

Labor Tops Derail Anger, Promote Democrats

Wisconsin: and the Unions Through Class Struggle!

MARCH 13—Republican Wisconsin governor Scott Walker has thrown down the gauntlet to the entire labor movement, signing a law stripping the state's public workers unions of their right to bargain for their members. This is an open attempt to destroy the public sector unions, which are similarly under attack in Ohio, Indiana and other states. The law dictates that pay increases—the sole issue on which the unions are now permitted to bargain—may not exceed the cost of living index unless approved by a statewide referendum. Workers' contributions toward their health care and pensions will be dramatically increased, meaning an effective pay cut of 8 percent on average. Wisconsin's Democrats, who put up a show of stalling the vote on the union-busting bill by fleeing the state, had earlier stated their support to all the key economic take-backs, as had the state's labor officialdom.

The labor movement must beat back this wage-slashing, union-busting attack. Six years ago in Indiana, collective bargaining rights were abolished for state workers, leading to a decline in union membership from 66 percent to **7 percent** of the eligible workforce. What is and has been needed is strike action to close Wisconsin down. Many workers have shown their determination to wage such a fight. Tens of thousands have repeatedly rallied to defeat the anti-union onslaught. Across the U.S., private sector unions have joined in demonstrations against similar legislation and cutbacks, which are designed to make working people pay for the economic depression—a crisis caused by the capitalists' insatiable drive for profits. National polls indicate that broad swaths of the population, hammered by the economic crisis, are opposed to the anti-union attacks.

Occupation of the Wisconsin State Capitol by protesters drew worldwide attention to Madison, but to date there has been no strike action. Why? The pro-capitalist trade-union leadership has been working overtime to divert workers' militancy into Democratic Party electioneering, centrally through a campaign to recall Republican legislators as well as Walker.

This was made clear at a 100,000-strong demonstration in Madison yesterday mainly organized by the AFL-CIO. After the farmers, after local Democratic officials, after the folk singers and a parade of speakers from the "Fab 14" state senators, after the preacher pronounced, "Amen," and the crowd was dispersing—only then did a few labor officials speak. And when they did, they urged Wisconsinites to channel their energies into the

struggle against America's capitalist rulers. The Democrats, deceptively promoted by union leaders as "friends of labor," are simply the other major party of U.S. capitalist rule. The union bureaucrats are core cadres of that party, assuring that the unions they lead provide votes for its candidates and millions of dollars in dues money to electoral campaigns.

For that reason, the Democrats seldom seek to bust the unions outright. But they are no more averse than Republicans to leading savage attacks on the wages and benefits of working people in the service of the bosses. In fact, Walker was elected governor in a contest against the Democratic mayor of Milwaukee, who supported cutting back public employee benefits. The mother of anti-union legislation, the Taft-Hartley Act, was passed in 1947 over the veto of Democratic president Harry Truman, who knew full well that the veto would not withstand a Congressional override. Notwithstanding the Democratic Party's pledges to abolish Taft-Hartley, the law survived several administrations, during which the Democrats controlled the presidency and both houses of Congress.

Barack Obama, as a candidate for the presidency, promised to walk picket lines to defend union rights. Once elected as Commander-in-Chief of the American imperialist order, he quickly moved in collaboration with the auto bosses and the United Auto Workers misleaders to lead the assault that reduced the UAW—once the symbol of union power in this country, with a peak membership of 1.5 million—to a shell of its former self. Obama went on to launch a war against teachers unions by endorsing the wholesale firing of Central Falls,

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Hart/Wisconsin State Journal

March 5: Mass rally at State Capitol in Madison against Governor Walker's union-busting bill.

recall of eight Republican senators who backed the governor and into pressuring the capitalist courts to overturn the bill. Not a word was uttered from the podium about mobilizing labor's strike power. Spartacist comrades put up a banner and held signs highlighting the need to break with the Democratic Party and build a revolutionary workers party, selling most

of our literature to people who sought us out because of our hard stand against the Democrats.

The labor bureaucracy's service to the Democrats and prostration before anti-union laws are a *recipe for defeat*. Virtually every gain of the labor movement, including the very right for unions to exist, has been achieved through class



WV Photo

Left: Spartacists call for labor action at March 5 rally. Right: March 10 protest inside Capitol. Union tops' recall campaign channels workers' anger into capitalist Democratic Party.



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Rhode Island, high school teachers last year. Recently, a presidential spokesman repeated his boss's "indictment" of the legislation in Wisconsin as an effort "to denigrate or vilify public sector employees." This is equivalent to complaining that Hurricane Katrina was bad for tourism.

Scott Walker promised to create a PATCO moment for Wisconsin's public sector unions, that is, to destroy them. Ronald Reagan's unchallenged destruction of the PATCO air traffic controllers union in 1981, utilizing a plan drawn up by his predecessor, Democrat Jimmy Carter, set the stage for a ruthless capitalist offensive against the unions and the working class as a whole. It didn't have to be that way. Labor could have beaten back the union-busters by shutting down the airports. The power to do this was in the hands of unions like the IAM machinists, which organized the ground crews. There was plenty of sentiment in labor's ranks to fight to defend PATCO, as seen in the massive 19 September 1981 labor demonstration—half a million strong—in Washington, D.C. But IAM president "Wimpy" Winpisinger, a leader of the



1981 PATCO air traffic controllers strike: Union leaders arrested (left); NYC Labor Day rally (right). Labor bureaucrats refused to shut down airports, isolating PATCO in face of government attack that destroyed union.



Democratic Socialists of America, refused to call solidarity strike action, leaving individual workers to decide whether to honor or cross PATCO picket lines.

Emboldened by the decimation of private sector unions—a product of the prostration of the labor leadership to the dictates of the capitalist order—state

governments under both Democratic and Republican administrations are threatening the hard-won gains and even the very existence of public employee unions. The Wisconsin law proscribes the dues check-off system and mandates yearly union recertification elections in the hope that workers will refuse to pay their dues and abandon their unions. We oppose the capitalist state abolishing dues check-off or intervening in any other way into union affairs. At the same time, it is in labor's basic interest that union representatives, and not the bosses, collect union dues. This money should go toward building strike funds and otherwise supporting workers struggle, not be squandered to fund Democratic Party candidates. There must be a fight for the complete independence of the unions from the state agencies and political parties of the capitalist enemy.

The mass demonstrations in defense of Wisconsin's public sector unions have moved various ersatz socialist organizations to respond to calls for strike action. In the case of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), this has meant issuing a few mealy-mouthed criticisms of the union bureaucrats while simultaneously supporting their pro-Democratic recall campaign. An 11 March editorial in the ISO's *Socialist Worker* emphasizes: "The Republican senators *should* be recalled—and Walker, too." Even while chastising union officials for "demobilizing and disarming" workers, the editorial disparages the call for a statewide strike as "unlikely to get very far," advocating instead "pickets before work or noontime marches." This is the kind of "activism" that would bring smiles to the bosses' faces, as it neither stops operations nor challenges anti-strike laws.

The ISO is at one with the labor bureaucracy, which has itself made perfectly clear that the recall effort is *counterposed* to preparing the unions to wage the strike action that is necessary to defeat the union-busters. This comes as no surprise, as the ISO, along with the many other fake "socialists," seeks not the overthrow of the system that is based on the exploitation of labor but its reform.

Wisconsin workers realize, correctly, that they are treated as if they have no rights. Anesthetized by decades of labor's passivity enforced by capitalism's labor lieutenants, in the face of repeated attacks by the bosses, workers must be won to the understanding that such treatment is not an aberration but the very essence of the capitalist "democratic" order. That order enforces through its state power the democratic right of the rulers to exploit and repress the toiling masses. The cops, falsely portrayed by many reformists as fellow workers, now close off the Capitol in Madison to demonstrators and will not, if the unions strike, be hesitant to employ force against the picket lines. The courts will quickly move to proscribe militant class struggle. And the "friends of labor" in the Democratic Party will promise reform while supporting the forces of law and order.

Many workers fear that strike action can only result in further losses. While it will not be easy to defeat the arrogant rulers' union-busting drive, playing by the bosses' rules is a sure guarantee of defeat. It requires the mobilization of the mass strength and solidarity of the working class to prevail against the capitalists' attacks. As we wrote last issue in "All Labor Must Fight Assault on Public Workers Unions!" (WV No. 975, 4 March):

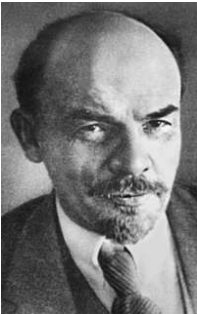
"Two possible roads lie before the working class. There is the bureaucracy's acceptance that the workers must 'sacrifice' to preserve the profits and rule of American capitalism, which has led to disaster. Or there is the class-struggle road of mobilizing the power of the working class in the necessary battles against the capitalist masters. In the course of such struggle, under a leadership that arms the working class with an understanding of the nature of capitalist society, the workers will become imbued with the consciousness of their historic interests as a class fighting for itself and for all of the oppressed. Such consciousness requires a political expression. That means the fight to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party whose purpose is not only to defend the working class against the menace of its own devastation but to rid the planet of the source of that devastation, capitalism itself, and the state that preserves it." ■



TROTSKY

Labor Versus the Capitalist State

Loyal to the capitalist system, the labor bureaucracy in the U.S. has for decades played by the bosses' rules, gravely undermining the unions and emboldening the bourgeoisie in its current drive against public workers. In an unfinished 1940 article on the tasks facing revolutionary Marxists in the labor movement, Leon Trotsky emphasized the urgency of fighting for the complete independence of the trade unions from the capitalist state.



LENIN

Monopoly capitalism does not rest on competition and free private initiative but on centralized command. The capitalist cliques at the head of mighty trusts, syndicates, banking consortiums, etc., view economic life from the very same heights as does state power; and they require at every step the collaboration of the latter. In their turn the trade unions in the most important branches of industry find themselves deprived of the possibility of profiting by the competition among the different enterprises. They have to confront a centralized capitalist adversary, intimately bound up with state power. Hence flows the need of the trade unions—insofar as they remain on reformist positions, i.e., on positions of adapting themselves to private property—to adapt themselves to the capitalist state and to contend for its cooperation. In the eyes of the bureaucracy of the trade union movement, the chief task lies in "freeing" the state from the embrace of capitalism, in weakening its dependence on trusts, in pulling it over to their side. This position is in complete harmony with the social position of the labor aristocracy and the labor bureaucracy, who fight for a crumb in the share of superprofits of imperialist capitalism. The labor bureaucrats do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to the "democratic" state how reliable and indispensable they are in peacetime and especially in time of war....

It is necessary to adapt ourselves to the concrete conditions existing in the trade unions of every given country in order to mobilize the masses, not only against the bourgeoisie, but also against the totalitarian regime within the trade unions themselves and against the leaders enforcing this regime. 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....

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.

—Leon Trotsky, "Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay" (1940)

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Steelworkers in Bitter Struggle Over Pensions

Ontario

The following article is reprinted from Spartacist Canada No. 168 (Spring 2011), newspaper of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League.

SPARTACIST CANADA

On January 29, 10,000 unionized workers marched through downtown Hamilton in defense of the 900 members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 1005 locked out by U.S. Steel since November 7. This was one of the largest labour protests in Ontario since the Days of Action of the mid to late 1990s—the one-day local general strikes against the then Tory provincial government. Busloads of workers poured into Hamilton from around Ontario, while others came from Quebec and the U.S. in a show of solidarity against U.S. Steel’s drive to gut pensions.

The company is demanding the de-indexing of the already meagre pensions of 9,000 retirees, leaving them to be chewed up by inflation. It wants new hires barred from the existing pension plan and forced into a “defined contribution” plan. Such a divisive two-tier system would put the pensions of younger workers completely at the mercy of the capitalist stock market. Even before the lockout, the steel bosses stopped indexing pensions and shut down the blast furnace in Hamilton, stopping steel production altogether. There is speculation that the plant will not reopen.

