Brien, who was IBT eastern region vice president under Hoffa, Jr., talked tough against UPS – vowing at the October 2022 TDU convention to "pulverize" Big Brown. But it was a different story with the rail unions, where two Teamsters affiliates, BLET (engineers and train workers) and BMWED (maintenance of way workers) represent three-quarters of all unionized railroad workers.

As railroad bargaining revved up in mid-2022, O'Brien got his pal Marty Walsh – a former construction union leader who became mayor of Boston and then President Biden's secretary of labor – to get a Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) appointed under the 1926 Railway Labor Act, which lets the federal government ban rail strikes. On the PEB's orders, the IBT and other rail union tops agreed to a contract without the sick days that the ranks had insisted on. And the OZ-TDU Teamsters leadership went along when Biden and the Democratic Congress – including AOC and the other DSA (Democratic Socialists of America) Democrats – rammed through a bill banning a strike and imposing contract on rail workers that a majority voted against.²

"Throughout negotiations," said an IBT release, "O'Brien worked closely" with Biden and Walsh "to reach an agreement

continued on page 23

² See "Democratic Party Strikebreakers Shackle Railroad Workers," *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.



Amazon delivery drivers affiliated with Teamsters Local 396 picketed outside ONT1 sort center, Mira Loma, CA.

Courtesy of Democrats, Republicans, Hoffa Jr. and TDU Union-Suers

How Feds, Dems and Banks

Whacked Teamster Pensions

Last December 8, President Joe Biden announced the grant of \$35.8 billion in federal funds to shore up the financially troubled Central States Pension Fund (CSPF), covering 350,000 Teamster workers and retirees, mostly in the Midwest. The action came barely a week after the Democratic White House and Congress imposed a contract on railroad workers that they had voted against, and which didn't include the sick pay they had fought for. The funds came from the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, the coronavirus relief package Biden got passed in 2021. It was the largest pension fund rescue in U.S. history.

Retirees depending on Central States pensions have been demonstrating for federal aid for years. They breathed a sigh of relief as they faced the cutoff of 60% in their benefits, which would have thrown tens of thousands into poverty. The Republicans, of course, denounced the rescue as a "politically inspired payoff" (*New York Times*, 9 December 2022). The timing was certainly meant to let labor officialdom try to sell Democrats as "friends of labor" in the face of worker discontent over the strikebreaking rail legislation. In making the announcement, Biden was flanked by Teamsters general president Sean O'Brien and AFL-CIO chief Liz Shuler.

It also meant that there was little chance that O'Brien would cross Biden in a United Parcel Service (UPS) strike this summer. To be clear: current UPS employees are not covered by the CSPF. The company pulled out in 2007, setting up the UPS/IBT Pension Fund covering about 70,000 current employees; others are covered by the Western Conference Teamsters Pension Plan, the New England Teamster Pension Fund and other smaller plans. In the July 25 IBT-UPS tentative agreement, the New England and UPS/IBT plans (which paid lower benefits) will get increased funding, while other plans are essentially frozen, saving UPS many millions.

So how did the Central States Pension Fund come to be so underfunded? Republican spokesman Rep. Kevin Brady blames "union leaders" and trustees who promised too-high payments. (The average CSPF monthly pension is less than \$1,200.) The rightist Federalist Society blames mismanagement by Teamster "union bosses." Wrong on both counts. The No. 1 reason for the tanking of multiemployer Teamster funds was deregulation of trucking under Democrat Jimmy Carter, which led to the demise of many Teamster unions, so today there are five CSPF retirees for every active worker.

Factor No. 2 was the 1982 consent decree that the Teamsters were forced into by Carter's Labor and Justice departments, with a big assist from Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). In April 1977, International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) president Frank Fitzsimmons was forced by the Carter administration to step down as trustee of the CSPF. *Work-*

ers Vanguard (No. 158, 20 May 1977), then the voice of revolutionary Trotskyism, ran an article headlined "Hands Off the Teamsters!" WV detailed shady practices of the IBT tops, but stressed: "Breaking union power, not 'cleaning up the labor movement,' was the real aim of government intervention."

TDU, in contrast, hailed the feds' action, saying that removal of Fitzsimmons was a "little step toward pension reform. So far so good." Spokesman Pete Camarata said that TDU was "willing to accept government intervention," that "the union's so corrupt right now that you need it for a while." But it's more than that. The TDU was an instigator of the government attack on the Teamsters. At its national convention in September 1977, it distributed a pamphlet stating:

"TDU is organizing a letter writing campaign to President Carter and Labor Secretary Ray Marshall asking them to use their powers under the Pension Reform Act (ERISA) to remove the current Teamster trustees on the grounds that they have acted in an imprudent manner."

In May 1978 TDU sued Teamster pensions funds, and in June, when a Congressional hearing was held on the Central States fund, Camarata and another TDUer testified against the union.

This was par for the course for the TDU, which repeatedly ran to the capitalist courts and Labor Department calling to prosecute the IBT. In April 1987, as the Reagan administration was preparing to sue the IBT under the draconian Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act, TDU organizer Ken Paff wrote to Assistant U.S. Attorney General Stephen Trott saying, "we strongly urge the government to seek reorganization of the IBT under Section 164(a) of the RICO Act." The TDU asked for government ordered union elections, and it got its wish. In 1989, U.S. attorney Rudolph Giuliani settled the RICO suit with a court order for the feds to run Teamster elections in 1991 and 1996, and granting federal officers vast powers over the IBT.

The result was the government-supervised election of TDU-backed Ron Carey ... and six years later the government ouster of Carey in the wake of, and as reprisal for, the 1997 UPS strike (see "Teamster-UPS Deal: No End to Poverty Wages" on page 20).

Now back to the 1982 consent decree and Central States Pension Fund. Under its terms, a government-named "fiduciary" was granted exclusive power to manage the CSPF plan and invest its assets. The Wall Street investment bank appointed as fiduciary (originally Morgan Stanley) promptly sold off real estate assets – mostly lucrative investments in Las Vegas casinos, which were deemed "troubled" not because they were not profitable, on the contrary, but because they were loans allegedly made to front men for the Mafia who were off-limits to regular banks. Instead, the "professional" money managers invested in "traditional" stocks and bonds.

From 1993, the plan administrators put a majority of CSPF investments in "equity

securities" whose value rose and fell with the cycles of the stock market. This intensified from 2000 on, as the fiduciaries (now J.P. Morgan and Goldman Sachs) put two-thirds of the plan's assets in stocks, a far higher percentage than the average (48%) for multiemployer union pension funds. This continued as Morgan was replaced by Chicago-based Northern Trust. Then came the 2008-09 stock market crash. That led to "Central States' astonishing 42% drop in assets – and a loss of about \$11.1 billion in seed capital – in just 15 months during 2008 and early 2009."¹

As *MarketWatch* noted, the government and banks "stood watch while the financial markets accomplished what the mob had failed to: which was to smash the fund's long-term solvency with massive money-losing investments." Central States never recovered from this devastating loss, which is why a federal rescue was needed to prevent the fund from going under. But so-called "legitimate" investors who stayed invested in Vegas real estate, having pushed out the mob, made out like bandits, so to speak, raking in billions. Even other Teamster pension funds that escaped the feds' death grip, like the Western Conference fund, managed to stay solvent.

The overall problem of underfunded pension funds was not limited to the CSPF, or the IBT. A 2018 report to Congress by the U.S. Government Accountability Office cited reports by a "prominent actuarial firm" that by 2014, 36% of multiemployer pension funds insured by the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation (PBGC) were classified as "endangered" or in "critical" status.² Something had to be done. The response of the Obama administration and Congress was the bipartisan Multiemployer Pension Reform Act of 2014, whose main purpose was to "save" pension funds *by slashing retirees' benefits*. Senate Democrats voted by 2-1 for the bill.

IBT president James Hoffa Jr. originally joined with employers and other union tops in developing a plan to allow such cuts, pulling out at the last minute. Teamsters for a Democratic Union played a leading role in opposing the cuts, *but was co-responsible for the government takeover of CSPF that led to the crisis*. This union "reform" caucus was started by the International Socialists (I.S.), heirs of the anti-Trotskyist renegade Max Shachtman. In his book praising the TDU, *Rank and File Rebellion* (1990), fellow Shachtmanite Dan La Botz wrote:

"The TDU pension reform campaign was largely successful... [P]artly as a result of TDU's pressure, the Carter administration used the power of the federal government to clean up the Central States Pension Fund, removing the gangsters and stopping the poor investment practices of the past."

The social-democratic TDU appealed to the capitalist government to "clean up" the IBT. As a result, the feds whacked the

funds and endangered the livelihoods of Teamster workers.

This is not an apology for the IBT Old Guard, far from it. Many of them – but not all – were in bed with the mob. They are the heirs of Teamster chief Dan Tobin who brought in the government to prosecute and jail the Trotskyists who led the greatest Teamster battle in history, the 1934 Minneapolis strikes that laid the basis for Teamster power. The bedrock of that power was independence from the bosses, their politicians, their government and their state power. Among the thugs Tobin sent to Minneapolis to battle the militant Teamsters was a young Jimmy Hoffa, who had been part of the Central States Drivers Council led by Trotskyist Farrell Dobbs.

The story of the Central States Pension Fund comes down to basics. The Democrats (and Republicans) are no "friends of labor" but bosses' parties. The government is not neutral, it is the executive committee of the bourgeoisie whose task is to suppress the exploited and oppressed. Appealing to the cops, courts and bourgeois politicians is crossing the class line, betraying the workers by bringing in the class enemy. Marxists and class-struggle labor militants oppose government intervention in union affairs, including laws claiming to defend union democracy, and we defend the unions, however corrupt, against the capitalist state. Bottom line: **labor must clean its own house.**

It should be obvious that no private pension funds, whose income derives from investments, are safe from destruction by financial pressures under capitalism. Even supposedly guaranteed Social Security funds can be gutted, their wholly inadequate benefits slashed, their coverage limited and their assets raided by bourgeois politicians out to improve the "competitiveness" (profitability) of capital. This is being dramatically demonstrated by the sharp battles over pensions in France, from 1995 to today.³ Only by mobilizing the power of the workers in all-out class struggle can we defeat the forces who would condemn millions to toil until they die.

Social gains of the past – the 8-hour day, 40-hour workweek, pensions, public health and education – are being ripped up before our eyes as decaying capitalism only invests in frenzied speculative bubbles and job-destroying technology. A secure retirement for the millions can only be won by building a class-struggle workers party fighting for international socialist revolution. Then, instead of condemning those who can no longer produce profits for the bosses to poverty and dreary warehouses for the elderly, a society freed from the deadly profit drive can come up with creative means to ensure a comfortable and rewarding existence for all. ■

³ See the program for "All-Out General Strike to Shred the French Pension 'Reform'," in our article "France: Drive Out Macron, Fight for a Workers Government," *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.

¹ "How the Teamsters pension disappeared more quickly under Wall Street than the mob," *MarketWatch*, 6 April 2016.

² GAO, "Central States Pension Fund: Investment Policy Decisions and Challenges Facing the Plan" (June 2018).



UPS drivers share thermometer readings of near 120° (and over) heat in their trucks, with surface temperatures of 150°, August 2022. Demand UPS install air conditioning now.

Teamsters...

continued from page 21

that kept Teamsters working and America's rails running" – that is, to prevent a strike. On the UPS contract, O'Brien said he wanted Biden to stay out. This shows how unpopular the rail contract fiasco was with the membership. A strike at UPS, which moves 6% of all domestic production, would be a huge disruption to the economy, and when O'Brien settled, he was thanked by Biden for averting a strike, again.

