

U.S. Expands Domestic Spying Machine

Bipartisan Assault on Civil Liberties

On April 26, the House of Representatives passed the benign-sounding but deeply ominous Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA). Under the pretense of seeking to secure the country's computer networks from "terrorists," "cybercriminals" and foreign governments, CISPA provides legal authority for the National Security Agency (NSA) and the Department of Defense to obtain detailed and sensitive personal information over the Internet without first obtaining a search warrant, which is supposedly required for intercepting phone and postal communications. The legislation offers immunity to corporations that convey the information to the Feds and exempts such data troves from the government's disclosure obligations under the Freedom of Information Act.

If enacted, CISPA will give a blessing to the massive phone and cybersnooping already securely in place. In late 2005, it was revealed that the NSA was intercepting not only communications abroad but also those of U.S. citizens, without first procuring warrants. A glimpse of the scope of such snooping was provided by retired AT&T worker Mark Klein, who came forward to reveal how the NSA had tapped into AT&T's fiber-optic cables to obtain a copy of much of the country's Internet data flow. Klein's revelations became Exhibit A in a lawsuit filed by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) to expose and stop the illegal government data mining (see "Phone Worker Exposes Government Spying Network," WV No. 953, 26 February 2010).

In an April 20 interview with *Democracy Now!*, longtime NSA staffer William Binney recalled that the system implemented at AT&T, supposedly in response to the September 11 attacks, had in fact been developed earlier. According to Bin-

ney, the NSA was "prepared to deploy about eight months before 9/11." The NSA spy system at AT&T was set up under George W. Bush at the time of the Pentagon's notorious Total Information Awareness project, which was run by convicted Contragate criminal John Poindexter. Following a public outcry over revelations of the project's massive accessing of e-mail and other information on the Internet, Poindexter resigned and Congress made a show of cutting off funding for the project. In his interview, Binney declared that Poindexter's project had been made public "to test the waters in Congress to see how they would be receptive to something they were already doing." Binney resigned from the NSA in protest when the surveillance program he helped develop was applied to U.S. citizens.

The NSA-telecom spy network that Mark Klein revealed was just the tip of the iceberg. In San Antonio, Texas, the NSA has converted an old Sony factory nearly as large as a football stadium into a facility to intercept data. The NSA is putting the finishing touches on its Utah Data Center in the desert town of Bluffdale—a \$2 billion project, five times larger than the U.S. Capitol, slated for operation next year. Coursing through its servers and routers will be complete con-

tents of e-mails, cellphone calls, Google searches, parking receipts, travel itineraries, books purchased and much more. As revealed in an article by James Bamford in *Wired* magazine (15 March), the NSA has established listening posts across the country and has created a supercomputer with the aim of breaking the most sophisticated encryption codes, thus trying to remove one of the ways people can protect their privacy.

To put it bluntly, the government wants to know what you do, where you are, what political activities you engage in, what you read, what music you listen to, who you sleep with, what your bedmate reads, what his or her political affiliations are, etc. If George Orwell's Big Brother were watching, he would be on the short end of a sibling rivalry.

The "war on terror" was launched as a rationale for both the imperialist occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq and for expanding state repressive powers at home. As the Spartacist League and the Partisan Defense Committee wrote in our 2003 *amici curiae* (friends of the court) brief on behalf of Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen seized and detained by the government as an "enemy combatant" in the "war on terror": "Like the 'war against communism' and the 'war against drugs,'

this 'war' is a pretext to increase the state's police powers and repressive apparatus, constricting the democratic rights of the population."

Orwellian Nightmare

Forty-two Democrats joined Congressional Republicans in voting for CISPA, though other Democrats have voiced vague civil libertarian concern about the bill. CISPA now has to go before the Senate, and President Obama has threatened to veto the bill, stating apprehension that the law fails to institute "privacy, confidentiality, and civil liberties safeguards." This dance of the Democrats and Republicans is almost as old as the fox-trot. After voting nearly unanimously for the USA-Patriot Act in 2001, Democrats in Congress have made a ritual of balking at the renewal of various of its provisions, only to fall into line.

When the NSA phone intercepts were first revealed, Congressional Democrats feigned outrage. But after squawking a bit they voted to authorize the NSA program in 2007 and voted for its renewal a year later. In 2009, Obama's Justice Department won dismissal of the EFF lawsuit.

As the CEO of the most dangerous imperialist power in the world, Obama is concerned that CISPA might undermine receipt of data from the private sector, which should be done "in a way that permits appropriate sharing within the Government." Joined by the American Civil Liberties Union, which opposes CISPA, the Obama administration proposes that such data mining be overseen not by an intelligence agency like the NSA but by a "civilian" agency, namely, the Department of Homeland Security, the massive government agency that is a centerpiece of the "war on terror." With less fanfare, the Obama administration has reportedly drafted legislation that would force the Internet industry to insure that the government have "backdoor" access to all forms of Internet communication.

Already, by Binney's estimate, the Feds have amassed some 20 trillion records of communications by U.S. citizens through

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Call/Deseret News

Corbis

Top: New NSA spy complex under construction in Utah. Domestic spying has massively increased as part of "war on terror" under both George W. Bush and Barack Obama, shown with FBI Director Robert Mueller at NYC Joint Terrorism Task Force Headquarters, October 2009.