In 2007 U.S. Steel bought Stelco’s Hamilton and Nanticoke, Ontario plants and quickly shredded its toothless “guarantees” to maintain the workforce—then at 3,105 workers—and production levels for the next three years. Sweeping layoffs and long plant shutdowns saw the shrunken workforce further decline. In August 2009, U.S. Steel locked out USW Local 8782 at the Nanticoke plant. After eight long months out of work, the local swallowed the company’s demand to bar new hires from the pension plan. Having won there, U.S. Steel turned its guns on Local 1005.

This is a crucial battle for all labour, and a win for the workers of Local 1005 could help reverse the bosses’ unrelenting attacks. For many decades, Hamilton-area steelworkers, along with miners in Sudbury and auto workers in Oshawa and Windsor, were the bastions of the Ontario labour movement. To the extent that unionized workers have pension plans, medical benefits and health and safety protection it is in large part thanks to the hard-fought struggles of steelworkers, miners and auto workers to forge strong international industrial unions in the 1930s and 1940s.

But for years the bosses have been waging a one-sided class war against workers, as the pro-capitalist labour misleaders negotiate one giveback after another, leading to the withering of the unions and impoverishment of the working class. Loyal to the right-wing social democrats of the NDP [New Democratic Party], or even to the capitalist Liberal Party, these labour bureaucrats will not lead the kind of struggle that is needed. Sharing with their capitalist masters a belief in the inviolability of the profit system and pushing a program of Canadian nationalism, the union leaders strangle the enormous potential social power of the proletariat. The difficult task of building a class-struggle leadership in the unions to carry out the



January 29: 10,000 rally in Hamilton Day of Action to support locked-out steelworkers.

vital necessary battles against the capitalist class is long overdue.

Capitalist Profit and Accumulating Misery

“Most of us left parts of our bodies in Stelco when we left. I don’t have any use of my left hand, I have two artificial hips,” said a retired Local 1005 millwright at the January 29 protest. For the thousands of Local 1005 pensioners making less than \$1,000 per month, about three-quarters of whom are widows, de-indexing pensions will be catastrophic. Many already survive thanks only to food banks and second-hand stores.

Capitalist exploitation uses up and destroys workers. To survive, workers must sell to the capitalist their ability to work. It is from the surplus value created by their blood and sweat that the billions in profits flow into the pockets of the bosses. When workers are injured or too infirm or too old and can no longer sell their labour power, they are discarded. U.S. Steel follows this inexorable logic in its attack on the pensions of those who toiled in Hamilton’s steel mills for 30 or 40 years.

In Canada as in the U.S. and Europe, governments and private capitalists alike are attacking pensions as a way to boost profits. In line with this, the federal Conservatives have just announced a private “pension” scheme that will benefit not the eleven million Canadians who have no pension plans, but the profit-bloated banks. The capitalists’ campaign against the supposed “gold-plated” benefits of unionized workers is meant to prepare the ground for further attacks while fomenting anti-union sentiment.

If the harshest blows have so far fallen on workers in the private sector, the bosses are now jacking up the attacks on unionized public sector workers. Canada Post seeks to destroy both the pension and sick plans of postal workers. In Toronto, right-wing mayor Rob Ford has launched an offensive against transit workers and is making a union-busting bid to contract out garbage pickup.

The capitalists’ answer to the most severe economic downturn since the Great Depression of the 1930s is that “all must

sacrifice.” And “all,” for the ruling class, means the working class. In his great work *Capital* Karl Marx wrote: “Accumulation of wealth at one pole is, therefore, at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole, i.e., on the side of the class that produces its own product in the form of capital.” The truth of this statement can be seen in the destruction of livelihoods, lost homes, destroyed families, gutted social services, impoverished retirement and more. As for the much-vaunted “recovery,” the capitalists admit that it has been “jobless.” The only thing recovering is their profits.

The fight for jobs, pensions and other desperately needed benefits is the fight against the devastation of the working people. It is necessary to demand an end to layoffs by shortening the workweek at no loss in pay, as part of the struggle for jobs for all. Unemployment benefits must be greatly increased and extended to everyone who cannot find a job, and all pensions must be completely guaranteed by the government. A massive program of public works at union wages is needed to rebuild roads and bridges, fix the decaying health system and schools and expand public transit.

But such basic and obviously necessary demands, the elements of which were laid out in the 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Trotskyist Fourth International, will not be granted by the rapacious capitalist rulers. The capitalist state, including the cops, courts and army, exists to defend the rule and profits of the bourgeoisie. It cannot be reformed or wielded to serve the interests of working people. The catastrophe of joblessness, threatening the disintegration of the working class, can be effectively fought only by a workers movement led by those committed to the struggle for socialist revolution and the creation of a rationally planned, socialist economy on an international scale.

Protectionism: Joining with the Enemy Class

The Hamilton steelworkers’ struggle closely mirrors the bitter year-long 2009-10 strike by more than 3,000 nickel min-

ers at Vale Inco in Sudbury. There too, the company sought massive concessions, including gutting the pension plan. The workers of USW Local 6500 fought with all their might, but the union leadership—like the leaders of Local 1005 in Hamilton today—offered Canadian nationalism as the answer to the bosses’ attacks. In the end, the Vale Inco workers voted up a contract that bars new-hires from the defined benefit pension plan.

The Sudbury USW tops held up the former Canadian-owned Inco as a positive alternative to the Brazilian-owned Vale, which took over the company in 2006. But it was Inco that slashed tens of thousands of mining jobs, and every gain Canadian nickel miners won came through struggle *against* these mining magnates. Canadian mining corporations were and are notorious for their rapacious brutality in countries like Ecuador, the Philippines and the Congo. As for attacks on pensions, look at Nortel, the Canadian telecommunications giant, which cried bankruptcy and then, backed by the courts and government, destroyed the pensions of more than 17,000 former employees.

In 1980, there were more than 25,000 workers at Stelco facilities; it was this Canadian company that ravaged the workforce, reducing it by more than 20,000 before U.S. Steel took over. After a frenzy of international buyouts in 2006-07, the steel industry in Canada is now almost entirely owned by international conglomerates from Europe, India, Brazil, the U.S. and elsewhere. Regardless of who owns the steel plants, the capitalist exploiters will attack the working class in their drive for greater profits.

Today, reflecting the declining economic and industrial power of U.S. imperialism, U.S. Steel, while still the largest American steel company, ranks only tenth in world production. The layoffs in Hamilton, the shifts in production to the U.S., attacks on pensions: all are aimed at improving their position against their European, Asian and other competitors. The increasing centralization of the steel industry, with various international conglomerates jockeying for control, cries out not for a protectionist campaign for a “Canadian steel industry”—i.e., for home-grown exploiters—but for *international class struggle*. Above all, it points to the need for an internationally planned socialist economy under the rule of the working class.

Far from this perspective, the leadership of USW Local 1005 calls to “rebuild Stelco,” and denounces U.S. Steel as “unwilling to be a participant in Canadian nation-building.” The lead banner on the January 29 march proclaimed “Canadians Stand as One!” The Local 1005 tops even uphold Stelco as a “national treasure!” If these slogans have a somewhat quirky Mao-oid quality, that is not accidental, for the president of the local, Rolf Gerstenberger, is also a prominent supporter of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist).

But there is not a trace of communism here, only the purest nationalist bombast, and it coexists perfectly with the politics of the mainstream bureaucrats in the Ontario Federation of Labour and other major unions. In an article in the Hamilton *Spectator* (9 December), Canadian Auto Workers leader Ken Lewenza mourned the loss of “corporate icons” and “key productive jewels” like Stelco. It was Lewenza, two years ago, who agreed to unprecedented wage and benefit cuts of \$19 an hour at Chrysler and \$22 an hour at General Motors, setting the stage for the latest

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For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution! Women and the East German Deformed Workers State

The following article was translated from Spartakist No. 185 (October 2010), which is published by the Spartakist Workers Party, German section of the International Communist League. It is based on an International Women's Day 2010 presentation by Barbara Köhler in Hamburg.

PART ONE

In Berlin, we held our forum on Women's Day, and on my way to it the subway TV ran a news item that Alice Schwarzer, Germany's icon of bourgeois feminism, had spoken. She stated that she was against Women's Day, a "socialist invention" having something to do with striking women textile workers. In her own words: "It's got absolutely nothing to do with feminism!" Occasionally even this reactionary lady says something true. As a bourgeois movement, feminism makes men the hindrance to achieving women's equality. Thereby it deepens the division of the proletariat fomented by the capitalists, setting men against women. We communists know that the oppression of women is inextricably tied to class rule and exploitation. We fight for mobilizing the entire proletariat,

SPARTAKIST

men as well as women, against the special oppression of women. Without women, no socialist revolution; without socialist revolution, no liberation of women!

Schwarzer was expressing the hostility of the bourgeoisie to the proletariat—International Women's Day marks the strike of women textile workers in Manhattan on 8 March 1908. But what we think of above all is 8 March 1917 (February 23 according to the old Russian calendar)—the women textile workers strike in St. Petersburg. That was the beginning of the February Revolution in Russia. For us communists, March 8 commemorates a day of struggle by the entire working class.

Over the entire past year, we ran articles and gave forums counterposing our communist program to the bourgeois propaganda marking 20 years of counter-revolution in the former East German deformed workers state, the DDR, with which we were inundated all year long. It was with this same program that we intervened in 1989-90 in the incipient political revolution in the DDR. The central issues were defense of the DDR against imperialism, proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy as well as socialist revolution in the West—the fight for a Red Germany ruled by workers councils (soviets).

The bourgeoisie would like to lay the DDR to rest once and for all, but it is still obsessively fixated on it. In German bourgeois circles, one of the most devastating labels you can apply is "DDR methods" or "socialism." When Ursula von der Leyen was still Minister of Family Affairs, she came out for more kindergartens, but only because the German bourgeoisie wants to raise the low birthrate and simultaneously have well-trained women in professional life. And for this sin, even this top-echelon Christian Democratic display model of a mother was accused of DDR methods.

So everybody talks about it, but *what*



Redaktions-Service-Maecker

Schoolgirls receive industrial training in East German factory.

was it really like for women in the DDR? As communists, we apply programmatic standards in order to understand and explain things. Thus we cite the utopian socialist Fourier as an authority on the woman question. Fourier stated, "The change in a historical epoch can always be determined by women's progress towards freedom.... The degree of emancipation of woman is the natural measure of general emancipation." Marx cites Fourier very approvingly in *The Holy Family* (1845). This is one of our guidelines. But at least equally central is Engels' important insight in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884) that women's oppression is rooted in the institution of the family, which is characteristic of all class societies. Engels explains that the first condition for the liberation of women is their integration into public industry and thus into public life, leading to "the abolition of the monogamous family as the economic unit of society."

The DDR arguably constituted the most advanced society for women so far in the history of mankind. In important respects it was even more advanced than the young, revolutionary Soviet Union. While the Bolsheviks advanced a revolutionary program for women's liberation aiming at replacing the functions of the family by socializing housework, the material poverty of the young workers state was a huge obstacle to actually putting this into practice. The DDR even at its founding,

despite having emerged out of the Second World War and despite the reparations claimed by the Soviet Union, nonetheless possessed the basis for a highly industrialized society. This made a big difference.

At the end of the 1980s, over 90 percent of women in the DDR worked or were in training or ongoing education. They really had lots of economic and genuine personal independence. Women and men both acquired broad scientific training, with women working at highly skilled jobs, much more so than in the West. Among people up to 40 years old—all of whom were raised in the DDR—there were as many women as men in every form of training and education. And single mothers could be professionally active and have children because there was an extensive system of childcare facilities, often linked directly to the factories.