Fight for a Program That Points the Way to Workers Rule

Among the gains highlighted by the Teamster bureaucracy as it tries to sell the UPS tentative agreement is the elimination of the "22.4" tier. This was originally billed as being for "flexible," "hybrid" indoor-outdoor workers, but in reality, it was just another tier of lower-paid drivers. The fact that those workers will now be regular package car drivers is a step forward, but under UPS' "progression" rules, they will only reach full rate in four years, with puny raises in the first three years. Moreover, a new de facto tier of future part-time hires will only get a \$2 raise over the course of the contract, while existing part-timers get another \$2.75. These tiers are used to divide workers. We say: **To hell with "progression" – abolish the tiers – full pay for all, now!**

The terrible situation of part-time workers is key to the condition of all UPS workers, and to the company's profits. Some 55% of the UPS workforce in the U.S. is part-time. In New York, under the current contract most part-time workers make a little over *one-third* the rate of full-time drivers. Lower pay for part-time workers was originally imposed in a contract in 1982, during a deep economic recession with 11% unemployment and the bosses on a rampage after busting the PATCO air controllers union. Part-time starting pay was reduced by 25%, to \$8 an hour – and it stayed close to that for three decades! With inflation, **\$8 would today be \$25**, so under the new TA, **part-timers would still make far less than the cut-rate pay of 40 years ago!**

The reduced part-time wage led to a massive expansion of part-time workers and huge profits for UPS in the following decades. In 2018, a Teamster negotiator said union leaders had gone along with "artificially low" starting pay for part-timers for 36

years with the justification that it allowed for higher pay for full-timers and for senior workers – as if the top rate for drivers were something to brag about. Even the 1997 strike, under the slogan "Part-Time America Won't Work," left the huge pay gap. And today the creation of 7,500 full-time (22.3!) jobs is a drop in the bucket when there are 180,000 UPS workers stuck in the part-time trap. UPS workers should demand: **Equal pay for equal work – and full-time jobs for all who want them.**

Then there are the brutal *split shifts*. The "22.3" full-time positions coming out of the 1997 were created by combining part-time shifts, but many of these shifts are not continuous. A large number resulted in split shifts, separated by several hours, so that a warehouse worker on a 4-9 a.m. preload shift might also have a 6-10 p.m. twilight shift. Some sleep at work between shifts and may go home only once a week. Now there are rumors that even more 22.3 workers will be put on split shifts. These conditions are intolerable, a throwback to non-union days. The 8-hour day, 40-hour workweek were supposedly won almost a century ago. UPS workers should demand: **end split shifts!**

UPS raked in record profits of \$26 billion in 2021-22. Its adjusted operating profit last year was 66% above its pre-pandemic level. Its profit rate (return on invested capital) was 31%. Plus last year it handed out \$8.6 billion to shareowners (led by the Wall Street behemoth BlackRock) in the form of dividends and share buybacks. In short, United Parcel Service is rolling in dough. The Teamsters are in an extraordinarily strong position to strike, and would enjoy huge popular support as workers earning as little as \$16.20/hr. take on a company whose CEO makes more in a day (\$19,000,000 ÷ 365 = \$52,000) than most UPS workers earn in a year. It would not be hard to explain, and for millions to understand, that **UPS Teamsters are striking for all of us!**

Even in less favorable conditions, with a leadership fighting on a program of militant class struggle the Teamsters could sock it to UPS. But that can't be done with a "business union" leadership that the OZ-TDU "team" represent no less than Hoffa Jr., all of whom recognize the bosses' "right" to exploit workers. Rather than accepting the "logic" of capitalism, union militants should raise a series of "transitional demands" pointing to a struggle for workers rule. Take **forced overtime**. The new TA says no one will be required to work six days a week. This is just going back to the past. UPS workers should not have to put in long hours at all. They should demand a **shorter workweek with no loss in pay ("30 for 40")**, creating a lot of new jobs.

This demand for a **sliding scale of working hours** should go hand in hand with a fight for a **sliding scale of wages**, automatically raising wages to make up for the rising cost of consumer goods. UPS Teamsters have a "cost-of-living"

adjustment (COLA), which is rare enough these days, but it only provides piddling compensation. The way it works today, it only kicks in when the increase in the Consumer Price Index is over 3% a year. So if the official annual inflation is 4.9% (as it was in April), then the COLA would be all of 28 cents. As they said ironically in the '30s Depression, "don't spend it all in one place." UPS Teamsters should demand a **full COLA**, based on **union calculation of the actual inflation rate**.

Or take **air conditioning**. This has become an urgent issue as killer heat waves roll across the U.S. In June 2022, Esteban Chavez Jr. died of an apparent heat stroke in his truck in Pasadena, California, and in October 2021 23-year-old warehouse worker Jose Cruz died of heat exhaustion on the job in Waco, Texas. Videos have gone viral of UPS drivers collapsing as they deliver packages, and of workers documenting 120° heat (and 150° surface temperatures) in cargo areas of vans and package cars. Last month, Phoenix, Arizona set a record of 31 straight days of over 110°. But all that the new TA promises is a couple of fans and to **start** purchasing delivery vehicles with air conditioned cabs next January.

That is no answer at all to the heat crisis. There is no reason for such a delay except one: money, and not a lot of that. Workers should demand that **UPS put roof-mounted units on its delivery vehicles, starting now!** At \$750 to \$3,000 (for top-of-the-line models) apiece, to a company of UPS' size, that is chicken-feed. (No doubt UPS bosses would object to the fuel costs of keeping the engines running. That's their problem: if they want packages delivered, they'll eat it.) And demand that **when temperatures in UPS warehouses go over 90°, production stops**. To enforce this, there should be **union safety committees** empowered to shut down operations in unsafe conditions.

As Leon Trotsky, co-leader together with Lenin of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, wrote in the *Transitional Program*, the founding document of the Fourth International, such measures, and others such as to **open the books for workers inspection** and **workers control of industry**, point to the need for a **planned economy** based on production for human needs rather than the tyranny of the market based on production for profit. To accomplish that requires **expropriation of the capitalist class** by a **workers government**. To be sure, we have a ways to go to get there, but a solid strike can be an excellent school for socialism. And that poses point-blank the crisis of working-class leadership.

Build a Class-Struggle Opposition in the Teamsters

At the July 31 meeting in Washington of leaders of Teamster UPS locals, the vote was 161 to 1 to endorse the TA (only Local 89, Zuckerman's home local, voted against). There have been reports of considerable discontent, particularly (but not only) among part-time workers, many of whom believed that O'Brien was hard-lining it for a minimum \$25 an hour wage. One group, Teamsters Mobilize, has called to "Vote NO" on the deal, demanding (in addition to the \$25 base part-timer pay) that all market rate adjustments be permanent, full-time wages for all 22.3 workers, getting rid of surveillance cameras and some other correct demands. The freeze

of pension contributions other than for the IBT-UPS and New England plans is another sore point.

Since the 2016 upsurge in votes for the populist Democrat presidential primary contender Bernie Sanders, which led to a huge influx into the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America, a significant number of young DSAers found their way into UPS. Many have since become active parts of the OZ-TDU regime. Moreover, although the DSA professes to have a "rank-and-file strategy" in the unions, it has been actively recruiting officials at different levels of Teamster officialdom. As a result, many of those who are today singing the praises of the UPS deal are these professed "socialists" ensconced in the union bureaucracy and the capitalist party of warmongers and strikebreakers Biden, Sanders and AOC's "squad."

When the TA was announced, the DSA quickly issued a statement hailing the Teamsters' "historic contract campaign," vowing "unflinching solidarity" with the ranks "as they vote to accept or reject the TA." Very helpful. Other groupings in and around the DSA have called to vote "no," including Workers Strike Back, an outfit spawned by Socialist Alternative (SAlt).³ The most that the Tempest Collective,⁴ another tendency in the DSA, could do (so far) was to reprint an article by Joe Allen, a former UPS worker and author of *The Package King: A Rank and File History of UPS* (2020), lamenting that "it feels like a moment has been missed for real historic victories."⁵

Left Voice (LV, U.S. affiliate of the Trotskyist Fraction current) calls to vote "no" while holding a joint forum with Tempest. The professional tailists of LV are so intent on chasing after one and another current in this "left" wing of the capitalist Democrats that they actually called on the DSA to lead a fight for a "no" vote: "The DSA, which has been organizing thousands of people to join practice picket lines and support UPS workers, should put all their strength behind supporting the workers who are fighting against the TA and for a better contract" (*Left Voice*, 28 July)! But the DSA is hardly an opposition in the Teamsters.

For its part, Cosmonaut, which leads the Marxist Unity Group inside the DSA, has published several well-informed articles calling to defend part-time workers and make \$25 an hour a bottom-line demand, while exposing the betrayal of this centerpiece of the contract campaign by O'Brien and the TDU.⁶ But a group which is part of an organization (the DSA) that counts rail strikebreaker/Ukraine war budget supporter AOC and the host of DSA Democrat elected officials at local, state and federal levels as "comrades" *cannot* give revolutionary leadership to UPS workers. Why not? Because breaking with the Democrats and *all* capi-

³ "Vote 'No' and Escalate the Fight to Win a Strong Contract!" (28 July). SAlt is part of the International Socialist Alternative tendency.

⁴ Tempest (founded by former leaders of the defunct International Socialist Organization) was quite active among the several currents present in the DSA in the past (2019-21), but has since largely left, although some Tempest members are still in it.

⁵ "What happened to the big UPS Strike?" originally published by CounterPunch (28 July).

⁶ See "Thousands of Rail Workers Railroaded by Teamsters Bureaucracy" (11 November 2022); "The Case for a Socialist Rank-and-File Teamsters Organization" (10 June); and "The Part-Time Fight for \$25 at UPS and the Betrayal of TDU" (21 July).



Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamsters disperse cops and scabs in “Battle of Deputies Run,” 21 May 1934. They weren’t practicing. Picket lines mean don’t cross!

talist parties and politicians is fundamental to *any* serious struggle against capital.

All the groups in and around the DSA fail to (1) state clearly that overturning the IBT-UPS tentative agreement will require an all-out strike; (2) oppose TDU *on principle* for appealing to the capitalist state (Labor Department, courts, etc.) against the union; and (3) insist on opposition to the Democrats, and all the bosses’ parties. Whether they call to vote “no,” equivocate or remain silent on the contract, it is impossible to lead UPS Teamsters’ struggle forward to victory without taking a clear and emphatic position on these key questions. The duty of Marxist revolutionaries is to tell the truth to the masses, and the truth is that in order to prevail, the union must prepare its forces *politically* to take on a frontal assault by capital.

Outside the social-democratic constellation, the Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) published a full-throated endorsement of the UPS deal, declaring “UPS Teamsters’ victory shows how workers can fight and win!” (*Liberation*, 25 July). According to the PSL, “For organized labor to have real power, the most essential thing is to be prepared to strike”

– not to wage a victorious class battle but only to “be prepared” to walk out. Like the DSA Democrats, these Stalinoid reformists orient to the union bureaucracy. Then there is the WSWS, which we have dubbed the World Scab Website, because while posing as leftists it actually sides with the bosses in opposing unions.⁷ They have no business being present at any labor struggle.

The various “critical” currents active around the Teamsters struggle at UPS basically have a program of (more or less) militant trade unionism. Some talk of a “rank-and-file strategy” while others espouse “social justice unionism,” but it’s all within the capitalist framework. The Trotskyists of the Internationalist Group call instead for *class-struggle unionism*, on the basis of a program calling to overthrow the system of exploitation and oppression of the “wage slaves” of capital. We say that there can be no “fair wage” or “fair contract” under the

⁷ In the drive to unionize workers at the Amazon facility in Bessemer, Alabama in early 2021, the WSWS called to “Vote ‘No’ to the UFCW-backed union at Alabama Amazon facility!” (see our exposé “How the ‘World Scab Web Site’ Aids the Bosses,” *The Internationalist* No. 62, January-March 2021).

dictatorship of capital – it is necessary to break the chains that bind workers to the bosses. That requires that workers champion the cause of all the oppressed.

UPS had a mainly white workforce into the 1970s, but especially with the massive expansion of part-time work, it became a major employer of African American and Latino workers. UPS management has a long, dirty record of racist discrimination and harassment against black employees, going back decades and continuing today. In 2019, 19 black workers at a UPS warehouse in Maumee, Ohio, sued UPS over racist abuse, including nooses being hung at the workstation of a black worker. The union needs to mobilize to fight every instance of racist discrimination and abuse. Connected to this, fighting for the cause of part-timers is tied in with the struggle against UPS racism. So is the struggle to unionize Amazon.

Unionize Amazon with Class Struggle!

Organizing Amazon was an issue in the national Teamsters election in 2021. O’Brien and the TDU said that their strategy was to show Amazon workers the benefits of a union by fighting for “strong contracts” when the DHL and UPS contracts expired in 2022 and 2023. We said at the time: “Winning major gains from the shipping bosses won’t come easy – it will take an all-out nationwide strike” (“Unionize Amazon with Class Struggle!” *The Internationalist* No. 65, October-December 2021). Instead, Teamster tops settled for utterly insufficient contracts and refused to strike when the membership was ready. It still is, but it needs leadership with the determination and program to fight to win.

That was what was key in the Trotskyist-led Minneapolis Teamster strikes of 1934. The flying pickets, mass, militant picket lines and policy of not relying on the capitalist state were able to defeat massive repression. That won the strikes, laid the basis for the workers defense guards that defeated fascist stormtroopers and later led to the organizing of over-the-road drivers. It went together with the struggle against the imperialist war drive, which is why IBT leader Tobin and the feds joined to jail the Minneapolis Teamster and Trotskyist leaders as the U.S. prepared to enter World War II. This struggle is detailed in the book *Revolutionary Teamsters* (2013) by Bryan D. Palmer, which we highly recommend for all labor militants today.

In 1940, as WWII was underway, Trotsky wrote that in this epoch of decaying capitalism, trade unions “cannot any longer remain politically neutral.... They can no longer be reformist, because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.” Trotsky’s words are just as true today, as the capitalist world hurtles toward a third, devastating imperialist world war.

In his unfinished essay, which was on his desk as he was assassinated by a Stalinist agent, Trotsky added that the suppression of workers democracy in the unions was a function of “their drawing closely to and growing together with the state power.” This common feature of the trade unions was characteristic

of both fascist and “democratic” imperialist countries as well as in the colonies and semi-colonies. Almost as if he were denouncing in advance the latter-day union-suers of TDU, who make a mockery of union democracy by appealing to the capitalist state, the Bolshevik leader wrote:

“The primary slogan for this struggle is: complete and unconditional independence of the trade unions in relation to the capitalist state. This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy.

“The second slogan is: *trade union democracy*. This second slogan flows directly from the first and presupposes for its realization the complete freedom of the trade unions from the imperialist or colonial state.”