What made this possible in the DDR was the victory of the Red Army over Nazi Germany in 1945. The state machinery and economic power of the German bourgeoisie was smashed in the East and a state was founded based on socialized property forms—in Marxist terms, a workers state. However, this workers state was, as we Trotskyists say, deformed from the beginning because political power did not rest with the working class but with a Stalinist bureaucracy.

On the one hand, there was all this economic independence because women were active in production. But at the same

time the institution of the family, which according to Engels is an institution for the oppression of women, existed in the DDR. Not only did the family exist, it was singled out and hailed. This is a contradiction that requires explanation. As Trotsky said in 1940 in regard to the Soviet Union, and is equally true of the DDR: "The workers' state must be taken as it has emerged from the merciless laboratory of history and not as it is imagined by a 'socialist' professor, reflectively exploring his nose with his finger" ("Balance Sheet of the Finnish Events," *In Defense of Marxism*).

The East German deformed workers state was Stalin's "unloved child." This was one instance of his betrayal of revolutionary opportunities in all of Europe and parts of Asia at the end of the Second World War, betrayals committed by Stalin for the sake of his agreements with his imperialist allies, the U.S. and Britain. For example, in Italy the Stalinist Communist Party made the partisans disarm and itself joined a capitalist popular-front government, thereby preventing a workers revolution and subjecting the workers to the U.S. command. In Germany, following the war the socialist aspirations of the proletariat were bureaucratically throttled. Initiatives by the workers to take over factories and towns and run them through embryonic workers councils—the anti-fascist committees—were suppressed.

The DDR and the other "people's democracies" arising from these social transformations were deformed workers states that came into being as a defensive Soviet reaction to the imperialists' escalating Cold War. Thus the DDR set out to build "socialism in one country" on the model of the Stalinist degenerated Soviet Union of the 1940s. The DDR bureaucracy was even willing to give it a try in half a country. This program of "socialism in one country" fundamentally contradicts Marxism, which states that socialism, as a preliminary stage to communism, must be an international social order with a material basis that transcends the bounds of even the most developed capitalist countries. To put it another way: You cannot construct socialism on the basis of material scarcity in an isolated country.

The October Revolution of 1917

Let's go back to the program of the Bolsheviks that led the working class to victory in 1917. From the outset, their program posited that the revolution had to be extended internationally. They always saw the Russian Revolution as just the

Wählt—

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Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands

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Left: Spartakist Workers Party March 1990 election poster, "No to Capitalist Reunification!"

Right: Women protest closing of day-care centers, with sign reading: "Not Every Mom Wants to Be Just a Housewife. That's Why We Need to Keep Day Care."



beginning of revolution on a worldwide scale, and it never even occurred to them that it could survive in isolation. Early Soviet legislation granted women wide-ranging equality and freedom that even today have not been realized by the economically most advanced “democratic” capitalist countries.

Some central characteristics: civil marriage was introduced, along with divorce at the request of either partner, and any and all laws against homosexuals were abolished. The director of the Moscow Institute for Social Hygiene reported in 1923 on the underlying principles of Soviet legislation: “It declares the absolute non-interference of the state and society into sexual matters, so long as nobody is injured and no one’s interests are encroached upon.” *And in 1920 the young Soviet Union was the very first government on earth to overturn criminalization of abortion*—really and truly a gain! For the first time, women were given the right to control their own bodies and were no longer degraded into reproductive machines.

The Bolsheviks were aware of the fact that the family, along with the social functions it fulfills in class society—raising children, taking care of food and clothing, seeing to education and looking after the elderly—could not simply be abolished by decree. Trotsky spoke of the “family as a shut-in petty enterprise.” These functions have to be *replaced* through the socialization of housework. In the major cities of the early Soviet Union, the first steps were taken to set up facilities for socializing housework such as kindergartens, canteens and the like, but the material basis for extending them simply was not there. But the Bolsheviks in the revolutionary period of the Soviet Union told workers the truth: the liberation of women will occur once we have been able to socialize housework; at the moment we cannot simply shake this out of our shirtsleeves, but we are fighting for the extension of the revolution to the economically advanced countries—this is the way to get there!

Degeneration of the Soviet Union and Its Effects on Women

These policies of the Soviet leadership changed because the leadership changed. In 1923-24, the hopes of the Russian working class for a speedy extension of the revolution were destroyed, particularly when a great opportunity for the working class to seize power in Germany was wasted. It was the German Communist Party’s policy of looking to the Social Democratic Party and waiting for it that blew it—as well as the Communist International’s hesitancy at this point in time (for more, see “A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern,” *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 56, Spring 2001). Hence this great possibility for bringing the Soviet Union out of its isolation was allowed to slide by.

With the Russian working class broadly discouraged, a conservative bureaucracy under Stalin seized political power. Its program was to settle down within the status quo, constructing “socialism in one country” and seeking peaceful coexistence with imperialism. Thus the leadership no longer sought to extend the revolution but only reacted to the pressure of imperialism. This bureaucratic layer no longer strove for the extension of the revolution to eliminate material scarcity, instead functioning as kind of a gendarme to administer the existing generalized want.

With Trotsky, we say that this constituted a political counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. But the socialized property forms still existed. This is why we fought for a proletarian political revolution in the Soviet degenerated workers state and do so today in the remaining deformed workers states. This means that the imperative task is defending the social basis, the socialization of the means of production. But it is also necessary to drive out the leadership layer, this caste, and restore the entire power of the working class, including its political power. Leading the working class to this point, however, requires a revolutionary party, as in 1917.

In the Soviet Union, Stalin’s reactionary political line quickly became directed against women. In 1936, a new constitution was adopted that banned abortion and hailed the family as the so-called unit of socialism. In his fundamental work *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), Trotsky explained the underlying mechanisms:

“Having revealed its inability to serve women who are compelled to resort to abortion with the necessary medical aid and sanitation, the state makes a sharp change of course, and takes the road of prohibition. And just as in other situations, the bureaucracy makes a virtue of necessity. One of the members of the highest Soviet court, Soltz, a specialist on matrimonial questions, bases the forthcoming prohibition of abortion on the fact that in a socialist society where there are

death.” That was one reason the bureaucrats needed the family—as an instrument of regimentation—but they also needed it to provide the services that society was unable to provide, due to material causes. Here, of course, it is important to see that the leadership in the Soviet Union and later in the DDR generally did not have achieving this material basis as its goal, but rather constructing “socialism” within the confines of a single country.

A revolutionary leadership in the DDR would have presented an internationalist program to the working class. Like the Bolsheviks, it would have said: We want to extend the revolution, we want to expand our material basis; this cannot be done here at this point, but in the mean-

Mass demonstration in West Germany in 1970s demands repeal of Paragraph 218 banning abortion, introduced by Bismarck in 1871. Inset: 1924 Communist poster by Käthe Kollwitz demands: “Down With the Paragraph Against Abortion!”



no unemployed, etc., etc., a woman has no right to decline ‘the joys of motherhood.’ The philosophy of a priest endowed also with the powers of a gendarme.”

And so it was on the model of this Stalinized Soviet Union that the DDR was constructed.

The DDR: A Deformed Workers State from the Outset

In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky explained the dual character of the Stalinist bureaucracy. An understanding of this is vital if you want to grasp the contradictions in the DDR’s policies toward women. The bureaucracy is a parasitic caste sitting atop the socialized means of production; it vacillates between fear of the working class and fear of imperialism, trying to maneuver between them so as to preserve its privileges. And though Trotsky’s book was written in 1936, in our intervention into the incipient political revolution in the DDR in 1989-90 we were often told it sounds like it was written about the DDR bureaucracy, as if it were an up-to-date handbook.

The proletarian 17 June 1953 uprising underlined the DDR bureaucracy’s contradictory character as a caste, rather than a class owning the means of production. With this uprising, the working class was attempting political revolution, that is, the overthrow of the leadership to gain political power while maintaining the economic foundation of the DDR. At that time, considerable sections of the Socialist Unity Party [ruling East German Stalinist party] went over to the side of the workers. One can hardly imagine a whole segment of the capitalist class going over to the side of the working class in the event of a socialist revolution! The bureaucracy was not a class but a caste, comparable to the bureaucracy in the trade unions.

Trotsky also explained in *The Revolution Betrayed* that the bureaucrats actually needed the family, namely for the social regimentation of the populace. Trotsky showed that families, far from being units of socialism, were units of social backwardness in which women, children and youth were held captive, an “archaic, stuffy and stagnant institution in which the woman of the toiling classes performs galley labor from childhood to

time we will simply do what is possible. But what is possible cannot be simply dictated by the bureaucracy. Instead, the workers, both men and women, taking the factories as their starting point, must determine the policies of the workers state through workers councils. In a struggle to construct such workers councils, a revolutionary leadership in the DDR would have based itself on the most advanced sections of the working class. That is Trotsky’s program and it’s our program as well. But of course that is just what the DDR bureaucracy did not do, since such a struggle for workers councils would have meant dissolving itself. Hence the family was pushed, presented as a fighting unit of socialism, thus reinforcing reactionary notions within society.

Over the years, kindergartens, canteens, laundries, etc. were unevenly but steadily expanded, with a significant part of these facilities directly linked to the factories. However, the DDR leadership promoted this not because they wanted to do something for women’s liberation but because it desperately needed young, well-educated women in the workforce who in return demanded that childcare be provided by society! The number of daycare slots for children up to three years jumped by leaps and bounds from a scant 4,700 in 1950 to over 50,000 in 1955.

This demonstrates the great effort to attract women into production in the early years of the DDR. There was another great leap between 1970 and 1975: from 166,000 to nearly 235,000 (Donna Harsch, *Revenge of the Domestic*, 2007). This was to fulfill [Erich] Honecker’s promise to raise the living standard, which in 1975 had been termed the “unity of economic and social policies.” Honecker had replaced [Walter] Ulbricht in 1970-71 following a series of scares the bureaucracy got from working-class actions, starting with the incipient proletarian political revolutions in the DDR in 1953 and Hungary in 1956, through the 1968 “Prague Spring,” to major strikes against price hikes in Poland in 1970.

The bureaucracy talked itself into believing that under Honecker it could eliminate the DDR’s ever-worsening performance vis-à-vis West German imperialism, in regard to the economy and liv-

ing standards, by running up debts to Western bankers and increasingly cutting back on investment in many areas of the economy. The result was that in 1989 only 30 percent of the country’s machines were operational at any one time, while expenditures for housing construction expanded from year to year right up to 1989. This had brought the DDR to the brink of bankruptcy in the early ’80s, temporarily averted by selling DDR-processed Soviet oil to the West. But doing this caused the efficiency of the DDR economy to collapse even further.

In 1989, there was virtually one kindergarten place available per child, and in many towns the availability of daycare slots stood at over 80 percent. But in some locations women were unwilling or outright refused to use these slots out of concern that kindergarten care was inadequate. Things were even more critical in laundries, where the clothes were damaged or washing took far too long. Trotsky explained this the following way: If workers do not really have control over and cannot determine what they produce, how they do it, how they organize it, then this will impose a sort of gray curtain of indifference upon all labor. And simultaneously this whole stuffy, backward weight of the bureaucracy enveloped society like a suffocating blanket.

Also a problem with childcare facilities was that they generally were not open around the clock. The standard time they were open was approximately 6 a.m. to 6-7 p.m. This of course made it very hard for women working shifts, leaving many women unable to take jobs they would have liked, because the childcare was not there. *We are for top-quality childcare around the clock.* During our intervention into the incipient political revolution in 1989-90, we often had discussions with women who saw themselves as communists but had been so deeply molded by family propaganda—this mommy propaganda that the DDR bureaucracy constantly churned out—that some were against having round-the-clock childcare, arguing that mommy really should be caring for her children in the evening. This shows how, thanks to the intervention of the bureaucracy, backward notions were preserved and became deeply ingrained in people’s minds.

It is interesting and important to see that there were very many women who wanted to be heard. They felt, OK, we’re told it’s a socialist society, so we have the *right* to get more of these facilities, which replace housework for us. There were many protests directed at various levels of the bureaucracy, very many letters were addressed directly to Honecker, in which a woman worker would complain roughly: “Comrade Honecker, it’s unbelievable that in the major factory where I work I’m unable to shop for groceries at lunchtime because there’s nothing in the store. You absolutely have to change this.” A very large number of proletarian women, of working women, thought they had the right to *more* and that they could organize it themselves, and better.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

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Journal of the Women’s Commission of the Spartacist League/U.S.

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Young Spartacus

France, May 1968

Prerevolutionary Situation Betrayed by Communist Party

We print below the final part of a forum by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France, translated and adapted from the LTF's newspaper *Le Bolchévique* (Nos. 185 and 186, September and December 2008). Parts One and Two, which appeared in WV Nos. 972 and 974 (21 January and 18 February), covered the period from May 13, when a nationwide general strike followed the brutal repression of student demonstrations, to the end of May.

LE BOLCHEVIK

As we saw, leading up to May 29, the regime in France was badly shaken. A portion of the bourgeoisie was wondering about President Charles de Gaulle. On the 29th, the day of the big demonstrations called by the French Communist Party (PCF), de Gaulle “disappeared” off to Baden-Baden to consult General Jacques Massu, the chief of staff of the French army in Germany. Massu convinced de Gaulle to stand firm, no doubt assuring him that the army was prepared to intervene if necessary—which would have meant civil war. Even though that plan was never carried out, it was definitely an option de Gaulle was contemplating in case he

PART THREE

could not put an end to the strike by parliamentary means. This simple fact confirms the Marxist theory of the state, which exists to defend the capitalist order through force.

In his book *Baden '68*, Massu also reported that on May 28, the day before his meeting with de Gaulle, he had received with pomp and circumstance the commander-in-chief of Soviet troops in East Germany, Marshal Koshevoy, who recommended that he “crush” the students in Paris and had nothing but praise for de Gaulle. In other words, the bureaucracy of the Soviet degenerated workers state was prepared to see revolution in France strangled in order to preserve de Gaulle, because of his semi-autonomy from the U.S.-led anti-Soviet NATO alliance.

On the morning after the big May 29



Gérald Bloncourt

Paris, 27 May 1968: Communist Party and CGT union federation leader Benoît Frachon presented sellout deal to striking Renault-Billancourt workers, who shouted it down.

demonstrations, the CGT trade-union federation had another meeting with the Fédération de la Gauche Démocrate et Socialiste (FGDS, a bloc comprising the French Socialist party and small bourgeois parties) and the PCF (which led the CGT). The purpose of the meeting was to convince the FGDS to form an electoral alliance with the PCF/CGT.

That evening, de Gaulle went on the offensive, emboldened by the support of the military and, no doubt, by the report Massu had given him about his encounter with Koshevoy. De Gaulle dissolved the French parliament, launched a virulent anti-Communist attack on the PCF and CGT, practically accusing them of plotting a coup d'état, and called for a mobilization of the “people”—in other words, the bourgeoisie, the part of the petty bourgeoisie that had not been won over by the strikers and the dregs of society well known to the likes of Charles Pasqua. (Pasqua was key for the covert operations de Gaulle ran using thugs and

gangsters.) De Gaulle promised to free a dozen leaders of the OAS who were still in jail. (The OAS [Secret Army Organization] was a fascist organization led by former army officers that formed to oppose French withdrawal from Algeria.) He did this by mid June in order to make up with the far right and the officer corps.

Faced with this offensive the PCF and CGT were cornered, since they rejected any confrontation with the Gaullist regime outside of the institutional framework of parliament and the Fifth Republic. They wanted to avoid a fierce and uncontrollable clash at any price, so they had no option but to call the workers back to work. To make this happen, they would not hesitate to use any means, specifically atomizing the strike, which they started to do after the May 25-27 Grenelle negotiations between the government and capitalists and the unions. Since the PCF had no success coaxing the FGDS into an alliance, they knew they had no chance in the elections.

In spite of the absence of a revolutionary party able to expose the Stalinists' rescue operation for capitalism and split the PCF by winning over militants disgusted by their leadership, the bureaucrats encountered fierce resistance from the working class. PCF leader Georges Séguy explained it this way: “In some cases, of which there were few, our activists had to argue strongly with workers who were in favor of continuing the strike in spite of the indisputable success we had had with the demands that we won. They had hoped for more decisive changes. They didn't realize that the political situation didn't allow us to go further.”

In *Whither France?* Trotsky said: “The most striking features of our epoch of capitalism in decay are *intermediate* and *transitional*: situations between the non-revolutionary and the prerevolutionary, between the prerevolutionary and the revolutionary or...the counterrevolutionary. It is precisely these transitional stages that have a decisive importance from the point of view of political strategy” (ellipsis in original). It is easy to imagine that, if a revolutionary party had intervened as the strike grew, Trotsky's words would have become concrete after May 30, when de

Gaulle decided it was time for a showdown. That was a turning point in 1968 for both the bourgeoisie and the PCF.

It wasn't until June 7 that the first significant back-to-work moves took place. It took several days to get those sectors that had kicked off the strike to go back. To finally overcome the determination to continue the strike, the bureaucrats used every contrivance: separate negotiations for individual union locals; false rumors of plants going back to work; back-to-work votes and, when those didn't obtain the expected results, revotes, and so on, until they got the strikers back to work.

While the Stalinists maneuvered, the bourgeoisie sent the cops to attack key centers of workers' resistance like the postal sorting centers and railroad terminals. On the night of June 5 the CRS riot cops took over the Renault factory in Flins. Four days of pitched battles ensued around the plant, during which the young Maoist high school student Gilles Tautin was killed. On June 11 the cops attacked the Peugeot factory in Sochaux; two workers were killed. On June 12 all the far left organizations (pseudo-Trotskyists, the “March 22 Movement” student organization, Maoist groups, etc.) were banned. Far from protesting this ban, when members of these organizations came to the factory gates, the PCF physically attacked them!

In the end, the bureaucrats and the state got what they wanted. The working class and its last holdouts, betrayed by their own leaders and lacking a credible revolutionary alternative, could no longer resist the pressure to go back to work and surrendered, sick at heart. The large percentage of workers who voted against going back shows how much reluctance there was. Some sectors like the workers in the metal industries went back very late. The CGT called to end the strike at the Renault plant in Billancourt on June 17. Krasucki (a CGT leader) got booed when he called for going back to work at Citroën on June 24. That was even after the first round of parliamentary elections, which took place on June 23 and were a landslide for the reactionaries!

Mentors of Today's New Anti-Capitalist Party

Now let's get back to what the Pabloite predecessors of New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) spokesman Olivier Besancenot were doing in May '68. Political adaptation and capitulation are the Pabloites' hallmark. And they didn't miss any opportunities for that in this prerevolutionary period. They presented the radicalized students as the vanguard. For instance on May 20, the Pabloites' international organization, the United Secretariat, declared: “There is still a huge gap between the revolutionary maturity of the vanguard of the youth and the workers' level of consciousness.” But around 1968, all the organizations in the workers movement claimed to be fighting for socialism or communism. The working class was extremely combative and tended to identify its struggles with the 1917 Russian October Revolution.

In 1968, the Pabloites were centrists, that is, revolutionary in words and opportunist in deeds. Their rhetoric was full of references to workers revolution, to dual power, even “smashing the bourgeois

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Spartacus Youth Club Classes

CHICAGO

Thursday, March 24, 6 p.m.

The Capitalist State: An Instrument of Organized Terror Against Workers and the Oppressed

University of Illinois at Chicago
African-American Cultural
Center Library, Room 200
Addams Hall, 830 S. Halsted St.
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

TORONTO

Wednesday, March 23, 7 p.m.

Forge a Revolutionary Workers Party!

OISE (Ontario Institute for Studies
in Education)
252 Bloor Street West
Room 2281
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartacan@on.aibn.com

LOS ANGELES

Wednesday, March 30, 6 p.m.

Women's Oppression and the Family For Women's Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

UCLA, Ackerman Union, Room 3516
Information and readings: (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

NEW YORK CITY

Wednesday, March 30, 7:30 p.m.

The Class Nature of the State For a Revolutionary Workers Party That Fights for a Workers Government!

CCNY, Room NAC 1/209
(Take #1 train to 137th St.-City College)
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net

Visit the ICL Web Site:
www.icl-fi.org

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and the Imperialist Military No to ROTC on Campus!

With the brutal occupation of Iraq dragging on, tens of thousands of additional troops sent to Afghanistan and increased “secret” drone bombings and CIA operations in Pakistan, the armed forces are looking for a “few good men and women” to serve in their officer corps. *All U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan now! Hands off Pakistan!* In his January 25 State of the Union address, imperialist Commander-in-Chief Obama invoked the repeal of the military’s anti-gay “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy to bolster military recruitment: “Starting this year, no American will be forbidden from serving the country they love because of who they love. And with that change, I call on all our college campuses to open their doors to our military recruiters and ROTC.” Within days of the Senate’s December 18 vote to allow the repeal of DADT, university presidents, including at Columbia and Yale, scrambled to bring ROTC back to their campuses. Meanwhile, the media blathered on about how the military can contribute to the “diversity of the intellectual and moral climate” (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 9 January). On March 4, Harvard president Drew Gilpin Faust reinstated Naval ROTC.

ROTC had been driven off over 100 campuses by the early 1970s, as opposition to U.S. imperialism’s dirty, losing war in Vietnam roiled the country. Since that time, ROTC has quietly crawled back onto many of these campuses or set up joint programs with neighboring universities. Unlike radicalized students in the 1960s, in the last few years, campus activists and liberals have narrowly focused their opposition to ROTC on the military’s discriminatory DADT policy. Most recently, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) groups have objected to ROTC’s return because the military continues to forbid transgender people from enlisting.

As revolutionary socialists, we have a principled stance against the imperialists’ war aims and their armed forces, upholding German revolutionary Wilhelm Liebknecht’s call: “not a man nor a penny” for the capitalist military! ROTC is a training program for officers. It’s an appendage of the military, which exists to defend the bourgeoisie’s interests both through war and colonial plunder abroad and by violently repressing class and social struggle at home. While we fight against discrimination, including discrimination against homosexuals in the armed forces, our goal is not to clean up the image of the capi-

talist military but to destroy it, along with the racist and sexist capitalist order it defends, through socialist revolution.

Since our founding, the Spartacus Youth Clubs (and our predecessors) have mobilized to keep military recruiters and ROTC off campuses, and have protested military research and CIA and cop training on campus. The universities are not ivory towers, but part of the capitalist society they exist in—campus administrations run them to serve the interest of the capitalist class, in order to train the next generation of managers, technicians, government administrators and war criminals. Nonetheless, we oppose every attempt by the ruling class to turn the campuses into direct training grounds for agents of U.S. imperialism. *ROTC, military recruiters and cops off campus now!*

The Imperialist Military and Capitalist Society

Militarism and imperialist war are inherent to this class-divided society in which a tiny minority of the population owns the banks and industry and amasses profit by exploiting the labor of the working class. Imperialism is not a policy that can be reformed. The final stage in the development of capitalism, characterized by the export of finance capital, imperialism is a system in which rival advanced capitalist states are compelled by the need for cheap labor, natural resources and new markets to wage wars to divide and dominate the world. The U.S. imperialists, who sit on the largest stockpile of operational nuclear weapons and have a military budget greater than that of the next 19 countries combined, are the greatest danger to the world’s peoples.