–L.D. Trotsky, “Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay” (August 1940)

Carrying forward this program, Class Struggle Workers – Portland (CSWP) put forward and won resolutions in 2016 to break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties to form a class-struggle workers party, and then, following the victory of xenophobic, misogynist Donald Trump, to mobilize union power to smash racist forces. The next year (2017) this was carried out as hundreds of Portland-area unionists and supporters came out to stop a fascist provocation. Today, as in past years, the CSWP has won the support of unions to defend immigrants and the rights of transgender people against reactionary attacks. Not narrow trade-unionism but *intransigent class struggle in defense of all the oppressed is what it will take to defeat UPS*.

It also key to unionizing Amazon. This will not be achieved on a warehouse-by-warehouse basis, handing in cards to the federal government so that the National Labor Relations Board can hold a representation election. This momentous struggle, which will transform the industry and shake the country, will be done the way the industrial unions were built in the 1930s: through a massive labor revolt. To succeed, such a struggle must champion the cause of black workers, notably in the anti-union bastions of the South, and of immigrant workers, including in the vast network of warehouse and transportation hubs in the Inland Empire in southern California.

The struggle to organize the unorganized – and win real victories for the unions – means class war against capitalism. That requires leadership prepared to take on and defeat the bosses, their parties and their government. **Vote no on the TA at UPS! Strike for 25, and air conditioning now! Organize Amazon with class struggle!** ■

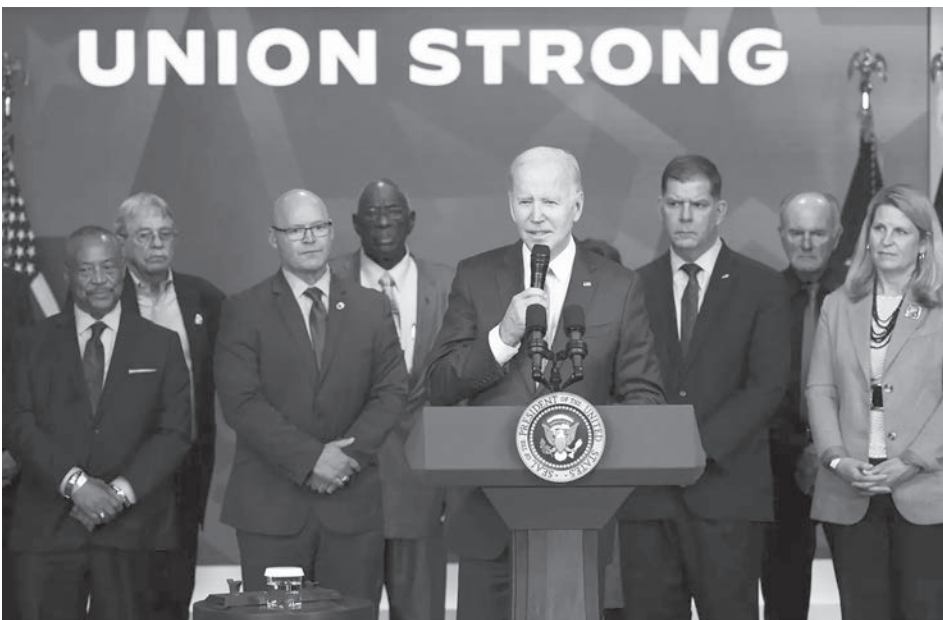
For a Class-Struggle Workers Party

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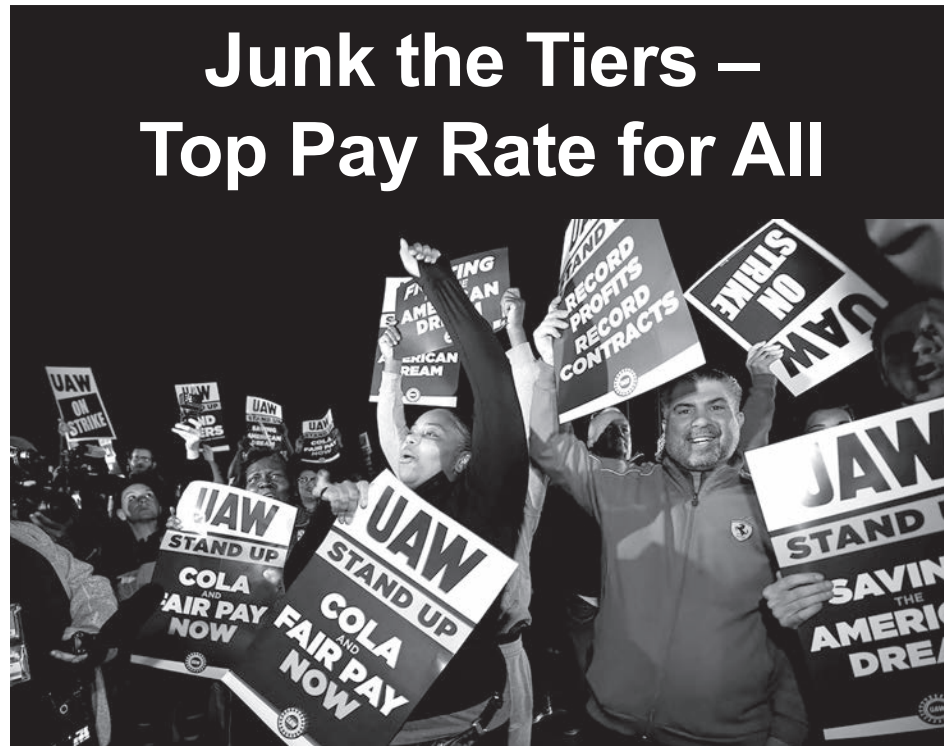


One week after Democrats in the White House and Congress passed strikebreaking legislation imposing no-sick-days contract on railroad workers (three-quarters of them Teamsters) who had voted against it, President Joe Biden announced \$36-billion rescue of Central States Pension Fund. Flanking him are Teamster general president Sean O'Brien (to his left) and AFL-CIO president Liz Shuler (right).

**Restore Full Pensions and Health Coverage!
For Real COLA, Based on Union Figures!
Break with the Bosses' Parties – For a Class-Struggle Workers Party!**

For an All-Out Auto Strike to Shut Down the Big 3

UPDATE: As we go to press (October 31), the UAW has announced tentative agreements with the Big 3 auto companies. While the extremely limited strike, affecting a small number of plants, did result in some gains, the lowest-paid workers, now receiving as little as \$16 an hour or less, will still end up earning poverty pay. The overall wage increase barely makes up for losses due to inflation, and at the end of the five-year contract, top pay (\$40) would still be less in today's dollars than UAW auto workers were making in 2007, when the two-tier wage system was introduced. The tiers will remain, and while the number of years of progression to full pay has been reduced, workers hired since 2007 will still not have a defined-benefits pension. UAW workers should vote "no" on this deal, and prepare for the all-out strike against all the Big 3 that it will take to actually end the tiers.



Striking United Auto Workers picket at Ford assembly plant in Wayne, Michigan, shortly after midnight Friday, September 15.

SEPTEMBER 14 – The working people who make this country run are hurting, bad, while the exploiters who live off our labor are making out like bandits. A showdown with the “Big Three” auto companies offers a chance to launch an offensive of militant class struggle to undo decades of union defeats that have led to the present obscene level of inequality, unparalleled since the late 1920s. But to wage and win such an offensive requires a program and leadership prepared to take on the bosses, their parties (Democrat and Republican) and their government.

Ever since the COVID pandemic, U.S. corporations have been raking in eye-

popping profits as household incomes are slashed. Last year, the drop in real wages (deducting for inflation) was the largest since the 2007-09 economic crisis. It was the third year in a row that workers' pay has fallen. This stark fact has driven demands for sharply higher wages in major union contracts. The big business press worried about – and many workers hoped for – a “summer of strikes.” It didn't happen. Why not? A sellout labor bureaucracy that wants to play ball with the bosses.

The Hollywood writers and actors unions walked out, and are still out after months on the picket lines. But the Teamsters caved, settling with UPS for a contract that left part-time workers still toiling for poverty pay. ILWU West Coast dock workers, meanwhile, after working without a contract for a year, agreed to a deal that let maritime bosses introduce job-killing technology in exchange for union jurisdiction on the docks. Now a strike by the United Auto Workers (UAW) is posed as the contracts with the Big Three auto makers expire at midnight.

This is a tremendous opportunity for labor to strike back at the head-on assault on the living standards of working people throughout the country. But instead of calling for an all-out strike shutting down all three of the auto giants, the UAW leadership, headed by union president Shawn Fain, is calling for a token “strike” at just three (!) plants of different companies to

pressure the employers. Instead of mobilizing the membership for a knock-down, drag-out battle with the bosses, the union tops are using pin-pricks to needle them. **This “strategy” can never win.**

We've said it many times, and it's still true: **if you play by the bosses' rules, you're sure to lose – labor's gotta play hardball to win.**

When the union demanded a 40% pay hike over four years, and then reduced it to 30%, Ford, GM and Stellantis (Chrysler) upped their insulting “offers” to 20, 18 and 17.5% respectively – 5% or less per year – which would barely cover losses to *past* inflation. Their proposals for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA escalator) are a joke, providing zero wage protection for future price increases. Most importantly, all three companies *rejected outright* the UAW's call to **end tiers**: for top pay rate after 90 days on the job, restoring full pensions and retiree health care.

For years, UAW workers have been demanding an end to the two-tier system in which workers hired after 2007 (the large majority) get starting pay of only \$18 an hour, taking eight years to reach the top rate of \$32.32/hour, which is itself outrageously low, not nearly enough for a family. “Temporary” workers start at \$16 an hour (or less, at Chrysler) for at least two years. This system, key to the Big 3's profits (up 65% since 2019), was agreed to by the super-corrupt Administration Caucus that ran the union since the late 1940s, almost three-quarters of a century.

The new leadership of the UAW headed by Shawn Fain is formally calling to end the tiers, and is making a show of openness about negotiations. But it is not mobilizing the ranks for the hard fight it will take to

get rid of multi-tier wages that are key to the auto giants' profitability, and a Power-Point presentation in a livestream event or on Facebook is not democratic control by the ranks over bargaining. Bottom line: you won't get rid of tiers by playing nice with the bosses. So don't be surprised when the UAW tops jettison this key demand as bargaining “gets serious.”

What it will take to defeat the concerted action of the mega-corporations, and the cops, courts and capitalist politicians who do their bidding, is a mobilization of the union ranks in an all-out strike shutting down all the unionized auto plants across the country. The call to **end the tier system** must be made a non-negotiable demand, and to counter a bureaucratic sellout, auto workers should fight for an **elected UAW strike committee**, with hundreds of delegates representing every plant and shop, who can be recalled at any time by the members. As we wrote in the 2019 strike:

“key to any real victory is to insist that no one goes back until all go back equal: junk the tier system, make ‘temporary’ workers full-time, equal pay for equal work, now!”

–“For a Big 3 Nationwide Auto Strike!”
The Internationalist, September 2019

Forge a Class-Struggle Leadership!

To win against the giant auto/truck corporations will require a struggle in which the almost 150,000 UAW auto workers, with a class-struggle leadership, connect this fight with that of all the oppressed sectors in this rotting capitalist system, and with our sisters and brothers internationally. Back when Detroit was Motor City, it was a powerhouse of the U.S. economy and a center of black culture. But after the 1967 upheaval over racist police repression and the failure of the civil rights movement to alter conditions in the northern ghettos, and the brutal suppression and occupation of black Detroit by the National Guard, the city was devastated.

The bureaucracies that have blocked the power of the organized working class are not simply a bunch of corrupt sellouts, although there are plenty of those. It is a whole social layer, sitting atop the unions while seeking to “mediate” between labor and capital by keeping the workers down. This layer was installed in the late 1940s, as the Democrats spearheaded a “red purge” that kicked out the socialists and communists who had built the industrial unions in the class battles of the '30s.

During and after the pandemic, the union tops blocked workers' struggle with “no-strike” contract clauses at a time when they could have forced through their demands as the bosses were desperate to keep the supply chain going. The *Wall Street Journal* (12 September) reported: “Wages and benefits



On the picket line at Wayne, Michigan Ford assembly plant, September 15.

for nonunion workers were up 15.8% from the end of 2019 through June, compared with a 12.2% gain for unionized workers, according to the Labor Department.” Those figures are a stark condemnation of the *sabotage* of the unions by the labor bureaucracy.

Recently, as discontent was boiling in the rank-and-file, old-line bureaucrats have been replaced by newer leaders who have been posturing as militants. This was the case of Sean O’Brien in the Teamsters, who once was a vice president in the regime of James Hoffa Jr., and now of Shawn Fain in the Auto Workers. But as shown by O’Brien’s sellout of part-time UPS workers, who are the majority of union members there, installing new tough-talking leaders does not change the role of the bureaucracy in chaining workers to the bosses.

Fain was elected on the slate of Unite All Workers for Democracy (UAWD), which had campaigned for direct election of UAW officers (president and executive board). In this, they were the continuation of the New Directions caucus in the 1980s and Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) which backed O’Brien. Both of these “union reform” groups betrayed workers by running to the bosses’ courts and government to oust the entrenched bureaucracy. Class-struggle unionists condemned this appeal to the class enemy: Labor must clean its own house.