The release by WikiLeaks last April of a video showing an Apache helicopter gunning down Iraqi civilians while the pilots gloated over the carnage provided a glimpse of the brutality of the U.S. imperialists’ military. And for those the imperialists see as domestic opponents of their war aims, witness the treatment of Bradley Manning, who is accused of leaking this video and other materials. He has been held in solitary confinement at a military brig since last May. Since March 2 his clothes have been confiscated at night. In the morning he has been forced to stand naked outside his cell to have them returned. Obama has endorsed this treatment, which is supposedly a “precautionary measure” for Manning’s safety.

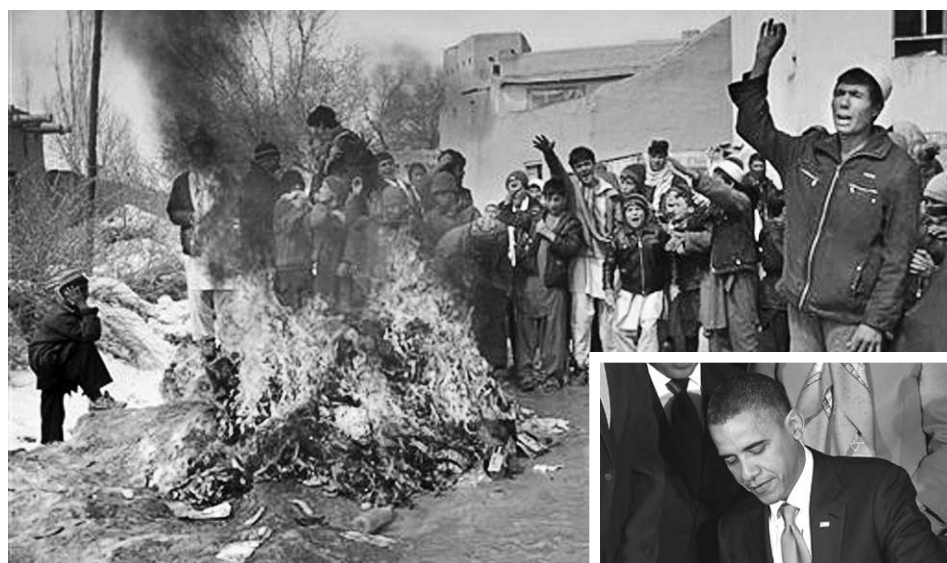
Free Bradley Manning!

The imperialist military is a microcosm

of society, reflecting the class divide between the ranks and the bourgeois officer corps, as well as the deep-rooted racism and anti-gay and anti-woman bigotry of American society as a whole. Historically, black troops have often been keenly aware of the hypocrisy of U.S. wars for “freedom” and “democracy” while they are oppressed and discriminated against at

strengthen our national security and uphold the ideals that our fighting men and women risk their lives to defend.” Referring to the many soldiers forced out of the military under the discriminatory policy, “Independent” Democrat Senator Joe Lieberman lamented, “What a waste.”

Anti-sodomy laws and “perversion” screenings in the armed forces have long



AP photos
March 1: Residents of Ghazni, Afghanistan, burn goods distributed by U.S.-led occupation troops on same day that NATO bombing killed nine children. Inset: Obama signs Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act on December 22.

home. As we pointed out in “Sex, Race and the Military” (WV No. 671, 11 July 1997): “Until the late 1940s, the military was rigidly segregated, with blacks by and large excluded from combat duty because of the bourgeoisie’s overriding fear of ‘Negroes with guns.’” As the massive need for manpower temporarily overwhelmed traditional racist practices toward the end of World War II, blacks began to be integrated into white fighting units.

In the U.S. today, the volunteer army relies on the economic draft to recruit the bulk of its rank-and-file soldiers. With dwindling access to higher education due to nationwide tuition hikes and the eviscerating of affirmative action, military recruitment is up. Many working-class and poor youth—disproportionately black and Latino—see joining the military as their only opportunity to get a college education or learn a skill. For black youth in particular, who face special race-caste oppression under U.S. capitalism, options are largely limited to the military, a McJob, prison or death on the streets.

As Marxists we oppose anyone volunteering for the imperialist military. We also oppose the draft. However in the event of a draft, as during the Vietnam War, we would oppose radicals refusing to serve in the military, which would only strengthen the ideological purity and political reliability of the armed forces. Instead, we say young militants should go with working-class and minority youth and continue their political agitation. (See “You Will Go!” *Spartacist* No. 11, March-April 1968.)

“Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

For more than a decade, the U.S. stood out among economically advanced countries for its policy of excluding open homosexuals from the military. Last December, Obama and the Democratic Congress pushed through the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act just weeks before the Republicans took over the House, though the repeal may take months more to go into effect. When signing the repeal, Obama enthused, “This law I’m about to sign will

been used to separate out the “sissies” and “sexual degenerates” from the “real men.” In 1982, Reagan signed a formal ban asserting that “Homosexuality is incompatible with military service.” Since the implementation of DADT in 1993 under Democratic president Bill Clinton, over 13,000 service members were discharged and thousands more have endured aggressive harassment, victims of the military culture’s particular brand of macho brutality and piggishness. Continuously vilified as rapists and pariahs, gays in the military are frequently the target of harassment, abuse and beatings.

When DADT was implemented in 1993, we wrote, “Allowing gays into the military with full rights is a simple democratic demand. However even if the formal ban is dropped, gays will still face harassment and violence at the hands of bigoted officers and fellow soldiers in this bigoted society” (“Right-Wing Bigots Mobilize Against Gays in the Military,” WV No. 569, 12 February 1993). This has been the case for women, who were granted permanent status in the military in 1948. Today, women are discriminated against in the armed forces and violence against them remains prevalent—sexual assault is twice as common as in the civilian population.

The systematic oppression of gay and lesbian people in the military—as in society at large—cannot be eliminated under capitalism. Hatred of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people flows from the institution of the family. Under the capitalist system, any sexual arrangement that deviates from the heterosexual, monogamous paradigm is demonized. The patriarchal family acts as the main prop of the oppression of women and regiments and conservatizes each new generation whose future is to become wage slaves and cannon fodder for capitalist exploitation.

In the past, many of those hoping to avoid fighting American wars of depredation relied on what was known as the “gay excuse” to get discharged. (Famously,

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Walker/NY Times
Columbia University, 1965: Spartacists at demonstration against ROTC during Vietnam War.

May 1968...

(continued from page 6)

state apparatus.” Thus, in a book he wrote in 1968 with his then-partner Henri Weber, now a Socialist Party senator, Pabloite leader Daniel Bensaïd could say: “The broken-down regime could no longer, in these troubled times, count on its own hirelings, the forces of repression were at the end of their rope, otherwise it was a debacle. Power was there for the taking. Anything was possible. The regime survived because of the lack of any candidate to take over.”

Instead of workers revolution, the Pabloites were for using pressure from the streets to form a popular-front government, that is, a government based on the alliance of bourgeois and workers parties to manage capitalism. Pierre Frank, leader of the Pabloite Parti Communiste Internationaliste, declared on May 22 (*Intercontinental Press*, 10 June 1968): “In these days when an unproclaimed general strike is in effect, it would be possible to force de Gaulle’s departure and to impose a CP-FGDS government by nonparliamentary but peaceful means.” The Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire, the Pabloites’ youth organization, tried to make this sound more appetizing with their slogan “People’s government, yes! Mitterrand, Mendès-France, no!” (Mitterrand and Mendès-France were left bourgeois politicians.) Twenty years later, in 1988, Pabloite leaders Alain Krivine and Bensaïd admitted that “the formulation of ‘people’s government’ had, however, the advantage of referring to a government of the left parties without going into any more precise considerations” (*Mai Si! 1968-1988: Rebelles et Repentis* [Yes We May! 1968-1988: Rebels and Repenters]). According to the Pabloites, this government—which could only have been a bourgeois government—would have been under the “control” of the working class.

Let’s compare what the young Bensaïd wrote in 1968 with the hardened reformist he had become 20 years later, when he co-authored that 1988 book with Krivine. In the book, he polemicized against his earlier position, going further in Pabloite adaptation to popular-frontist and anti-Soviet pressure: “Anything was not possible in 1968: you cannot jump ahead of your own time and the existing relationship of forces. But something different was certainly possible.” And, again, further on: “Today we still remain convinced that there were other possibilities, other outcomes, other roads. Not the big day, Revolution with a capital ‘R,’ but the overturn of the regime through the strike and through extraparlimentary mobilization.” Bensaïd preferred to sweep the formulation “Anything was possible,” which he has come to consider too far left, under the rug. So he made his view clear, that the general strike could have forced de Gaulle to resign, after which he expected a popular front to replace him.

“Anything is possible” was a formula-

tion used by the centrist Marceau Pivert during the 1936 revolutionary situation in France. At that time, Trotsky polemicized very sharply against Pivert, who talked about revolution while staying inside the SFIO (the French Socialist party), in which he represented the left wing. Pivert was to end up in the propaganda office of Léon Blum’s popular-front government. Trotsky sought to win youth and workers away from Pivert’s influence by exposing his politics, which provided a left cover for maintaining the capitalist order. There was someone who argued “Anything is not possible” against Pivert in 1936. It was PCF leader Maurice Thorez, the gravedigger of the revolutionary situation. Bensaïd and Krivine know this perfectly well. So it’s quite cynical for these two to adopt Thorez’s formulation in order to denounce the positions they themselves held in 1968. In hindsight, it is clear that

class control of capitalism, etc., which he sums up as “revolutionizing society.” And above all, he’s ready and willing to participate in a bourgeois government if it is “anti-capitalist.”

Voix Ouvrière’s Economism in May ’68

In contrast to the Pabloites’ student vanguardism, Voix Ouvrière (VO) had a solid proletarian orientation, but it was mainly economist. The pamphlet that VO’s successor organization Lutte Ouvrière (LO) put out for the 40th anniversary of 1968 indicates:

“It was obvious that ‘the ten million striking workers weren’t demanding state power.’ For the most part, they didn’t have even the slightest idea what that meant, and Séguy, Waldeck Rochet and Marchais were certainly not going to enlighten them. May 1968 was obviously not like the situation in October 1917 [in

and the adjustment to be made to wage rates, but by calling on workers themselves to organize to control this.”

That is, indeed, VO/LO’s whole program and the sum total of the demands you can find in all of their leaflets and articles from May-June 1968. The only thing they add today is, of course, “workers control over the factories’ accounting in order to know exactly what their financial situations are.” Clearly, VO’s program in 1968 was the same as the CGT’s. It’s just that the amount they demanded for the minimum wage, etc., was greater.

For us, what will change workers’ consciousness and tear them out of the clutches of the reformists and centrists is the intervention of a revolutionary party with its program. This party will be built by forging cadres, organizing the most conscious elements of the working class, the vanguard. VO’s pamphlet shows they didn’t explain the need to do away with capitalism until the beginning of June, when the strike had already passed its peak.

Lenin laid out the basis of his conception of the party in his 1902 work *What Is To Be Done?*, explaining that “Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers.” Lenin at the time was fighting against economist “socialists” like LO today, who insisted that the workers could acquire consciousness of their historic tasks spontaneously through their economic struggles. It is because of this economist conception that, throughout May-June 1968, the program VO/LO intervened with never went beyond simple economic demands, only for a few cents more than what the CGT/PCF were asking for. It also explains why, for LO, the whole thing was just a big strike. Like all economists, in the end, they blamed the workers, saying they weren’t ready or conscious enough to struggle for power. But making the working class understand its historic task as the gravedigger of capitalism is the role of the revolutionary party. This also means combating the social backwardness that divides the working class along race lines, something that LO never worried about then—nor does it today.

VO and the Popular Front

Confronted with maneuvers over a new popular front and whether it would be with or without the PCF, VO supported the May 27 rally at Charléty Stadium that was designed to launch a popular front without the PCF. Thus the 28 May *Voix Ouvrière* described Charléty as a demonstration of 60,000 people “built around ‘far leftist’ demands” and enthused over the slogan “Séguy, traître,” without mentioning that the same demonstrators started chanting bourgeois politician Mendès-France’s name the moment they saw him.