In the case of the UAW, a federal government investigation led to the convictions of more than a dozen union officials, including two former presidents, on charges of embezzlement, kickbacks and collusion as they negotiated sweetheart deals with the Big 3 bosses. This led to a December 2020 consent decree which allowed a direct vote for top UAW officials. The UAWD supported that government control of the union, and even went to court to demand a greater say in selecting the federal monitor who now oversees UAW finances and internal affairs.

Another outfit which has sued the union in the capitalist courts is the WSWS, which we have dubbed the World Scab Web Site, as these fake-leftists have literally sided with the bosses in opposing union recognition in votes supervised by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).¹ Although these scabs claim that the UAW is simply “a subdivision of the companies,” they ran a candidate, one Will Lehman, for union president in 2022. The WSWS also went to federal court to demand that the government further rewrite the union constitution, election rules and more.

Labor officials installed under the auspices of the capitalist government will never wage the hard-knuckle class struggle needed to defeat the auto bosses. Moreover, the UAW under Fain is appealing to the Democratic Party for support – the same strike-breaking government party that banned a rail workers walkout last December. Now Biden booster Bernie Sanders is to be the featured speaker at a Sept. 15 union rally.

As for the Republican Donald Trump, he too is an enemy of the workers. The former president when he was in office bragged about how he got General Motors to sell a Lordstown, Ohio plant that it was shutting down to a non-union start-up that would build electric trucks. But the company hardly produced any vehicles, and is now filing for bankruptcy. While Trump works to turn

working people against each other using racism, and to set American workers against their sisters and brothers in other countries, it is crucial that striking auto workers in the U.S. appeal for international solidarity action from Mexican workers at Big 3 plants located south of the border.

The UAW is facing enormous challenges, including the struggle to organize non-union plants in the South. A victorious strike against GM, Ford and Stellantis/Chrysler that abolishes the tier system and wins a major pay raise will go a long way to winning that battle. The fight for auto workers’ livelihoods, to escape from the low-wage misery they endure under decaying capitalism, requires forging a class-struggle leadership to oust the bureaucrats, break with the Democrats and all capitalist parties and politicians, and build a workers party, fighting for a workers government and international socialist revolution. ■

German Far Left...

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In the United States, the Internationalist Group, the section of our League for the Fourth International, played an important role in initiating and carrying out the May Day 2008 dockworkers strike against the imperialist wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Early in the history of the Communist International, the French Communist Party (PCF) organized a campaign in defense of the Berber uprising led by Abd el-Krim in the Rif region of the French colony of Morocco, which led to a general strike in France against the war on 12 October 1925 (with up to 1,000 PCF members and militant workers arrested). Later, in 1949 and 1950, dockworkers in Marseilles refused to load munitions for French forces waging an imperialist war in Vietnam. And earlier still, in January 1918, thousands of industrial workers in Kiel and up to 400,000 metal workers in Berlin went on strike against German participation in WWI. In those strikes, workers councils were elected in Germany for the first time, which later played an important role in the German November Revolution of 1918.

So such workers actions have been led by leftists of various tendencies, though they are not in themselves a panacea. The Revolutionary Shop Stewards, mainly supporters of the USPD (Independent Social Democratic Party), who in 1918 led the German workers councils, subsequently played a contradictory role in the development of the revolution, not least in the bloodily suppressed “Spartacus Uprising” in January 1919. But without those prior class mobilizations, there would have been no revolutionary events, whose outcome depended on forging an effective revolutionary communist leadership.

After the recent split, the Kommunistische Organisation (ZL) is at a crossroads. Its hesitation to formulate a position on the Ukraine war is indicative of the political confusion that has gripped almost the entire left over the past year and a half, but whose roots lie much deeper. The traditional Stalinist-reformist recipe for a nationalist popular-front “peace movement” has manifestly failed, while the pseudo-Marxist-Leninists (as well as not a few pseudo-Trotskyists) openly turn Lenin’s teaching on imperialism on its head in refusing to stand on the side of the targets of the U.S./NATO imperialist war. Their cynical distortions are proof that

their revisionism is a deliberate choice in favor of the real imperialists.

The various “pseudos” all lead to a dead end. For those who seek to play a revolutionary role in the coming class battles, addressing the question of Stalinism vs. Trotskyism is essential. *Return to the road of Red October; the road of Lenin and Trotsky, for international socialist revolution!* ■

ICL-LFI...

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chain of willful fabrications, threatened to disaffiliate the Mexican section if it did not vote for statements the members knew to be false, publicly defamed our comrades, and much more, as we laid out at the time (beginning with *From a Drift Toward Abstentionism to Desertion from the Class Struggle*). For going on 30 years, the ICL sought to ignore and silence the facts. Those serious about revolutionary politics have a right to expect concrete and specific answers, after decades of snow jobs and smears from the ICL.

Your 11 October response to us states that the ICL’s investigation does include the 1996 “trials” (sic) as well as “the claims you have made about the actions of our tendency in Brazil.” This was not just “claims,” but facts laid out in detail at the time in materials collected in the dossier *Responses to ICL Smear Campaign Against Brazilian Trotskyists* as well as *From a Drift...*

We also asked about the 1997 campaign against oppositionists in the ICL’s French section, who after their expulsion joined in founding the League for the Fourth International.¹⁵ You write that this “was unquestionably a despicable fight” – but that the ICL is “not currently reviewing” it. Why is that? Nor, to our knowledge, has the ICL made any public accounting regarding this blatantly chauvinist and colonialist campaign whose proclaimed goal was to “humiliate” these North African comrades and “demoralize” them, for opposing the disgraceful line the ICL put forward regarding both Algeria and France.

Your response to our 27 September letter notes that it “raises several substantial political differences” with the ICL’s current line and work, but does not seek to respond to them all. So we will make brief comments on some of what you do address.

No, the difference between united-front actions and a political bloc is not “a false distinction.” As explained in the fundamental Spartacist pamphlet *On the United Front* (1976): “In contrast to a united front, a bloc is an open-ended agreement to collaborate for broadly defined aims” – which describes rather well the perspective you laid out, for which, as we noted, there is no principled programmatic basis. A united front, however, is a joint action for concrete, limited objectives, and as noted in our letter we have initiated many such actions, inviting a range of tendencies, including the ICL.

You reject our statement that the ICL is seeking to turn Trotsky’s perspective of permanent revolution into a stagist program, and cite a phrase from the current issue of *Spartacist* as supposed evidence to the contrary. With bourgeois nationalism as the driving force for a group (as is the case with the present-day ICL) that still – for now – claims to be Trotskyist, an accurate presentation of permanent revolution

can only be an impediment. For left groups undertaking wholesale revisionism, it is standard operating procedure to include a few “orthodox”-sounding phrases.

Turning permanent revolution into a stagist program is what it means to embrace, as you do, the “anti-imperialist united front,” which is the long-standing pretext for such a program and “theoretical” justification for political blocs with bourgeois-nationalist forces. That is also what it means to identify, as *Spartacist* now does, Trotsky’s permanent revolution with Lenin’s pre-1917 formula of “democratic dictatorship” of the proletariat and peasantry, and with the formulation that Marx put forward in 1850. When Lenin stood on that formula, he explicitly stated that it meant a “democratic, not a socialist” regime (*Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* [1905]); in April 1917, against those who sought to cling to that slogan, he wrote that “things have worked out differently,” and called instead for “all power to the soviets of workers deputies” (*Letters on Tactics* [1917]). With regard to the formulation by Marx decades before the imperialist era, Trotsky noted: “Marx at that time expected the independent stage of the democratic revolution in Germany.... That, however, is just what did not happen” (*The Permanent Revolution* [1930]).

These kinds of revelations now proclaimed by *Spartacist* have been made many times in the past by erstwhile Trotskyist tendencies seeking theoretical cover for their rightward motion. They are part of a package including the idea that democratic demands *rather than* class struggle are the “fundamental lever for socialist revolution.” From China 1927 to Indonesia 1965, Chile 1973 to the Philippines now – and so many other countries – the real-world consequences of a stagist program, tying the proletariat to the “democratic”/“anti-imperialist” bourgeoisie, have been fatal.

Your letter states that we have presented various of the ICL’s positions as being self-evidently opportunist. Yes, that would indeed seem self-evident when faced with statements like that of the SL/U.S. (quoted in our 27 September letter) that the “real battle” is “workers vs. the Establishment” (a standard term that liberals use instead of class). This *openly* contradicts the ABCs of Marxism – based on the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie – and blatantly echoes bourgeois populism of both “left” and right. Then there’s the SL’s appeal to “unite the broadest possible forces” in a pressure campaign aimed at “any politician in office that is really on the side of black people” which is straight out of the handbook of popular frontism. Etcetera.

Lastly, we are glad that you have accepted our challenge to a debate. Given current events, December 9 would not be practical for us; we propose January 13 instead. We want to have the standard debate format (with presentations, discussion and summaries, extending to two rounds if needed) rather than diluting it into a day-long quasi-conference. We have no objection to the title you propose, “The Fight for the Fourth International Today,” and, as you state, details such as venue, chair, etc., can and should be arranged soon.

Communist greetings,

Jan Norden
for the Executive Committee of the
League for the Fourth International

¹ See “How the ‘World Scab Web Site’ Aids the Bosses,” *The Internationalist*, January 2021.

¹⁵ See *The Internationalist* No. 5, April-May 1998.

Esteban Volkov...

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Volkov had returned home from school when he saw Trotsky bleeding to death but still standing defiantly in the arms of his bodyguards and his wife, Natalia Sedova.

"Keep the boy away. He shouldn't see this!" he recalled his grandfather shouting.

The assailant, Spanish-born Stalinist Ramón Mercader, had found his way into the home under a pretense of being an admirer, then attacked Trotsky with a mountaineering ice-axe he had hidden in his coat.

Mr. Volkov saw his grandfather's bloodied body taken away on a stretcher. Trotsky, who with Lenin had helped overthrow the Russian Empire during the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, died of his wounds the following day at age 60.

Mercader was convicted and spent almost 20 years in a Mexican jail before moving to the Soviet Union, where he received a hero's welcome. A friend of Cuban leader Fidel Castro, he died of lung cancer in Havana in 1978.

After the assassination, Trotsky's second wife, Natalia, looked after Mr. Volkov throughout his teenage years. At the National Autonomous University of Mexico, he received a degree in chemical engineering. He got a job as a chemical engineer at the Mexican pharmaceutical company Syntex and, through his work in the synthesis of steroid hormones, was involved in the development of the contraceptive pill.

He was married to Palmira Fernandez from 1953 until her death in 1997. In addition to Nora, who is director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse in Bethesda, Md., survivors include three other daughters, Veronica, Patricia and Natalia; five grandchildren; and two grandchildren.

Mr. Volkov spent much of his life knowing little of the fate of his half sister, Aleksandra, until he received a call in the late-1980s from a French historian, Pierre Broué, telling him she was alive in Moscow but dying of cancer. Amid Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, or openness, Mr. Volkov was granted permission in 1988 to visit with Aleksandra.

"Aleksandra was always distressed that it was I who our mother took with her," Mr. Volkov told the publication *Workers Vanguard* at the time. "It was Broué, who was first to find out why. Stalin had specified in the exit papers that she could only take her youngest child." (Aleksandra also spent years in a labor camp in Kazakhstan, then a Soviet republic, as part of a roundup of people related to "enemies of the people." She was freed after Stalin's death in 1953.)

Mr. Volkov described his reunion with Aleksandra as bittersweet. They could barely communicate because he had forgotten his Russian, and she spoke no Spanish, English or French. Nevertheless, he said at a news conference, "it was a little like people from a shipwreck who meet safe and sound on the beach."

Mr. Volkov also used the visit to press the Soviet state to clear the name of his vilified grandfather, whose very mention was taboo for decades. (He was never officially rehabilitated.)

Nora Volkow remembered her father as "an extraordinary man who infected me with his passion for science, justice and the truth, and who inspired me with his resilience. He liked nature, mountains, the ocean and loved music, with Shostakovich and Stravinsky his favorites. He never stopped walking and even died while walking, outside his nursing home." ■

The Triumph of the Fourth International: The Duty and Task That Is Still to be Fulfilled

Speech by Esteban Volkov (Sieva) on the 69th anniversary of the Assassination of Leon Trotsky

We publish below the words of Esteban Volkov (Sieva), the grandson of Leon Trotsky, on 20 August 2009, the anniversary of the death of the co-leader, together with Vladimir Lenin, of the October Revolution of 1917. His speech was given in front of the funeral monument designed by the Mexican muralist Juan O'Gorman in the garden of the Museo Casa de León Trotsky in Coyoacán, Mexico. This was where the great internationalist revolutionary lived the last years of his exile, before being assassinated by a Stalinist agent in August 1940. Among those who attended the ceremony were a dozen comrades of the League for the Fourth International. A spokeswoman for the Grupo Internacionalista, the Mexican section of the LFI, gave some brief remarks and at the end The Internationale was sung in Spanish, English, French and Russian.

On August 20th, it will be 69 years since the day when on a hot summer afternoon, returning from school after a long walk to our house at Viena 19, in Coyoacán, I was able to see alive, for the last time, my grandfather, Lev Davidovitch, better known as Leon Trotsky.