One of the rare times VO talked about the PCF and the SFIO allying with the bourgeoisie, in a 4 June article in *Voix Ouvrière*, they reminded us that the left had already been in power twice, adding:

“In the aftermath of World War II the Communist Party and the Socialist Party even had, between them, an absolute majority in the elections. But the SP didn’t want to govern without the MRP [the bourgeois Popular Republican Movement]. So then the PCF rallied to a three-party alliance in the name of unity. Do we have any reason to believe that this parliamentarist ‘left’ that has always gone back on its promises would keep them today? No.”

VO said there was no reason to believe the popular front’s promises, but in reality what the PCF and SP promised was precisely to make an alliance with the bourgeoisie—and that alliance can only be made on the bourgeoisie’s own terms, that is, against the interests of the workers. VO never explained that part because, for them, it is not a question of principle or a class question for workers parties to make such an alliance with the bourgeoisie.

After VO and the other organizations were banned, VO reorganized under the



1936: Workers occupy construction site as class struggle sweeps France under capitalist Popular Front government. Right: Popular Front alliance leaders Léon Blum (left) of Socialist party; Maurice Thorez (right) of Communist Party, which sold out general strike that year; bourgeois Radical Party’s Edouard Daladier (behind Thorez).



no credit

they have moved from centrist political positions like Pivert’s to reformist ones like Thorez’s.

Today the Pabloites have thrown their forces into building the NPA. We call it the “New Anti-Communist Party” because it clearly represents their acceptance of and integration into the “death of communism” campaign. In all his public talks, Besancenot never forgets to explain that the 1990s saw the end of a cycle, that the cycle of the 1917 Revolution is over and that, for him, references to communism, Leninism and Trotskyism are a thing of the past. Whereupon he offers up “21st-century socialism” with pathetic, classic social-democratic proposals: take from the rich to give to the poor, working-

Russia], with workers councils won to the idea of taking power, nor was it even February 1917, with soviets forming a *de facto* parallel power to that of the Provisional Government. In France in 1968, there was no embryo of dual power challenging the rule of the bourgeoisie in the name of the working class, even if only *de facto*, not even at the shopfloor level where strike committees composed of representatives of the workers in struggle existed only in a tiny number of factories.”

That’s true, but LO mentions it in order to argue that it was impossible for such workers councils to emerge. To do so, LO needs to distort reality. What they falsify is the extent to which the country, the Gaullist regime and the state were paralyzed. They disappear the possibility, opened up by the workers mobilizations, for a revolutionary leadership to transform the strike committees into true organs of proletarian power.

But while LO chides PCF leaders Séguy and Waldeck Rochet for failing to enlighten the workers about what workers power would mean, the workers clearly were not any more enlightened by VO’s newspaper and leaflets (judging by what LO has reprinted). Actually, LO concludes the passage I quoted earlier with an explanation of the program VO put forward during the entire May-June 1968 period:

“Simply on the level of economic demands, these would have called not only for wage increases greater than the measly proposals of the ‘Grenelle Agreement’ [and] an immediate return to a 40-hour workweek, but also a sliding scale of wages, which is the only way to prevent the bosses from recouping, in a few months of inflation, everything they had to give up. Not by leaving it to the government to assess the rate of inflation

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name Lutte Ouvrière on June 24. Three weeks after their June 4 article, in the first issue of *Lutte Ouvrière*, LO called quasi-explicitly for workers to vote for the very same organizations that were allied with the bourgeoisie or seeking such an alliance. In 2007, at Lutte Ouvrière's Fête, an event they host every year, François Duburg, one of their historic leaders, got offended and denied it when we pointed that out. But here's what LO printed between the two rounds of the 1968 parliamentary elections:

"It is however plausible that a large number of voters on the left, disgusted by the attitude of the PCF and the FGDS, who scuttled the general strike, may have abstained on the first round. Maybe those people will vote on the second round so they can express, in spite of everything, their opposition to Gaullism in the only way possible in these elections. Then we would see the left's vote count go up. That wouldn't be enough to prevent the UDR [the Gaullist party] from having a majority in the Chamber [the lower house of parliament].

"And that's too bad! It's really a shame that the FGDS and PCF can't rise to power: then their true face as servants of the bourgeoisie would appear clearly before everyone's eyes....

"Yes, it's really too bad that they can't rise to power. And if there's still time the workers, even if they're disappointed, must try to send them there [i.e., elect them] on the second round."

Of course VO wasn't today's LO group that has supported counterrevolution in the USSR and in Poland. But this foreshadows their call to vote "without illusions but without reservations" for François Mitterrand in 1981. Now, with the collapse of the USSR and the sharp decline of the level of consciousness in the working class following the "death of communism" campaign, LO's accommodationism leads them to openly embrace popular-frontism.

As I said, Trotskyists would have called for no vote to the popular-front candidates in the 1968 elections, including members of workers parties running as part of a bourgeois popular front. The fifth issue of the French edition of *Spartacist*, in May 1974, headlined "Not Only a Stupidity, But a Crime" [see "Not Mitterrand, But a Workers Government!" *WV* No. 43, 26 April 1974]. Our article attacked the OCI (Pierre Lambert's organization, a predecessor of the Parti Ouvrier Indépendant) for supporting the Union of the Left's candidate, Mitterrand, in the first round of the presidential elections in 1974. As for us, in 1974, we gave critical support to LO's candidate Arlette Laguiller in the first round because she was running against Mitterrand's popular front, although we warned in advance—and correctly—that LO would probably capitulate to Mitterrand on the second round. In 1977, two years after the Ligue Trotskyiste de France was founded, we intervened in the elections calling to abstain

except where candidates were running both against the alliance with the bourgeois Left Radicals, and for breaking with the popular front's "Common Program of Government" for managing capitalism.

Lutte Ouvrière and the Party Question

At the 2008 LO Fête, in a debate between LO and the Pabloites, VO's 1968 call to build a party that would regroup all revolutionaries came up. The first issues of *Lutte Ouvrière*, after VO was dissolved, had long articles calling for all "revolutionaries" to regroup. They would even have looked favorably on forming a greater United Socialist Party based on the platform of the Charléty rally, which was for a popular front without the PCF. (See the article in the 31 May issue of *Voix Ouvrière*, "A 'Third Force' on the Left?") LO argued that thousands of

One can compare that to what Trotsky did in the 1930s, especially from 1933 to 1938, to found the Fourth International. Throughout those years, Trotsky fought over programmatic questions like unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union and intransigent struggle against the popular front, which were at the heart of the debates. The result of these years of struggle—at a time when revolutionary events were unfolding as in Spain and France in 1936—was a rock-solid programmatic basis, the Transitional Program, on which the Fourth International was founded. Clearly, LO's method is quite the opposite of Trotsky's.

LO's call was an extension of the permanent liaison committee of the Pabloites and VO that was created on May 19, which is to say, right at the start of the strike. The program of this permanent committee was also utterly economist and

And we went on:

"What has been pointed up in France by the latest CP-CGT betrayal is not the need for a 'Trotskyist regroupment' but the need for a new revolutionary party based on the vindicated Bolshevik program, uniting all those, even from such tendencies as the Maoists and syndicalists, who stand in favor of workers' committees of power. We hope that VO, the French Bolsheviks, have not been disoriented as were the Russians in 1905."

—"To the Brink and Back: French Revolution," *Spartacist* No. 12, September-October 1968

The last sentence refers to the fraternal relations we had with VO at the time. We had met VO in 1966 at the London conference of the International Committee of the Fourth International (see *Spartacist* No. 6, June-July 1966). One of our members went to work with VO/LO in France. By the time she came back to the U.S., she had been won over to VO's economist political conceptions. We had a fight about this in the party—you can read the main documents in our pamphlet, *Lutte Ouvrière and Spark: Workerism and National Narrowness* (1988). This fight was against LO's economism, and therefore about the Leninist conception of the party.

Aftermath of May-June 1968

May '68 had tremendous international repercussions. In Italy the simmering student revolt culminated in the "hot autumn" of 1969. And then in 1974 the Portuguese revolution took place. In both cases a revolutionary party was lacking, and these opportunities were sold out by the Stalinists and the social democrats with the help of the pseudo-revolutionaries. Then a whole lot of social movements arose in many countries. The whole post '68 period was full of turmoil. The Stalinists and the social democrats in France, drawing their own lessons from 1968, went on to form the Union of the Left based on the "Common Program of Government" and succeeded, with the help of the pseudo-revolutionaries, in channeling all the struggles into this popular front until it won the elections in 1981.

May '68 also largely put an end to the left-wing theories that the working class was no longer the revolutionary force in advanced industrial countries. These ideas were widespread during the '60s among young radical activists to the left of the social-democratic parties in Europe and the Democratic Party in the U.S., but the role the working class played in May-June 1968 debunked them. That was part of what allowed us to recruit rapidly in the U.S., which was the basis for the transformation of the SL/U.S. into a fighting propaganda group. Then we were able to lay the basis for our subsequent international expansion.

Immediately after May '68, the Pabloites, LO and the Lambertists recruited considerably. They were the only organizations claiming adherence to Trotskyism in continental Europe that numbered several thousand. This massive post-1968 recruitment is the reason these organizations have survived to this day with a large membership. In the years that followed, these groups moved to the right under the pressure of the second Cold War and the anti-Communist crusade led in France by Mitterrand. They all supported the counterrevolutionary anti-Soviet forces in the 1980s as well as the various popular fronts. Their adaptation to and integration into the popular front today is a reflection, on the national terrain, of their abandoning a revolutionary perspective, which had been expressed on the Russian question.

When you draw the right political conclusions from May-June 1968 you understand that the key question in this pre-revolutionary situation was the question of a party. The task before us today is to reforge the Fourth International of Leon Trotsky, the world party of revolution, and learn the lessons of 1968. That is the task we are pursuing today. Join us! For new October Revolutions! ■



New York, 22 June 1968: Protest against French government's ban of organizations to the left of the Communist Party.

youth and workers were looking for a revolutionary path but were puzzled by the huge number of small groups; "revolutionaries," whether Trotskyist, Maoist or anarchist, had to come together despite their differences because time was getting short; all "revolutionaries" were up against the bourgeoisie and the bureaucrats, and during the strikes they stood arm in arm in spite of their differences. This party had to allow different tendencies to exist, and these tendencies would have the duty to express their differences publicly—in other words it would be a Menshevik party even though they referred to the Bolshevik Party constantly in those articles! Though LO kept talking about the "revolutionary ideas" all these groups shared, not once did they spell out the differences between them, let alone say what political program these groups should unite on.

very similar to the CGT's program: a 1,000 franc minimum wage, pay for strike days, union rights in the factories, etc. The only difference from the CGT's demands was that they added the utopian reformist demand "dissolution of the repressive forces of the bourgeois state." At that time, the committee already called on all organizations claiming to be Trotskyist to join it.

Our comrades in the Spartacist League/U.S. wrote about this committee in an article that made the necessary points:

"The axis upon which the VO-Pabloite unity of action is based is a false one. The joint statement called upon 'all organizations claiming to be Trotskyist to join in this move.' The VO comrades feel the recent events constitute 'the French 1905.' Let us remember that the sequel to the 1905 Russian Revolution was a unification of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks! It took Lenin several years to break this over-fraternal unity."

by American flags, revoltingly propounds the usefulness of gays to the imperialist war machine.