It still seems to me as if it was yesterday, when on that afternoon, through a half-opened door of the library, I saw my grandfather, mortally wounded, lying on the kitchen floor with his head bloodied, and at his side his inseparable companion Natalia, who was applying ice to the head wound, attempting to stop the hemorrhaging. Also at his side, if I remember correctly, were the American comrades, Charlie Cornell and Joe Hansen.

Upon hearing my steps in the room next door, motioning in that direction, he said, "Keep Sieva away, he must not see this." Shortly before, he had also admonished the comrades upon hearing the groans and cries of Stalin's agent coming from his office where he was being beaten by one of the comrades: "Don't kill him, he must talk," were his words.

By the time he was in the hospital, in his last conscious moment, before going into surgery, he gave his last message to Joe Hansen: "I am sure of the triumph of the Fourth International. Forward!"

Stalin, the bloody tyrant of the Kremlin, supreme leader of the counterrevolution, had finally managed to assassinate one of the most noteworthy revolutionaries which humanity has produced, who together with Lenin played a decisive role in the preparation, execution and triumph of the first socialist revolution on the planet.

The assassination of Trotsky was the culmination of the extermination of Lenin's comrades in struggle, and of the great majority of the generation which made possible the victory of October. These were the methods that Stalin used to maintain his usurping and illegitimate

bureaucratic regime.

Scarcely three months earlier, in the early morning of May 24, we had suffered a first, failed attempt on the life of Leon Trotsky in the big house in Coyoacán. On that occasion the painter Alfaro Siqueiros together with 20 or so Stalinist fanatics had stormed the house at Viena 19, preventing the comrade guards from leaving their quarters, raking it with intense fire while pouring machine-gun fire into the bedroom of my grandparents from three different directions, using Thompson sub-machine guns. Quick thinking by Natalia, who immediately pushed grandfather out of the bed and kept him in a corner of the dark bedroom, was what saved both of their lives. At the time I slept in the neighboring bedroom, and was grazed by a bullet on the big toe of my right foot.

Firebombs thrown into my bedroom, in order to burn the cabinets and destroy archives were the unmistakable calling card of Stalin, since only he could have been interested in their destruction.

It is difficult to describe on this occasion, how filled with joy and euphoria grandfather was at having emerged alive from this first failed attempt at assassination. Only the discovery of the absence of the guard on duty, Sheldon Hart, cast a shadow over the atmosphere.

But Lev Davidovitch knew that the break would be short and that his days were numbered. Every day when he got up he said, "Natasha, they have given us one more day of life."

The question was, where would the next attempt come from? So much so that when he suffered the fatal attack, covered with blood, his glasses broken, standing in the door frame, when Natalia rushed up to him, he only exclaimed: "Jackson!" and pointed to the assassin who was pinned down by the guards, as if to say, "That's where what we were expecting came from!"

My reuniting with grandfather was in Mexico, in August 1939, a year before his assassination. I was 13 years old at the time, and arrived from France with the Rosmers, old friends of my grandparents.

My memories of Lev Davidovitch during this last chapter, this last year of his existence, are very sharp and clear. It is difficult for me to describe with words, to impart the image of the living being, of the revolutionary with the magnitude and the brilliance of Leon Trotsky.

He was a human being of exceptional intelligence, and of total, absolute commitment to the struggle for socialism. His whole personality was shaped by the framework of this struggle. He was generous, supportive, patiently explaining and politically educating the comrades, with a great sense of humor, creating a jovial and warm atmosphere around him.

He was a tireless worker, not wasting a minute of his existence, radiating vitality and optimism. He had great admiration for human labor, where he did not permit privileges or distinctions. The word fear

did not exist in his vocabulary.

What most impressed me about his person was his absolute certainty, his immovable confidence in the coming of socialism in the future of humanity.

A certainty that he acquired through his experiences of life, of having participated as a key personage and privileged observer in one of the most notable and astounding events in the history of humanity, the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, which in its beginning laid the basis for genuine socialism, and which later due to the adverse historical circumstances of the time degenerated under the blows of a counterrevolution. At least it demonstrated once and for all that socialism is a tangible and achievable reality.

Those of us who do not accept that there is eternal life, do believe that in the immortality of ideas.

Leon Trotsky had such an active and prolific mind in analyzing, elaborating theses and political slogans, that he transcribed and bequeathed to us an immense and inexhaustible arsenal of Marxist ideology and theory, the fruit of more than 40 years of revolutionary struggle, such that I venture to say that Leon Trotsky is still with us. His immense Marxist legacy enables us to analyze and understand all the past and present historical happenings, and to plan the future.

In the face of the increasingly voracious and brutal capitalist regime of today, in speaking of the socialist revolution, the words of Leon Trotsky come to mind: "Never was there a greater task on earth. The Party demands everything of us, totally and completely. In exchange, it gives us the immense satisfaction of participating in building a better future and carrying on our backs a particle of humanity's greatest dream, and that our life will not have been lived in vain."

Leon Trotsky's last message to Joe Hansen was: "I am sure of the triumph of the Fourth International. Forward!"

This has not yet been accomplished. This is the duty and it is also the task to be carried out by the comrades who fight with the example and the ideas of the great revolutionary Leon Trotsky.

Let us remember his words:

"My faith in the socialist future of mankind is not less ardent, indeed it is firmer today, than it was in the days of my youth.

"Natasha has just come up to the window from the courtyard and opened it wider so that the air may enter more freely into my room. I can see the bright green strip of grass beneath the wall, and the clear blue sky above the wall, and sunlight everywhere. Life is beautiful. Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full."

Thank you.

Esteban Volkov

21 August 2009

Revolutionary Trotskyism on the Imperialist War Drive Against Russia and China

By Jan Norden

We print below a translation of the presentation and summary by Jan Norden, speaking on behalf of the League for the Fourth International, at the thematic symposium on “Positions on the War in Ukraine” at the Second Leon Trotsky Conference. Transmitted online on August 21-25, the conference was organized as a follow-up to the Trotsky conference held in Havana, Cuba, in May 2019.¹ The text of the presentation has been edited for publication and slightly expanded to include some excerpts that were omitted for the sake of brevity. Recordings of the round table discussions and thematic symposiums of the Conference are available on the site: <https://www.youtube.com/@EncontroTrotsky>.

The war over Ukraine is a historical event of the first order, which has shaped the course of political, economic and world events during the last year and a half. The constant escalation of military intervention by the United States and NATO imperialists has not only prolonged and intensified the war, but points directly toward a thermonuclear World War III. In the current long-awaited “Ukrainian counteroffensive,” the Kiev leadership insists on launching suicide attacks against well-entrenched Russian forces, with a toll of about a thousand Ukrainian soldiers killed daily during the last few weeks. But what else can one expect from military leaders who fired on their own supporters in the Maidan Square massacre [that touched off the Kiev coup] in 2014,² which in fact started this war.

The war in Eastern Europe is also a major factor in the class struggle in many imperialist countries in the West. The capitalist rulers are lashing out against historic gains of the workers, calling for “sacrifice” while stoking their war machines with billions of euros. This is the case in France, where we have written that the struggle of workers to defend their pension rights against the attack by the self-styled “Ju-

¹ See “The Havana Trotsky Conference: Notes of a Participant,” *The Internationalist* No. 57, September-October 2019, and “Presentations and Comments at the Trotsky Conference in Havana,” *internationalist.org*, October 2019.

² See “Question Answered: Who Was Behind the 2014 Maidan Massacre?” *The Internationalist* No. 66, January-April 2022.



“Bradley Square,” on the Zaporozhye front, on Day 1 of the much-heralded Ukrainian counteroffensive, June 8: fields littered with destroyed Leopard tanks and U.S. Bradley armored personnel carriers. In first two weeks, Kiev regime lost up to one-third of all the armor the U.S. sent it. So Ukrainian commanders instead sent soldiers without armor, with over 1,000 dead per day.

pterian” president Emmanuel Macron cannot be separated from the struggle for workers action against the imperialist war.

The war in Ukraine is also being used to attack the freedoms of speech and assembly with police-state measures. In Germany, any explicit siding with Russia (or even denying the myth of a “holocaust” in Ukraine in 1932-1933!)³ has been out-

³ In 1932-33, there was a famine in which millions of people died in Ukraine and elsewhere in the Soviet Union, touched off by Stalin’s brutal campaign of forced collectivization of agriculture and intensified by a drought across the grain-producing regions of the southern steppes of the USSR. Ukrainian nationalists and anti-communists have falsely claimed that this was a *holodomor* or campaign for death by starvation, and a “holocaust.” There is no doubt that Stalin’s disastrous policies were a major factor in causing this calamity, due to his abrupt about-turn after years of denouncing the call by Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition for gradual, voluntary collectivization. The charge of deliberate genocide against the Ukrainian people, however, was promoted by rightist nationalists (many harking back to those who collaborated with Hitler in WWII) who sought cover behind claims (accompanied by inflated death tolls) that “the Soviets were worse than the Nazis,” and is belied by the fact that millions more (4 million by some counts) died elsewhere in the Russian heartland and Kazakhstan as well.

lawed, while the police search protestors for Russian and Soviet flags, in addition to the Palestinian and Kurdish ones they had already banned some time ago. In the European Union, the Russian media outlets Sputnik and RT are banned. And everywhere in the imperialist countries, the docile bourgeois press inundates the population with war propaganda and lies fabricated by the fascist media team in Kiev.⁴

However, tight control of the mass media by the imperialist warmongers does not ensure their success in keeping everything quiet on the “home front.” In Italy, the government led by fascist prime minister Giorgia Meloni feels a close affinity with Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky, a puppet of the fascists and imperialists, and deluges him with war materiel, while keeping ships packed with immigrants at sea in the Mediterranean, refusing to let them dock. But in Genova, Italy, on February 25, the first anniversary of the outbreak of war, dockworkers and 10,000 demonstrators shut down the waterfront under the slogan, “Port Open to Refugees, Port Closed to Arms,” and expressly denouncing “NATO’s war.”⁵

As always, imperialist war puts into

⁴ Ukraine has been widely praised in the Western media for “winning the information/propaganda war.” This has involved tightly controlling the flow of information about the battlefield, as well as creating heroic images and atrocity stories which have been fed to, and picked up by, the imperialist mainstream media. Thus, while the Russian front is awash with often-critical military bloggers, each with their own Telegram channel, Western journalists are seldom allowed close to the front, and are dependent on hand-outs from military spokespeople in Kiev for their “news.” Much of this “narrative control” has been coordinated through the Office of the Presidency led by longtime Zelensky aide and movie producer Andriy Yermak, as well as the Ukraine National Security and Defense Council’s Center for Countering Disinformation. And it is tightly coordinated with the fascists of the Azov Brigade, which has assiduously cultivated Western media, from the *New York Times* to internet outlets like *Vice*, going back to 2014.

⁵ See “Italy: Workers Action Key to Defeating Imperialist War Drive Against Russia, China,” *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, 27 June 2023.

question the program and actions of those who profess to be revolutionaries. In the current case, the war over Ukraine has caused enormous confusion and turmoil among the left, particularly among ostensible Trotskyists, but also among the castaways of Stalinism’s shipwreck. It is scandalous and disgusting that some of the major currents claiming to be Trotskyist have aligned themselves directly with the U.S. imperialists and the imperialist military alliance (NATO) they lead. The most shameful are followers of the late pseudo-Trotskyists Ernest Mandel and Nahuel Moreno.

The former Mandelite Unified Secretariat (now Executive Bureau), which claims to be the Fourth International, even came out for a supposed “democratic” right of Ukraine to join NATO, and demands “delivery of arms upon the request of the Ukrainian people.”⁶ Since these arms would necessarily come from the imperialist governments, the cynical claim of the U.Sec/EB to be for the “dissolution of NATO” is nothing but a fig leaf to hide their blatant betrayal of Leninist and Trotskyist principles. Likewise, they call for the “withdrawal of Russian armed forces from all Ukrainian territory,” including Crimea and the Donbass. This is the same as what the imperialists demand.

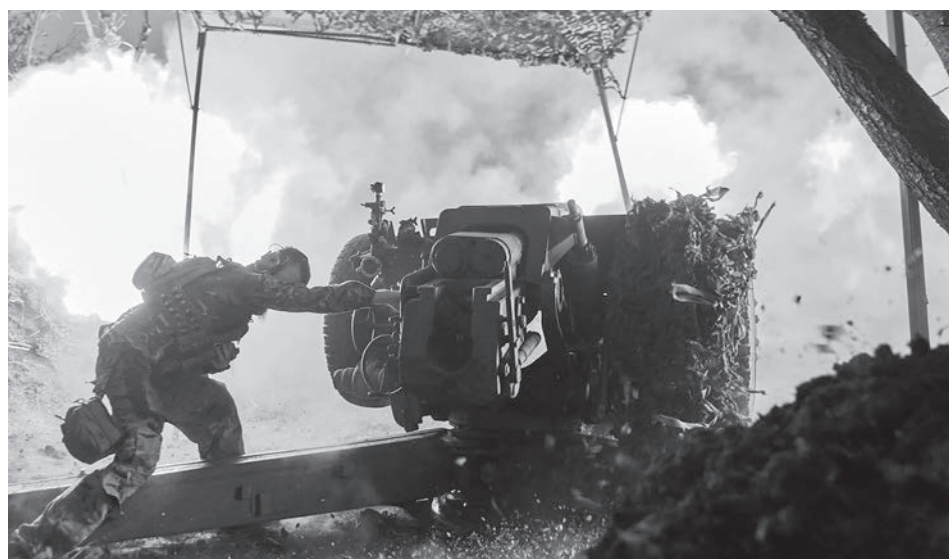
For its part, the Morenoite International Workers League - Fourth International (LIT), whose biggest member is the Brazilian PSTU (Unified Socialist Workers Party), plays the same game as the Mandelites, saying it opposes “any direct intervention by NATO” while in the same sentence it demands the “supply of heavy weapons and military technology to Ukraine so that it can defeat the invasion,” weapons and technology that would necessarily come from NATO governments.⁷ These tendencies (and the other satellites in the Morenoite orbit have almost identical positions) are nothing more than *sputniki*, that is, fellow travelers, of imperialism. With these anti-Trotskyists, there is really nothing or very little to discuss. They have chosen their side, they position themselves on the other side of the class line, betraying the proletarian cause to join the imperialist offensive.

And it’s not the first time. On the anti-China riots in Hong Kong in 2019; on the protests in Cuba on 11 July 2021, stoked by the *gusanos* (counterrevolutionary exiles) and agents on the payroll of U.S. imperialism; on the endless war in Syria, where they support Islamist gangs financed, equipped and advised by Washington; in Libya in 2011, in Venezuela and elsewhere, the Morenoites have almost instinctively lined up with imperialism. Their stance on the Ukrainian war reflects their decades-old Stalinophobia, now converted into Russophobia.

As opposed to the proletarian and revolutionary policy of Trotsky, who defended the Soviet Union against imperialism and condemned Stalinism (the betrayer of the Bolshevik Revolution) precisely for undermining this defense, Moreno’s heirs hailed the counter-coup of Yeltsin and U.S. president Bush in August 1991 which un-

⁶ “Statement of the Executive Bureau of the Fourth International,” 1 March 2022.

⁷ “Lessons from a year of war in Ukraine,” LIT-CI, 20 February 2023.



U.S.-supplied D-777 howitzer being fired near Bakhmut (Artemovsk). Revolutionaries must fight to defeat the U.S./NATO imperialist war against Russia.



Internationalist contingent at New York City May Day 2023 march called to defeat the U.S./NATO war drive, defend Russia and China against war-crazed U.S. rulers.

leashed the capitalist counterrevolution that destroyed the USSR and the Soviet-bloc bureaucratically deformed workers states of Eastern Europe. The Mandelites and almost all the pseudo-Trotskyist currents also sided with Yeltsin, with this or that nuance, all in the name of (bourgeois) “democracy.”

The genuine Trotskyists, on the other hand, represented at the time by the Spartacist tendency, the International Communist League, fought to the end to defeat the counterrevolution. We intervened with all we had in East Germany, the DDR (German Democratic Republic), in 1989-90 against the capitalist reunification of Germany, and then in the USSR itself. We raised there the banner of a proletarian political revolution, for establishing soviet democracy with the leadership of a genuine communist party fighting for international socialist revolution to block the way of the looming counterrevolution. The League for the Fourth International, the LFI, represents today the political continuity of that struggle for revolutionary Trotskyism.

In the current war over Ukraine, we of the LFI fight to defeat the proxy war of the U.S. and NATO and their fascist-infested puppet government of Ukraine. We call for the military defense of Russia, a regional capitalist power, and China, the largest deformed workers state in the world, through international workers mobilization against this united onslaught by all the imperialists. In making this call we do not give one iota of political support to the Great-Russian nationalist government infused with Vladimir Putin’s imperial dreams. On the contrary, we call for the overthrow of the governments in Kiev and Moscow by workers revolution, uniting Ukrainian and Russian workers against their respective capitalist rulers.⁸

Along similar lines, we defended Iraq against the 2003 U.S. invasion, and we also defend Iran against imperialist threats, without giving any political support to the murderous, anti-communist government of Saddam Hussein or to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This brings us to another strand of those who identify with Trotskyism, a whole range

⁸ See “Defeat the Imperialist War Drive and U.S./NATO Proxy Regime in Ukraine, Defend Russia, China Against War-Crazed U.S. Rulers,” *The Internationalist* No. 67-68, May-October 2022.

of tendencies that seek to take an in-between position in the war, equidistant from Russia and Ukraine, shall we say, pretending to oppose NATO as well as Russia. Among these centrist currents are the Partido Obrero of Argentina and the misnamed Trotskyist Fraction, whose major component is the Argentine PTS [Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas]. Their reasoning is reminiscent of those who pretended to represent a “third camp” during the anti-Soviet Cold War, with the slogan “Neither Washington, nor Moscow.” But as was the case with the third-campists of yesteryear, there is no “in between” position, and most of these currents in fact go along, critically of course, with the pro-Ukrainian “peace” movements.

Thus, for example, the German section of the FT organized a so-called “class struggle bloc” under the slogan “Neither Putin nor NATO” which marched in a demonstration in Berlin that was organized by the social-democratic trade union bureaucracy which called for increasing the supply of arms by NATO to Ukraine.⁹ So, they too are “NATO socialists,” albeit shamefaced ones. While the Morenoites and Mandelites boast of their support for the “Ukrainian resistance” – that is, for the Ukrainian government – these centrists want to hide it behind misleading slogans.

But in order to take a position supposedly opposing both sides in this war, those who claim to be proletarian revolutionaries are faced with a little problem: how to characterize Russia? Many social democrats, including those who claim to be Trotskyists, denounce Russia’s “imperialist policies,” its “imperialist war” or accuse it of being an “imperialist power.” Yet contemporary Russia does not correspond to any of the Leninist criteria of what imperialism is. It imports far more capital than it exports, at least until recently. Three-quarters of its exports consist of natural gas, oil and other natural resources. The structure of its production is more akin to than to semi-colonial countries than to countries that derive super-profits from the super-exploitation of workers in semi-colonial countries, as is the case even in small imperialist countries like Holland. It is an

⁹ See “German Left in Lockstep in ‘Changed Times’,” *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, January-May 2023.

intermediate capitalist country and peoples under attack by imperialism. If tomorrow Morocco declared war on France, or India on Britain, or Persia or China against tsarist Russia, he wrote, these would be just wars, no matter who initiated the military action.¹¹ Lenin also defended Turkey under Atatürk, i.e., the remnants of the Ottoman Empire reduced to an intermediate capitalist country, against Western imperialist attack in the 1920-1922 war.¹²

In order to justify not defending the countries that are targets of imperialist war, various currents claim that Russia is an imperialist country of a new type, or that it acts as an imperialist country since it is a more powerful country than poor little Ukraine (which nevertheless is the second or third largest country in Europe, now with the strongest army on the entire continent, having far more firepower than many of the NATO armies, thanks to the enormous weapons deliveries from the imperialists). Or they claim that Russia is a regional imperialist country. The Argentine Partido Obrero’s version of this subterfuge is to say that, “although [Russia] does not reach the status of a global imperialist

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

¹¹ V.I. Lenin, *Socialism and War* (1915).

¹² Following World War I, in 1920 the victorious “democratic” imperialist Allies signed the Treaty of Sèvres carving up the remnants of the Ottoman Empire. Soon after, Britain launched a proxy war against Turkey through its client state Greece, seeking in particular to gain Allied imperialist control of the Straits of Constantinople (Istanbul). Its principal aim was to attack Soviet Russia by sending warships through the Straits, and strangling it economically by cutting off its shipping from the Black Sea. The Soviet republic under Lenin and Trotsky provided arms to Turkey under Kemal Pasha (Atatürk), even as it recognized that his was a “government of the officer class” against which “the Turkish working class will have to fight,” as the September 1922 Comintern manifesto, “Peace to the Turkish People, War on European Imperialism” stated (Jane Degras, ed., *The Communist International, 1919-1943. Documents*, Vol. I). Soviet arms enabled Turkey to defeat the attack by British imperialism via its Greek vassal, secure recognition of the Turkish republic, undo the Sèvres Treaty and establish the neutrality of the Straits.

power, it is a power in the periphery.”¹³ Such characterizations are completely devoid of any grounding in Leninism. They serve only as excuses for pandering to imperialist war propaganda.

In all the left that defines itself as Trotskyist, our League for the Fourth International is virtually alone in defending the countries targeted by the imperialist war, Russia and China. On China, it is striking that almost all the groups that claim to be Trotskyist refuse to defend the biggest bureaucratically deformed workers state of our days. Just as they call Russia imperialist, they claim that China is a capitalist country, and some even call it imperialist. There is much to say on this subject, but I will limit myself to two empirical indicators that contradict this anti-Marxist definition/excuse. First, after the Wall Street financial crash of 2007-08 that triggered a decade-long depression throughout the capitalist world, China was the only country whose economy grew substantially, quintupling the incomes of the workers, thanks to its collectivized economic foundations. And second, during the COVID-19 pandemic, China was uniquely able to control the spread of the lethal virus, saving millions of lives while in the capitalist world at least 7 million died, according to official statistics, and up to 18 million according to other researchers.

The imperialists seek to inflict a “strategic defeat” on Moscow, and eventually to dismember Russia just as they broke up the USSR, on the way to their fundamental objective, to instigate counterrevolution in China. To that end, they are consciously aiming at a World War III. They want to provoke Putin to use tactical nuclear weapons, which makes no sense in Ukraine, but which the U.S. imperialists are eager to use against China on some atoll in the South China Sea. At recent NATO meetings they have announced the extension of the operational field of the imperialist military alliance to the “Indo-Pacific theater,” they are formalizing anti-China alliances with Australia, Japan, South Korea, and at the recent Vilnius, Lithuania summit they presented a detailed plan of some 4,500 pages to prepare for such a war, including the upgrading of their nuclear weaponry.

Against this all-out imperialist war drive, only the struggle to defeat it and its consequences in one’s own country through workers action, leading to world socialist revolution, can prevent the nuclear catastrophe that is looming before our eyes. This is the program of the League for the Fourth International.

Summary (excerpted):

A question was raised about the difference between the situation today in the U.S. and that at the time of the Vietnam War. It is a fact that currently most of the left is siding with Ukraine, i.e., with NATO, against Russia. This is seemingly quite different from the situation at the time of the Vietnam War, when they opposed the war of their own imperialism. But the reality is that in both cases they were and are following sections of the ruling class. At that time, on Vietnam, a large part of the left reflected the policy of the so-called “doves” of the Democratic Party. An “antiwar” movement was formed of a popular-front type, that is to say, uniting sectors of the left, and of the working class, with bourgeois sectors, in that case, of the Democratic Party. But at present the Democratic Party is the spearhead of this

¹³ “El FIT Unidad debatió sobre la guerra en Ucrania,” *Prensa Obrera*, 1 June 2022.

war against Russia, as the Biden administration is lurching toward a world war. They seek, more or less at every moment, to push China into Russia's arms. So naturally, as these sectors of the left usually line up with and reflect the interests of the Democratic Party, they take the Ukrainian side.

On the other hand, comrade Pablo Heller [of the Partido Obrero] spoke here of wanting to form an international movement for peace against both sides in the war. The problem is that in this war – in which the imperialists are entirely united on one side, against Russia – to form a “peace movement” against both sides is actually to betray the struggle against imperialism. Also, at the time of the war against Vietnam, we did not say that we were seeking peace, that we were against the war in general, but rather we fought for the victory of the Viet Cong, of the communists. What we said at the time was “All Indochina Must Go Communist.” And this caused considerable conflict within the so-called antiwar movement.

One reason why there is no massive left response to imperialist war today is because of the left's capitulation to imperialism's propaganda for “human rights.” But “human rights” has been the battle cry of imperialism in all its recent wars: supposedly defending the Shiite population in Iraq, supposedly defending women in Afghanistan, etc., etc. All this verbiage of human rights in the mouths of the imperialists is a fraud. One should not be guided by who is more “progressive” or less aggressive. This is not a Marxist criterion. We must look to class fundamentals. And I appreciate the compañero who quoted Trotsky's writings on [Getúlio] Vargas in Brazil in a [hypothetical] war against England. At the time, Trotsky said that he would take the side of Vargas' Brazil against England, because the victory of the imperialists would impose a new dictatorship, although not exactly fascist, because Vargas was not a fascist but a populist. Our guiding line must be the struggle against imperialism.

Concerning the PSTU spokesman's comments: these are the same words as the imperialists. On Ukraine [the PSTU] bandies about the same lies as Washington, as elsewhere. What he says about Mariupol is a total lie. He cites the supposed massacre

of the theater in Mariupol, yet there is not a single photo of any victim. There was no such massacre. The attack on the maternity hospital [in Mariupol] was organized by the fascists in Mariupol. The preponderance of fascists in the Ukrainian military today goes back to the fact that the Azov battalion was born precisely in Mariupol, and they were the ones who led the fight against the Russian-speaking population in the war operation [against the “people's republics” that revolted against the putsch in Kiev in March-April 2014]. They are hangmen, they are mass murderers, and they are perfectly capable of massacring the entire population of the Donetsk and Lugansk areas, which were subjected to a siege, harassment and deadly aggression for eight years that was actually the origin of the current war.