To swim in this stream, the fake-socialist ISO in many of its articles on DADT disapproves the repressive nature of the military, while pushing liberal illusions that a mythical "progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie can be relied on to fight for gay rights. After joyously gushing over Obama's election in 2008, last October the ISO grumbled that if Obama and the Democrats were "truly the champions of LGBT equality they have so often claimed to be, they would have kept their promises" to end DADT (*Socialist Worker* online, 18 October 2010). Now that Obama and the late majority-Democratic Congress have agreed to overturn DADT, are they now "truly champions of LGBT equality"? No! The Democratic Party, like all bourgeois parties, defends the system of capitalism, which perpetuates the oppression of women and sexual minorities. The ISO channels outrage over anti-gay prejudice and discrimination into impotent pressure politics

by telling leftists, workers and youth that the capitalist ruling class can be held "accountable" to their empty proclamations.

What is urgently needed is a revolutionary workers party, organized in opposition to the capitalist Democrats, that would champion the rights of all the oppressed. You cannot end war or the economic conditions that force working-class and minority youth into the military without overturning the capitalist system in which these are rooted. We stand on the model of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, which not only pulled a country out of the first imperialist world war but also eliminated all laws against homosexuality. As we stated in our article, "Marxism, Militarism and War" (*WV* No. 857, 28 October 2005), "As Marxists, our goal is not just to get ROTC and military recruiters off campus for now, but to win students to the struggle to organize the social power of the working class for socialist revolution to get rid of imperialist militarism, and the capitalist system it serves, once and for all." ■

ROTC...

(continued from page 7)

comedian Lenny Bruce reportedly faked being gay on board the USS *Brooklyn* during World War II, claiming that he was "attracted physically to a few of the fellows.") Today, enthusiasm for joining the military is one expression of a socially conservative trend in the gay rights milieu, one that seeks bourgeois "respectability" including by embracing patriotism and marital "family values." A statement by OutServe, an underground organization of gay and lesbian active-duty soldiers, exemplifies this patriotic trend: "Today's vote by the Senate is a step forward for America. Today our military is stronger, our nation is stronger" (outserv.org). Organizers of many gay rights demonstrations, including the International Socialist Organization (ISO), have promoted Dan Choi, a West Point graduate who was discharged after coming out on television. Choi, who often campaigned surrounded

(continued from page 3)

The pro-NDP “socialist” groups that populate the Canadian left apologize for, or openly propound, the same nationalist protectionism. The Maple Leaf patriots of the Communist Party of Canada (CP) claim that the current struggle is “about having a domestic industry to produce steel for Canadian manufacturing...or Canadian sovereignty and independence by another name” (*People’s Voice*, 1-14 February). The International Socialists mouth a few words against Canadian nationalism, but two years ago this group declared: “We must demand that the government keep steel production local” (*Socialist Worker*, 16 March 2009). While the CP calls to “Nationalize US Steel operations in Hamilton,” the I.S. pleads for the “nationalization and retooling of factories.”

The union misleaders sell workers the lie that a Canadian boss is better than an American (or Japanese or German), that protectionist tariffs and nationalization schemes will protect jobs, stop plant closures and maintain wages and benefits. But protectionism means joining with the enemy class to shore up their profits, profits extracted from the labour of working people be they in Canada, the U.S. or elsewhere. Moreover, nationalizing the *least* efficient capitalist operations is in a sense the exact opposite of socialist expropriation. Socialist economic planning under the rule of the working class is based precisely on appropriating from the capitalists the *most advanced* means of production. As Trotsky explained in the Transitional Program, the Marxist program of expropriating the capitalist bloodsuckers is counterposed to “the muddle-headed reformist slogan of ‘nationalization’” and must be linked to the struggle for working-class power.

A Spartacist Pamphlet

Karl Marx Was Right

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It was the 1946 strike against Stelco that won union recognition and a 40-hour workweek. The strike was part of a broader postwar upsurge of class struggle. Proletarian solidarity as well as militant tactics were key to the union's struggle. The company moved in an army of scabs to keep the mill going. But Stelco couldn't move the steel through the picket lines. And even when the picket lines were breached and steel was loaded on to a freighter, dockers in Montreal wouldn't touch the scab steel, so it sat on the *Selkirk* until the strike was over. The company failed to drive out the union, its fundamental goal,



Down With Anti-Communist China-Bashing!

The USW bureaucracy's main target has been China, now the largest steel producer (and consumer) in the world. The union tops complain that Ottawa has failed to protect the Canadian steel industry from Chinese imports. This is a direct echo of the campaigns of the North American steel bosses. A recent study by a right-wing Toronto think tank, the Munk Centre, laments that Chinese steel production does not operate in a "competitive domestic market environment," but has "very close relations to government agencies" ("The Importance of Steel Manufacturing to Canada," May 2010). In its own way, this pays tribute to China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state with a collectivized economy that is not based on production for private profit.

Albeit on different scales, both the industrial unions in North America and the workers state in China are the fruits of historic victories for the proletariat. One resulted from the massive struggles of the 1930s and 1940s, the other from the expropriation of capitalist class rule in the 1949 Revolution. Both must be defended unconditionally from attacks that seek to undo these gains, despite the fact that each is led by a bureaucratic layer that puts the gains in jeopardy. The bureaucratic misleaders of the unions

Workers Need Their Own Revolutionary Party!

While organizationally independent of the bourgeois parties, the NDP has a thoroughly pro-capitalist, nationalist program. When they are in power, from B.C. and Ontario in the 1990s to Manitoba today, they frontally attack the working

The fight to rebuild the unions as instruments of proletarian struggle is closely tied to the need for a multiracial, binational revolutionary workers party. That requires, above all, a political struggle against the social-democratic NDP and for a new class-struggle leadership of the unions. Against the tired and failed strategies pushed by liberals and fake socialists—from the Keynesian project of “benevolent” intervention by the capitalist state to the British Labour Party’s bourgeois nationalizations in the post-World War II period—we Marxists understand that no amount of tinkering with the existing system can wrench it into serving the needs of the proletariat and the oppressed. There is no answer to the boom-and-bust cycles of capitalism short of proletarian socialist revolution that takes power out of the hands of the irrational capitalist ruling class and replaces it with a planned, socialized economy. Only the achievement of a world socialist order can eliminate the age-old problem of poverty, scarcity and want. It is to this end that the Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste, Canadian section of the International Communist League, devotes all its resources. ■

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Libya...

(continued from page 12)

That rogue’s gallery includes Qaddafi’s former “justice” minister, as well as his former interior minister and head of the special forces. Of four former generals who have gone over to the opposition, two had been at Qaddafi’s side since he took power 42 years ago!

There is no doubt that Qaddafi is a butcher of his “own” citizens. This is also the case with the many kings, sheiks and colonels who have benefited from U.S. military aid. After America’s puppet regime in Iraq killed at least 29 people demonstrating for jobs and services on February 25, a U.S. military spokesman lauded the Iraqi forces’ “response” to the protest as “professional and restrained.” The military intervention by U.S.-backed Saudi Arabia in support of the Sunni monarchy in Bahrain demonstrates that, in the eyes of the U.S. imperialists, Bahrain’s Shi’ite majority is less than human, with no rights they are bound to respect. In recent years, the Libyan government has actively collaborated in the imperialists’ “war on terror” and introduced neoliberal privatization schemes. The imperialists are now shedding crocodile tears about the death toll in Libya only because they have not always enjoyed such civil relations with Qaddafi’s regime.

Not least of the crimes of the Qaddafi regime has been its racist treatment of black African migrant workers, who are subjected to arbitrary arrest and deportation—and at times outright pogromist attacks—while being used as scapegoats for unemployment and other ills. Currently, workers from sub-Saharan Africa are being set upon by both pro- and anti-Qaddafi forces, the latter of which often accuse them of being mercenaries for the regime. Over 100 black African migrants are feared dead and thousands are in hiding or seeking to flee the country.

As revolutionary Marxists, we have always staunchly opposed Qaddafi’s brutal rule while standing for military defense



Reuters

Tripoli, April 1986: Libyan rescue workers sift through rubble of an apartment building after U.S. bombing attack.

Right: March 1986 Berkeley protest against Reagan administration’s war provocations.



Young Spartacus

butchered, was a barbaric conflict over the possession of what would become Libya. For the first time in a war, airplanes were used against a population whose most advanced form of military transport was camels. It was, as Lenin called it, “a perfected, civilised blood-bath, the massacre of Arabs with the help of the ‘latest’ weapons” (“The End of the Italo-Turkish War,” 28 September 1912). That conflict set off a 20-year resistance struggle, centered in the east, against the Italian imperialists. Italian forces dropped poison gas bombs on civilians and imprisoned more than 100,000 in concentration camps, where up to 70,000 people—nearly half the population of Cyrenaica—died of disease and starvation.

During World War II, both Axis and Allied troops ravaged the country and its

exposed, the ISO tried to backtrack, declaring in *Socialist Worker* (9 March): “The CIA-backed National Front for the Salvation of Libya is an unsurprising advocate of U.S. action.”

Equally unsurprising is the fact that the ISO lined up with the imperialists against Qaddafi’s bourgeois regime. From supporting the CIA-backed, woman-hating, anti-Soviet *mujahedin* forces in Afghanistan and cheering the destruction of the USSR to lending its voice to the imperialist chorus against the deformed workers states of China and North Korea, the ISO, born of social-democratic anti-Communism, has always been squarely in the camp of “democratic” imperialism.

Writing in *Socialist Worker* (28 February), Todd Chretien derides the Workers World Party (WWP) and Party for Socialism and Liberation (PSL) for refusing “to take a stand with the Libyan people against a dictator.” While opposing imperialist intervention in Libya, the WWP and PSL are mainly driven by their longstanding political support for any and all forces in Third World countries that make a pretense of being “anti-imperialist.” This has included everyone from bourgeois-nationalist rulers like Qaddafi and Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez—who along with Cuba’s Fidel Castro is supporting Qaddafi in the current conflict—to reactionary Islamists like Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and Hamas in Gaza.

Workers World (12 March) goes so far as to praise “Libya’s record on human rights,” citing a section of a January 4 UN report that summarized the testimony of *the Libyan delegation!* The PSL, for its part, is disappointed in how yesterday’s “anti-imperialist” Qaddafi has turned out. *Liberation* (24 February) refuses to characterize his bonapartist regime as capitalist, complaining only that the government “included bourgeois forces” that were strengthened “over time.”

Lastly, mention should be made of David North’s Socialist Equality Party (SEP), best known as the “World Socialist Web Site,” whose propaganda today appears rather critical of Qaddafi and states opposition to imperialist military

intervention. We urge any readers who take the SEP’s “Marxism” for good coin to take a closer look at these political bandits, who comprise a special category in the annals of renegades from Trotskyism.

The SEP self-servingly disappears its history as participants in the squalid pro-Qaddafi machinations carried out by the dominant party in its “International Committee of the Fourth International” (IC), the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) in Britain led by one Gerry Healy. After years of hailing the mythical “Arab Revolution,” Healy’s IC openly championed blood-drenched bourgeois regimes like Qaddafi’s. Healy’s embrace of Qaddafi coincided with the reappearance of a Healyite daily paper, *News Line*, in England in May 1976, two months after his previous daily, *Workers Press*, had folded. In “Healyites, Messengers of Qaddafi” (WV No. 158, 20 May 1977), we noted of Qaddafi’s Libya, “where communists are to be jailed and butchered and their books burned, ostensible leftists would have to do some pretty peculiar things to survive—and *News Line* has made it clear the WRP would be more than willing to do them.” The Healyites went on to hail the murder of Iraqi Communist Party members by Saddam Hussein in 1979.

As we wrote in “Healyism Implodes” (*Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 36-37, Winter 1985-86): “It has been perfectly clear for some time that the Healy/Banda organization has been a captive creature of despotic ‘Third World’ capitalist regimes which have the blood of the workers and peasants on their hands.” This was a logical application of the WRP’s adulation for “anti-imperialist” Arab rulers combined with its vicious anti-Sovietism. The *Spartacist* article noted: “Once you discard the struggle for the building of Leninist parties to lead the working class in the liberation of mankind, and take off in search of get-rich-quick schemes, you will end up in a despicable place—if not a Healy, perhaps the more ordinary kind of scoundrel voting war credits for his own ruling class.”