We did not support Putin's invasion, but we said at the same time that we defended the peoples of the Donbass, and that it was necessary to fight to put a definitive end to the action of the fascists. However, with time, the imperialists' takeover of the war [on the Ukrainian side] is undeniable, it is evident in every facet. So, given the evolution of the war, it became necessary to take the side of those who are the target of the imperialist war. At the same time, we continue to struggle politically against Putin's reactionary government. ■

Defender palestinos...

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al blanco en la espalda de quienquiera que se atreva a hablar en defensa de un pueblo bajo asedio. Lo que es verdaderamente vil es el apoyo de demócratas y republicanos a la *maquinaria asesina sionista*. Hochul cuenta con el respaldo del alcalde de la ciudad de Nueva York, el expolicía Eric Adams, quien recientemente regresó de un viaje a Israel pagado del erario público, en donde actualmente se encuentra una delegación de policías de Nueva York en “entrenamiento”. Al mismo tiempo, varias universidades están “investigando” a estudiantes y grupos estudiantiles que se han manifestado en defensa de los derechos de los palestinos. Es necesario combatir frontalmente esta nueva caza de brujas macartista.

Sin embargo, los miembros de DSA en

el Congreso hicieron eco del vituperio de Biden. Su estrella, la representante Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (conocida como AOC), publicó un comunicado el 9 de octubre: “Condeno el ataque de Hamas de la manera más fuerte posible”. Aunque de manera piadosa llama por “un inmediato cese al fuego y a toda escalada”, su comunicado no tiene ni una sola palabra de crítica en contra de Israel ni de defensa de los palestinos. Otro miembro del “escuadrón” de AOC, Jamaal Bowman, hizo una declaración semejante.³ Ahora (10 de octubre), el comité local de Nueva York de DSA ha abandonado su postura previa y dice que “lamentamos la confusión que nuestra publicación ocasionó”. Todos los miembros de DSA, en tanto que integrantes de esta organización proimperialista, son cómplices de esta vergonzosa capitulación ante los censores sionistas e imperialistas. La representante Rashida Tlaib, una palestina norteamericana, al menos llamó a levantar el bloqueo, poner fin a la ocupación y dismantelar el sofocante sistema que produce resistencia.

Hoy en la Casa Blanca, Biden declaró: “En este momento, debemos ser cristalinamente claros: estamos con Israel”. Y añadió: “nos aseguraremos de que Israel tenga lo que necesita” para atacar a Gaza. Siendo así, en este momento, en que para los guerrilleros imperialistas es la hora de tomar partido, nosotros somos igualmente claros: mientras Israel arroja bombas que le ha pertrechado EE.UU. sobre mezquitas, escuelas y hospitales, asesinando a devotos, escolares y pacientes, todos los que se oponen al imperialismo y al sionismo deben *estar del lado del pueblo palestino*, oprimido por Israel desde su formación, y ahora objeto de un ataque genocida.

El Internationalist Group, sección norteamericana de la Liga por la IV Internacional, ha participado en protestas propalestinas recientes con pancartas que llaman a “¡Defender a Gaza! ¡Derrotar la guerra de Israel y EE.UU. contra los palestinos!” y “¡Defender el derecho al retorno de los palestinos!” Llamamos por “¡Acciones obreras contra el terrorismo sionista!” y decimos “¡Defender a Gaza, el nuevo Gueto de Varsovia! ¡Expulsar a los colonos sionistas y todas las fuerzas de ocupación de Cisjordania!” Nuestras pancartas también llaman a derrotar la campaña de guerra de EE.UU. y la OTAN contra Rusia y China, a lograr plenos derechos de ciudadanía para todos los inmigrantes, a romper con los demócratas y construir un partido obrero revolucionario, y a luchar por un *estado obrero palestino árabe-hebreo* como parte de una *federación socialista de Medio Oriente*.

Frutos amargos de décadas de sangrienta ocupación sionista

La valiente periodista israelí Amira Hass, que ha informado desde (y residido en) Gaza y la ocupada Cisjordania durante décadas, escribió en el diario sionista liberal *Haaretz* (10 de octubre):

“En unos cuantos días los israelíes vivieron lo que los palestinos han experimentado de manera rutinaria durante décadas, y siguen

³ En noviembre de 2021, Bowman viajó a Israel en una gira todo pagado que le “arregló” el lobby liberal sionista J Street, del que informó en un relato deslumbrante sobre sus reuniones con el presidente de Israel, el primer ministro (Netanyahu), “las Fuerzas de Defensa de Israel” y otros (“Reflexiones sobre mi viaje a Israel”, 20 de noviembre de 2021). En medio de la agitación reciente, Bowman dejó saber que desde hace un año no renovó su membresía en DSA.

experimentando: incursiones militares, muerte, crueldad, niños asesinados, cadáveres amontonados en el camino, asedio, miedo, ansiedad por los seres queridos, cautiverio, ser objeto de venganza, disparos letales indiscriminados tanto contra los que están peleando (soldados) como contra los que no (civiles), una posición de inferioridad, destrucción de edificios, celebraciones o días festivos arruinados, debilidad y desamparo ante hombres armados hasta los dientes y abrasante humillación”.

La operación de Hamas, por aire, tierra y mar –empleando bulldóceres para atravesar las masivas fortificaciones en cuya construcción Israel gastó miles de millones y que han confinado a los habitantes de Gaza a su infértil franja de tierra; usando parapentes improvisados para volar más allá de la muralla; paralizando las comunicaciones militares, tomando una base militar israelí, destruyendo tanques israelíes con drones– fue celebrada en buena parte del mundo árabe y dio un profundo susto al gobierno sionista. Su aparato de seguridad aparentemente no tenía ni idea de la elaborada operación, que tuvo que contar con la participación de cientos de personas a lo largo de muchos meses de preparación. El Mossad, la cacareada agencia de espionaje israelí, cuyas intrigas asesinas se han vuelto tema recurrente de los *thrillers* de Hollywood, fue tomado por completo desprevenido. A los arrogantes gobernantes israelíes, que se deleitan al sojuzgar a los palestinos, se les asestó un golpe.

Los dirigentes sionistas ahora buscan una venganza sangrienta. El ministro de defensa israelí Yoav Gallant declaró el martes (9 de octubre): “Estamos imponiendo un sitio total a Gaza. No habrá electricidad, ni alimentos, ni agua, ni combustible. Todo será cerrado. Estamos luchando en contra de animales humanos. Actuamos en consecuencia”. Esta vil *declaración de intenciones de cometer genocidio* proviene de uno de los elementos más “moderados” del gobierno derechista de línea dura, que se opuso a la reforma judicial de Netanyahu contra la que se movilizaron cientos de miles de sionistas liberales durante varios meses. Netanyahu mismo dijo que lo que el gobierno israelí está a punto de hacer en Gaza “reverberará en ellos durante generaciones”. El presidente de EE.UU. Biden hace eco de esta fraseología, al declarar hoy que el ataque de Hamas fue expresión de “maldad pura, absoluta”. Ésta sería una mejor descripción de las guerras asesinas del imperialismo contra Afganistán, Irak, Siria y ahora la de Ucrania.

Durante 16 años, desde que Hamas tomó el control del territorio en 2007, más de 2 millones de personas han sido recluidas en la pequeña franja de Gaza, más pequeña que el condado neoyorquino de Queens, sin la posibilidad de salir de lo que constituye la mayor prisión en el mundo. Bajo el control de Israel y Egipto, los habitantes de Gaza carecen de empleos, dependen de sus carceleros para alimentarse, tener agua y combustible y de las Naciones Unidas para sus magros servicios esenciales. La población palestina de Cisjordania, bajo ocupación israelí desde 1967, está confinada a enclaves aún más pequeños, siendo objeto de repetidas incursiones asesinas perpetradas por escuadrones de la muerte de la FDI y de bandas de colonos fascistas. Al mantener a una población entera encerrada durante décadas, condenándola a una existencia deshinchada, ¿qué esperaba Israel? Quienes sienten que no tienen nada que perder pueden reaccionar con rabia.

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¡Por una revolución obrera árabe-hebrea!

En noviembre pasado, Netanyahu asumió, una vez más, el cargo de primer ministro, esta vez a la cabeza del gobierno más derechista de la historia de Israel, que incluye dos ministros del movimiento fascista del difunto Meir Kahan, Bezalel Smotrich (ministro de finanzas, también a cargo de Cisjordania) e Itamar Ben-Gvir (ministro nacional de seguridad, a cargo de la policía). Desde entonces, ha habido una cadena de ataques provocadores de la policía y el ejército contra ciudades palestinas en Cisjordania, particularmente en Jenin, supuestamente para buscar “combatientes”. Más de 200 palestinos fueron asesinados en 2023 ya antes del ataque del 7 de octubre. Y la semana pasada, “más de 800 colonos israelíes tomaron la mezquita de Al-Aqsa y ocuparon Jerusalén Oriental el jueves por la mañana bajo la protección de fuerzas israelíes (*New Arab*, 5 de octubre). Sobra decir que nada de esto es mencionado en los medios occidentales.

El 6 de octubre marca el 50 aniversario de la Guerra del Yom Kippur de 1973, cuando Israel fue tomado por sorpresa con un ataque por parte de Egipto y otros países árabes. No puede ser accidental que Hamas haya planeado su ataque exactamente para el día siguiente. En su anuncio del ataque, “Operación Diluvio Al-Aqsa”, el brazo militar de Hamas citó los ataques contra la mezquita de Jerusalén, y los más de 5 mil palestinos que se pudren en las cárceles israelíes. Hamas justificó la toma de rehenes para intercambiarlos por palestinos presos. Defensores de los derechos democráticos han llamado desde hace mucho por la liberación de los miles de palestinos que son mantenidos como rehenes en Israel. Pero en la atmósfera actual, cabe dudar que la preocupación por las vidas de los rehenes israelíes vaya a detener la invasión militar sionista de Gaza siquiera por un minuto.

Ciertamente, tampoco es accidental que el impactante ataque de Hamas se haya dado tras las enormes protestas de cientos de miles en contra de la “reforma” judicial de Netanyahu que eliminaría la posibilidad de la Suprema Corte de Israel de bloquear decisiones y políticas aprobadas por el Knesset, el parlamento israelí. Aunque sionistas liberales y de “izquierda” (lo mismo que sus patrocinadores norteamericanos) calificaron esto como un “golpe de estado” perpetrado por Netanyahu, la actual situación, en la que unos pocos jueces no elegidos pueden vetar las acciones del parlamento elegido, es altamente antidemocrática. La cuestión de fondo es que el estado sionista mismo es antidemocrático hasta la médula, toda vez que se trata de un “estado judío” definido sobre la base de la religión y asentado en el sojuzgamiento de la población palestina, ya como “ciudadanos” de segunda clase en Israel mismo, ya como sujetos sin derechos en la Cisjordania ocupada. Sin embargo, los sionistas liberales han excluido de manera rigurosa cualquier bandera palestina de sus protestas.

Hamas puede haber calculado también que el gobierno de Biden en EE.UU. estaba preocupado por la guerra en Ucrania y, en consecuencia, con menos posibilidades de intervenir, lo que dista de ser el caso; y que su ataque haría más difícil que regímenes árabes “normalicen” relaciones con Israel, lo que podría resultar cierto. Al hablar ante las Naciones Unidas el mes pasado, Netanyahu desplegó un mapa del “nuevo Medio

Oriente” y con un marcador mágico rojo tamaño jumbo dibujó un eje que va desde los Emiratos Árabes Unidos, atraviesa Arabia Saudita e Israel (incluidas Cisjordania y Gaza) hasta Europa. Pero aunque este sueño mágico sionista pueda haber quedado fuera de la agenda por ahora, la lucha en Israel podría desencadenar una guerra regional. EE.UU. ha enviado un grupo de batalla naval al oriente del Mediterráneo como una advertencia contra Irán para que no intervenga, pero una masacre en Gaza podría desencadenar una agitada y explosiva situación en toda la región.

Por ahora, los sionistas liberales están cerrando filas con Netanyahu, mientras que las negociaciones para establecer un gobierno de “unidad nacional” están en curso, lo que incluiría a Benny Gantz, el general retirado que contendió en las elecciones de octubre de 2022 contra Netanyahu. Aunque esto se ha vendido a los sionistas de “izquierda” como una vía para controlar a los ministros fascistas, la verdad es que Gantz no es ninguna “paloma”, al haber comandado la masacre de palestinos previa en Gaza en 2021 como ministro de defensa del anterior gobierno de “unidad” dirigido por Netanyahu. Una invasión a escala total de Gaza producirá, sin duda, un número significativo de bajas en la FDI, pues las fuerzas de Hamas capaces de traspasar el muro fronterizo en minutos seguramente habrán preparado trampas mortíferas dentro de Gaza.⁴ Pero sin importar cuál sea la escala de las bajas israelíes, el inminente ataque terrestre de Israel (para el que la FDI ha movilizó a más de 360 mil reservistas) no será más que una matanza deliberada de palestinos.

Muchos palestinos que viven bajo el yugo de la ocupación israelí y activistas palestinos en el exterior estaban exultantes por el ataque de Hamas. La nacionalista burguesa OLP y la profundamente desacreditada Autoridad Palestina que dirige no son más que guardias de seguridad al servicio de Israel, en la nómina de Estados Unidos mediante el Coordinador de Seguridad de EE.UU., un teniente general del Pentágono. A pesar de que su crecimiento se ha dado a expensas de la OLP, el fundamentalismo islámico de Hamas y de otras formaciones como la Yihad Islámica sólo puede llevar a una derrota. Los estados árabes circundantes no ayudarán a los palestinos más que de manera meramente simbólica, y más probablemente para nada en lo absoluto, como se ha visto en el papel jugado por Egipto y Jordania como carceleros de los refugiados palestinos ya desde la Guerra Árabe-Israelí de 1967. Tampoco es probable que Irán se sume a una lucha contra Washington, toda vez que ha dedicado grandes esfuerzos para lograr que EE.UU. levante parcialmente las sanciones que le impuso. Todas estas fuerzas –Hamas incluido– lo que realmente buscan es asegurar un acuerdo con imperialistas y sionistas, a costa de los palestinos.⁵

La única vía hacia un futuro de paz

⁴ Saleh al-Aroui, jefe del buró político de Hamas, dijo: “La resistencia basa su posición y planes en las peores posibilidades, incluida una invasión terrestre”, que describe como “el mejor escenario para nosotros en la resolución de la batalla” (citado en International Crisis Group, “A Second October War in Israel-Palestine” [9 de octubre de 2023]).

⁵ Hamas ha propuesto repetidamente una tregua de diez años con Israel (que éste ha rechazado), de manera que pudiera administrar pacíficamente a Gaza, tal como lo hacen la OLP y la AP en los enclaves de Cisjordania.

y genuina liberación para las masas palestinas se encuentra en una lucha revolucionaria conjunta con los trabajadores de Israel, tanto de habla hebrea como árabes, independientemente de lo remota e improbable que pueda parecer en el presente. Además, la población judía de Israel, la mitad de la cual no es practicante religiosa, sólo puede esperar un “futuro” dentro de un fortín asediado que enfrenta amenazas de guerra sin fin y periódicamente su realidad. La “izquierda” sionista está acabada como fuerza electoral, consumida por la evolución lógica del estado teocrático que otrora dirigiera. Mientras tanto, el movimiento fascistoide de los colonos podría intentar aprovechar la crisis actual para implementar los viejos planes de expulsar a cientos de miles de árabes palestinos de Cisjordania y de Israel.⁶ Un “estado judío”, excluyente por definición y contrapuesto a la población circundante, jamás podrá estar seguro en el Medio Oriente, ni siquiera mediante el recurso del terrorismo genocida, como el que Israel practica ahora.

El Grupo Internacionalista y la Liga por la IV Internacional están completamente del lado de pueblo palestino, al que siempre hemos defendido en contra del opresor estado sionista y sus patrocinadores imperialistas que lo han condenado al exilio o a una existencia apátrida y miserable. Los trotskistas nos opusimos a la fundación del estado sionista, establecido sobre la base del despojo y la expulsión en masa de la mayoría árabe de Palestina. Este crimen histórico vino tras el Holocausto nazi que asesinó a más de 6 millones de judíos en la Segunda Guerra Mundial, y fue alimentado por el rechazo de los imperialistas “democráticos” a aceptar refugiados judíos durante y después de la guerra. Nos oponemos a todo estado basado en la religión, ya sea que se trate del autoproclamado “estado judío” de Israel, o las repúblicas islámicas de Irán y Pakistán, o de los estados oficialmente cristianos (como la España de Franco), etc.

No obstante, como resultado de esta historia de crímenes sobre crímenes, hay ahora dos pueblos que habitan el mismo pequeño territorio, la población de habla hebrea de unos 7 millones de personas, y un número igual de palestinos divididos entre la Cisjordania ocupada, Gaza e Israel mismo. Entretanto, hay más de 3 millones de refugiados palestinos en los países vecinos (Jordania, Siria, Líbano, Egipto), y otro par de millones en la diáspora en otros lugares. Al defender a los oprimidos palestinos en contra del ⁶ Estos planes fueron originalmente diseñados por el político “laborista sionista” Yigal Allon, exmiembro de la milicia Palmaj y del partido sionista de “izquierda” Ahdut HaAvoda, como el siguiente paso tras la conquista israelí de Jerusalén Oriental y de Cisjordania en la guerra de 1967.

opresor israelí, luchamos por el *derecho a regresar de todos los palestinos* a su tierra. Para abrir la vía hacia una solución justa y viable, no hay rodeos: estos dos pueblos tienen el derecho nacional a existir. Sin embargo, en un escenario de “dos estados”, como el previsto en los Acuerdos de Oslo de 1994, bajo el capitalismo, los recursos escasos, como el agua, serán acaparados por la entidad más fuerte, que no será un pequeño y disperso “estado” palestino.

Aunque muchos “progresistas” califican a Israel como un “estado colonial de colonos”, la verdad es que la vasta mayoría de los israelíes de habla hebrea –a diferencia de los colonos de Cisjordania, que en su inmensa mayoría son emigrados provenientes de EE.UU., particularmente de Nueva York– no tienen otro hogar al cual regresar. El estado-fortaleza sionista de Israel debe hacerse explotar desde adentro, y las protestas de masas de los primeros nueve meses de 2023 muestran la multitud de fisuras que podrían resquebrajar este aparente monolito. El GI y la LIVI sostienen que en los casos de *pueblos interpenetrados*, la única manera de resolver equitativa y democráticamente derechos nacionales en competencia es por medio de una revolución socialista que resulte de la lucha conjunta de los trabajadores de ambas naciones. Para asegurar una defensa real del pueblo palestino, luchamos por un *estado obrero palestino binacional árabe-hebreo*, que se vincule con los poderosos proletariados de Turquía, Egipto e Irán *en una federación socialista del Medio Oriente*.

Esta perspectiva exige forjar la dirección de un *partido obrero revolucionario e internacionalista árabe/hebreo basado en el genuino comunismo de Lenin y Trotsky*. Ésta es la única vía para la liberación, y es la tarea que debemos emprender en los aciagos tiempos que afrontamos. ■

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Venganza sionista tras ofensiva de Hamas que sacudió a Israel hasta la médula

¡Defender a los palestinos contra la guerra genocida de EE.UU. e Israel contra Gaza!

10 de OCTUBRE – En la madrugada del sábado 7 de octubre, el Movimiento de Resistencia Islámica (Hamas) en Gaza llevó a cabo un impactante ataque sorpresa contra Israel, el estado sionista que ha expulsado a millones de árabes palestinos de su tierra y que oprime a millones más en Gaza, la ocupada Cisjordania y al interior de Israel. Según se ha informado, Hamas lanzó más de 5 mil misiles, que incluso alcanzaron Tel Aviv, superando al infame escudo antimisiles de Israel conocido como el Domo de Hierro. El masivo muro fronterizo de 10 metros de alto y de 65 kilómetros de largo que rodea por completo la Franja de Gaza fue traspasado en numerosos sitios y los combatientes de Hamas se precipitaron para ocupar más de dos decenas de poblaciones israelíes. Hasta este momento (10 de octubre), el ejército israelí reporta la muerte de más de 900 israelíes, en tanto que las autoridades médicas palestinas informan de casi 800 palestinos muertos, la mayor parte como resultado de ataques aéreos contra la densamente poblada Gaza. A esto se suman miles de heridos en ambos bandos.

El número sin precedentes de israelíes muertos ha sacudido profundamente a la población judía. Los medios sionistas hablan del “Fracaso catastrófico” de las fuerzas israelíes (*Haaretz*), mientras que publicaciones árabes celebran el “Golpe decisivo” de Hamas, con el encabezado de “De la indignación al júbilo” (*Al Mayadeen*). Los medios y políticos occidentales condenan a los manifestantes propalestinos, tachándolos de “apologistas del terrorismo”. Por primera vez en más de medio siglo de enfrentamientos, han muerto más israelíes que palestinos. (La cifra usual es de más de 20 palesti-

nos muertos por cada israelí.¹) El ejército de Israel ya está dándole la vuelta a esta situación y ha comenzado, una vez más, la conversión del enorme campo de concentración que es Gaza en un campo de exterminio de palestinos. Ya más de 1,200 casas en Gaza han sido destruidas y el derechista primer ministro de Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, amenazó con que el sangriento ataque contra Gaza “no es más que el comienzo”. En lo que toca a los patrocinadores de Israel en Washington, que se presentan como defensores de los “derechos humanos”, cabe decir que son responsables de la muerte de cerca de un millón de personas en las guerras imperialistas de EE.UU. tan sólo desde 2001.²

Actualmente, Estados Unidos, bajo el gobierno del presidente demócrata Joe Biden, está librando una sangrienta guerra subsidiaria contra Rusia en Ucrania bajo el lema de “dure lo que dure” –es decir, hasta el último ucraniano. Pero ni esto, ni las riñas previas con Netanyahu, han impedido que Washington marche a paso cerrado con el perenne dirigente sionista israelí de línea dura (lleva casi 17 años como primer ministro, con alguna interrupción) mientras se prepara para destruir a Gaza. Israel ha solicitado a EE.UU. más municiones de precisión y el Pentágono dice que las proveerá. (El Pentágono envió proyectiles de artillería de 155 mm de sus reservas en Israel a Ucrania, pero ahora el ejército israelí precisa las armas para preparar su ocupación de Gaza.) Entretanto, el voto de Biden –y de prácticamente todos los demás jefes imperialistas– de que “Israel tiene el derecho a defenderse” equivale dar al estado sionista una “licencia para matar” palestinos. **Ésta es ahora una guerra de Israel y EE.UU. contra Gaza.**

Todo verdadero golpe contra el estado sionista por parte de fuerzas palestinas, incluso si se trata de islamistas reaccionarios, redundará en el interés de los obreros y oprimidos del mundo. Sin embargo, además de atacar al ejército israelí, combatientes de Hamas realizaron un

¹ Según estadísticas de las Naciones Unidas, de 2008 a marzo de 2023, 6,269 palestinos murieron en enfrentamientos, en contraste con 293 israelíes.

² Véase nuestro artículo “U.S. Imperialism Hurling Toward World War III” en *The Internationalist* No. 69-70, enero-mayo de 2023.

¡Echar a los sionistas de Cisjordania y Gaza!
¡Acción obrera internacional contra el ataque a Gaza!
¡Por un estado obrero palestino árabe-hebreo, parte de una federación socialista del Medio Oriente!



Youssef Masoud para The New York Times

La destrucción total de Gaza por el ejército sionista ha comenzado. En 2021 y 2014, destruyeron edificios específicos, ahora la fuerza aérea israelí destruye distritos enteros, sin ninguna advertencia a sus habitantes. Ariba: palestinos evalúan la extensión del daño en Khan Yunis, 26 de octubre.

ataque terrorista indiscriminado, asesinando a algunos cientos de israelíes que se encontraban en un festival musical, residentes de kibutz y habitantes de las ciudades del sur. Estos no son golpes contra la maquinaria de ocupación sionista, sino ataques al azar contra israelíes que socavan la defensa de la población palestina. Una *yihad* (guerra santa) como ésta es el método de nacionalistas de derecha y de fanáticos religiosos, como los islamistas de Hamas ... y los militaristas sionistas de todas las tendencias políticas. Ahora, la mal llamada Fuerza de Defensa de Israel (FDI) está haciendo lo mismo, sólo que a mucho mayor escala, en contra de la totalidad de la población de Gaza. El saldo de muertos no tardará en superar el de los cientos de palestinos que la FDI asesinó en su ataque de 2021 contra Gaza.

En casi todos los países imperialistas se están dando pasos para suprimir cualquier forma de apoyo a favor de los palestinos y de imponer un monopolio sionista en el espacio político. En Alemania, las protestas propalestinas han sido prohibidas en Berlín. En Francia, manifestaciones propalestinas programadas en París, Lyon y Marsella también han sido prohibidas con el falso

pretexto de que “incitan al odio racial”. Entretanto, el ministro de justicia ha iniciado una investigación contra el izquierdista Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) y ha llamado a dar una “respuesta penal rápida y contundente” a cualquier apoyo a Palestina, al afirmar que equivale a antisemitismo. En Italia, el ministro de educación envió inspectores para investigar y posiblemente arrestar a colectivos estudiantiles de liceos en Milán que se han declarado solidarios con los palestinos. Es necesario denunciar y desafiar estas prohibiciones y amenazas, así como vincular las protestas contra la guerra imperialista de la OTAN en Ucrania con la defensa del pueblo palestino. Esto podría incluir **acciones obreras para impedir el envío de armas a Israel y Ucrania.**

En EE.UU., el Partido Demócrata azuzó una histórica campaña prosionista. La gobernadora de Nueva York, Kathy Hochul, está en pie de guerra en contra de los Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) de Nueva York por promover una manifestación propalestina realizada el 8 de octubre que ella calificó como “repugnante”. Lo que la gobernadora está haciendo es poner un tiro *sigue en la página 30*

Rogelio Morales Ponce / Cuartoscuro



El Grupo Internacionalista en protesta frente a la embajada de Israel en la Cd. de México, 12 de octubre.