For our part, we struggle for the political independence of the proletariat from all bourgeois forces. A fundamental difference between the events in Libya and the popular upsurges in Tunisia and Egypt is that in the latter two countries there is a powerful, concentrated working class that has emerged as an active force. However, the workers organizations are subordinated to one or another bourgeois political force. Marxists must fight for the proletariat, the only class with the social power to overthrow the bourgeoisie, to come to the fore to lead all the oppressed in a revolutionary assault on the capitalist system.

The Libyan proletariat has clearly been devastated in the current conflict, as migrant workers—a major component of the working class in that country—have fled the chaos, armed violence and racist attacks en masse. The future of the Libyan masses will be decided by working-class struggle that extends beyond the national terrain to include the proletariats of Algeria, Tunisia and, especially, Egypt. That requires the forging of revolutionary working-class parties as part of a genuine Trotskyist Fourth International, which would link the fight for socialist federations of North Africa and of the Near East to the struggle for proletarian revolution in the imperialist centers. ■



Libyan Studies Centre

Tripoli after air raid during World War II.

of Libya against imperialist attack. In March 1986, the international Spartacist tendency (precursor to the International Communist League) sent a journalistic team to Tripoli as U.S. warships and planes were attacking Libyan forces in and around the Gulf of Sidra. Our purpose, as we wrote in a telegram to the Libyan government, was to express our support for the “just cause of Libyan independence and territorial integrity.” Within days of our delegation’s visit, President Ronald Reagan launched bombing raids on Tripoli and Benghazi, killing scores of civilians. One of the victims was Qaddafi’s infant daughter, who was killed when his compound was targeted. For the Cold Warriors of the Reagan administration, a primary “crime” of the Qaddafi regime was that it was a military client of the Soviet Union.

Our team reported from Tripoli: “The memory of bloody imperialist rampage and spoliation is burned into the Libyan masses” (see “Under Reagan’s Guns in Libya: Report from Tripoli,” WV No. 401, 11 April 1986). Our reporters made the point that the Turko-Italian war of 1911, in which thousands of Arabs were

people. Following the war, the imperialists created an independent Libya by joining together three distinct regions: Cyrenaica in the east, Tripolitania in the west and Fezzan in the south. Italian rule was replaced with a British-imposed monarchy. It is the flag of that pre-Qaddafi regime that is prominently displayed today by opposition forces.

Those imperialist-backed forces have the willing and avid support of the reformist International Socialist Organization (ISO), which at the outset of the conflict embraced the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, an outfit founded in the early 1980s with start-up capital supplied by the CIA and the Saudi royal family. Presenting Qaddafi as someone with whom the imperialists feel “they can do business,” the ISO ludicrously lauded the National Front as “less likely to be so pliable” (*Socialist Worker*, 24 February). Day after day, representatives of opposition forces parleyed with U.S. and European officials and issued pleas for the imperialists to impose a “no-fly zone,” launch air strikes, arm the rebels or otherwise intervene militarily in Libya. Utterly

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من أجل ثورة دائمة عبر شمال إفريقيا!

مصر: انتفاضة جماهيرية تتحدى الدكتاتورية

تسقط العونة الأمريكية لمصر وإسرائيل!

من أجل أحزاب عمالية فورية!

المقال التالي ترجمة عربية لكتاب نشر بصيغة "نظمية العمال" رقم 973 بتاريخ 4 فبراير 2011. "نظمية العمال" هي إصدار حال للجمعية الاشتراكية بالولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. فرع الجمعية الشيوعية الأمريكية (أربعة أمتار)

1 فبراير 2011 - فيما تنقلب للتشرذم أن نظام حسني مبارك البعثي الرأسمالي، والخدمة للصليبة والمهمة امستراتيجيا الديمقراطية الأمريكية، تاريخ في وجه موجة من الاحتجاجات الجماهيرية لم يسبق لها مثيل. يهتف المحتجون في ميدان التحرير وفي أرجاء البلاد: "الشعب يطالب بسلطة النظام." لم يبدى تعيين مبارك في الأسبوع الماضي نظام جديد من الزوراء، وتسمية أعضاء، جميعين وفلاء عسكريين سابقين مثل نائب رئيس الجمهورية ورئيس مجلس الوزراء، إلا إلى إكتفاء مزيد من لوب المعارضة لدكتاتورية.

Imperialists Hands Off Libya!

MARCH 15—The opposition in Libya to the decades-long rule of bourgeois strongman Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi appears to have taken the form, for now, of a low-intensity civil war, heavily overlaid by tribal and regional divisions, between the Tripoli-centered government and imperialist-backed opposition forces concentrated in the country's eastern areas. Leadership of the anti-Qaddafi opposition includes Islamists, tribal leaders, former generals of Qaddafi's army and former officials of his blood-soaked regime. Much of Libya's diplomatic corps has defected to the opposition. Marxists presently have no side in this conflict, which is essentially a struggle to decide who will control the country's immense oil and gas wealth while lording it over the exploited and oppressed masses.

The world proletariat does have a side, however, in opposing any intervention into Libya by the imperialists, who are backing the anti-Qaddafi forces. In the U.S., those beating the drums for imposing a "no-fly zone" over Libya span the gamut from Republican John McCain to Democrats Bill Clinton and John Kerry. If implemented, that would mean a direct military assault against Libya's air force and air defenses. Washington has positioned a pair of amphibious assault vessels off the Libyan coast, reportedly to be joined by the aircraft carrier USS *Enterprise*, while the United Nations Security Council imposed an arms embargo on Libya and tens of billions in Libyan assets held in foreign banks have been frozen. As Marxist opponents of the capitalist-imperialist order, we oppose all imperialist sanctions against the Qaddafi regime. In the event of impe-



Left: Rally in support of Libyan strongman Qaddafi outside Tripoli, March 11. Right: Supporters of Libyan opposition in Benghazi call for imperialist intervention, March 13.



AFP photos

rialist attack against neocolonial Libya, the proletariat internationally must stand for the military defense of that country while giving no political support to Qaddafi's capitalist regime.

Particularly given the turmoil in North Africa and the Near East, the imperialists are somewhat between a rock and a hard place when dealing with Libya under Qaddafi, whose forces have been turning back the rebels. While insisting that "all options are on the table," the Obama administration has shied away from being drawn into a possible quagmire in Libya when U.S. imperialism's military forces are already stretched thin by their murderous occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq.

French president Nicolas Sarkozy has officially declared the opposition National

Council, based in the eastern city of Benghazi, to be Libya's "legitimate" government. The Arab League joined the Near East's erstwhile colonial masters, Great Britain and France, in calling for imposing a "no-fly zone" over Libya. Britain's cause was not exactly helped by Tory prime minister David Cameron's Monty Python moment, when a Special Air Service mission to contact the Libyan opposition ended in debacle, with the rebels detaining the delegation and promptly dispatching it from the country. At a meeting of the G8 in Paris today, German foreign minister Guido Westerwelle put cold water on talk of a "no-fly zone," declaring that Germany did not want to "get sucked into a war in north Africa" (London *Guardian*, 15 March).

Just as the *New York Times* retailed the Bush administrations' lies of Saddam Hussein's "weapons of mass destruction" in the lead-up to the 2003 U.S. invasion, the bourgeois media quickly took on the role of press agents for the anti-Qaddafi opposition, making "facts" fit the imperialists' agenda. Gruesome stories put out by the opposition about Qaddafi's fighter jets deliberately bombing civilians were widely reported as fact. Virtually unreported was the March 2 admission by Defense Secretary Robert Gates that "we've seen no confirmation whatsoever" of those accounts. Meanwhile, the media has delicately refrained from going into the sordid pasts of the former Qaddafi loyalists in the leadership of the opposition forces in Benghazi.

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Anti-Muslim Witchhunt on Capitol Hill

In a blatant escalation of the "anti-terror" witchhunt, New York Republican Peter King, the newly minted chair of the House Committee on Homeland Security, last week staged the first of a promised series of Congressional hearings into the "radicalization" of Muslim Americans. While for King the televised proceedings served as political theater to paint the Democrats as soft on "terror," the hearings not surprisingly inspired panic among Muslims in the U.S., who from the onset of the "war on terror" have been in the crosshairs of the capitalist rulers. During his testimony, Minnesota Democrat Keith Ellison, the first Muslim elected to Congress, touched a raw nerve as he tearfully retold the story of a Muslim paramedic/police cadet who died trying to help rescue victims in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, only to have his name fall under suspicion that he was involved in the attack.

Notorious for his anti-Muslim bigotry, King authored *Vale of Tears*, a novel in which a New York Congressman (!) convinces reluctant Muslims to spill the beans on an Al Qaeda plan to bomb New York City. In comparison to this yahoo,

Down With Bipartisan "War on Terror"!

the Democrats cynically posture as defenders of religious tolerance and civil liberties. But their main role in the hearings was to offer a more effective means of carrying out repression in the name of fighting "terror." Ellison, seconded by L.A. County sheriff Lee Baca, criticized the widely publicized proceedings as serving to dry up sources of intelligence from Muslims.

The Democrats have in fact worked in tandem with the Republicans from the onset of the "war on terror," with at least 22 bipartisan House and Senate committee hearings on domestic "violent Islamist extremism" in the last five years alone. As U.S. imperialist Commander-in-Chief, Barack Obama has continued and expanded many of the repressive measures introduced under George W. Bush. Just last week, the White House entirely backed down on Obama's celebrated promise to close the prison in

Guantánamo Bay, ordering the resumption of military tribunals there and reaffirming the policy of indefinite detention of terror suspects. Nothing new here: During World War II, liberal icon Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the internment of 120,000 Japanese Americans. Today, the Democrats worry that King's modern-day Inquisition is counterproductive to the "national interest," threatening to further inflame Muslim populations reeling from the havoc wreaked by the U.S.-led occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq.

With Democratic politicians and liberal editorialists routinely connecting King's hearings with the Cold War witchhunts under Joe McCarthy, it is worth recalling that McCarthy's bourgeois critics agreed with him that Communism was the "enemy within," but thought that he overreached by gunning for "innocent" liberals along with the "guilty." Today, Islamic fundamentalists like Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda are surrogates for the "Red menace," invoked to justify domestic repression and imperialist militarism. But it was U.S. imperialism that promoted the forces of Islamic reaction

against the Soviet degenerated workers state during the Cold War. In the 1980s, the CIA massively armed and funded the *mujahedin* in Afghanistan—including bin Laden—to kill Soviet troops defending a modernizing nationalist government that had enacted reforms on behalf of women and others. Once the U.S. no longer had any use for them, these fundamentalists—Washington's Dr. Frankenstein's monster—turned on their former patron.

With the tenth anniversary of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon approaching, anti-Muslim mania is likely to find renewed fervor. As a Spartacist League/U.S. Political Bureau statement issued the day after the attacks noted:

"The ruling parties—Democrats and Republicans—are all too eager to be able to wield the bodies of those who were killed and wounded in order to reinforce capitalist class rule. It's an opportunity for the exploiters to peddle 'one nation indivisible' patriotism to try to direct the burgeoning anger at the bottom of this society away from themselves and toward an indefinable foreign 'enemy,' as well as immigrants in the U.S., and to reinforce their arsenal of domestic state repression against all the working people."

—WV No. 764,
14 September 2001

Indeed, the government went on to carry out a massive attack on the democratic rights of the population as a whole, while invoking "national security" as a club against striking New Jersey teachers, West Coast longshoremen and other trade unionists. This underscores the need to oppose all attempts by the capitalist rulers to augment the forces of state repression, which are aimed at suppressing the struggles of workers and the oppressed and propping up this decaying, racist capitalist order. ■