AP



Clarification

Why the Soviet Union Intervened in Afghanistan

In “Afghanistan: Women Under Imperialist Occupation” (WV No. 998, 16 March) we highlighted the huge gains made by Afghan women under the Soviet military presence in the 1980s and wrote that the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 was “a decent and progressive act, even if it was carried out by the corrupt and conservative regime of Leonid Brezhnev, that cut against the grain of the Stalinist dogma of ‘socialism in one country’.” While the latter assertion has appeared in other articles in our press, it does not accurately and fully convey what drove the Kremlin bureaucracy to intervene.

In particular, the article does not make it clear that Moscow did not send 100,000 troops into Afghanistan to effect a social

revolution. The bureaucracy’s aim was narrower but legitimate: to protect the Soviet Union’s southern flank and to make an unstable, strategically placed client state secure. The military intervention into Afghanistan was an exceptional act. But it did not put into question the bureaucracy’s Stalinist program.

In fact, the Soviet bureaucracy initially resisted intervening in Afghanistan, in spite of repeated requests by the modernizing nationalist People’s Democratic Party (PDPA) regime in Kabul, which was unable on its own to fend off the reactionary Islamic fundamentalist threat stoked by the U.S. Arguing against sending troops into Afghanistan, Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko in March 1979 expressed the concerns of the Kremlin



Lochon/Gamma

Soviet forces land at Kabul airport, December 1979.

bureaucracy, which had for decades pursued the illusory goal of peacefully coexisting with imperialism: “All that we have done in recent years with such effort in terms of détente, arms reduction, and much more—all that would be thrown back.” What finally compelled Moscow to pour troops into Afghanistan was the fear that the PDPA regime, with Prime Minister Taraki assassinated and his successor Hafizullah Amin reportedly making approaches to Washington, was about to collapse in the face of the CIA-backed jihad.

The Stalinist bureaucracy was a ruling caste, a parasite upon the state issuing from the proletarian October Revolution of 1917. In late 1924, Stalin proclaimed the anti-Marxist dogma of “building socialism in one country,” codifying the bureaucracy’s outlook, which subordinated the interests of the international proletariat to the defense of its own privileged position. At the same time, the Stalinist regime rested on the socialized foundations of the workers state, which it was at times compelled to defend. Even after nearly six decades of Stalinist repression, lies and sellouts, this contradictory character persisted, as exemplified by the military intervention into Afghanistan.

Moscow’s intervention both defended the Soviet Union and posed the objective possibility of a revolutionary transformation of hideously backward Afghanistan, where the status of women was a central factor in the unfolding civil war. When the Soviet Army went in and fought against the anti-Communist tribal chiefs and mullahs, who were committed to mass illiteracy and the enslavement of women, we declared: “Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!” and called to “Extend social gains of the October Revolution to Afghan peoples!”

The Soviet presence brought with it literacy, doctors, technicians and the first taste of liberation for Afghan women. But from the outset, the Moscow bureaucracy tried to limit the scale of social reforms in order to conciliate the feudalist opposition. After PDPA forces and Soviet troops routed the reactionary *mujahedin* rebels from strategic positions near the capital, Kabul, in 1982, we wrote: “Instead of capitulating to the mullah reaction, by limiting land reform and literacy campaigns, the Soviets should be pouring the money in there on a massive scale: land to the tiller *and* cheap credit, health programs, etc. But that means *social revolution*.... And that does not square with the Kremlin’s policies of détente and ‘two-stage’ revolution” (“Reagan, Begin & Hitler,” WV No. 308, 25 June 1982).

From the beginning, we warned that in its futile quest for peaceful coexistence with imperialism, the Soviet bureaucracy could reach a deal with the imperialists to withdraw. By the time Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985, the Stalinist bureaucrats were increasingly committed to withdrawing from Afghanistan. Soviet media churned out defeatist propa-

ganda about the Afghan war to turn the Soviet population against it. Gorbachev—who went from orchestrating the dismantling of centralized planning in the USSR to, in 1990, advocating outright capitalist restoration—openly declared that “after all, it’s not socialism we want” in Afghanistan. In 1988-89, even though the Red Army and PDPA forces were prevailing militarily, Gorbachev opened the road to murderous *mujahedin* rule in Afghanistan by withdrawing the Soviet armed forces. Three years later, in 1992, the *mujahedin* marched into Kabul. The treacherous Soviet troop withdrawal directly paved the way for the destruction of the USSR in the capitalist counterrevolution of 1991-92 led by Boris Yeltsin, a historic defeat for the proletariat and the oppressed around the world.

In 1936, Leon Trotsky pointed out in his analysis of the Soviet degenerated workers state, *The Revolution Betrayed*, that if the working class did not throw out the Stalinist bureaucracy, the bureaucracy would devour the workers state. To restore the Soviet state and the Red Army to their revolutionary and internationalist mission required a proletarian political revolution against the Stalinist usurpers of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party.

In early 1989, in the wake of the Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, our international tendency proposed to organize an international brigade to combat the *mujahedin* forces. Our offer—made in defense of women and other targets of Islamic reaction in Afghanistan and in defense of the Soviet Union itself—was turned down by the Afghan government. Organizing such brigades could have had an explosive effect in the USSR—particularly among veterans of the Afghan war who saw their involvement there as their internationalist duty—by promoting the struggle for proletarian political revolution against the decomposing Stalinist bureaucracy that was selling out the gains of October. ■

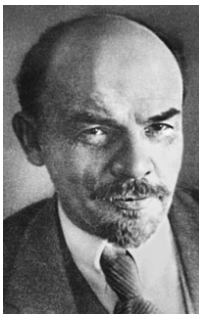


Reuters

Afghan women’s militia, 1989.

On Capitalist Democracy

The press agents of the imperialist bourgeoisies all peddle the supposed intertwining of capitalism and political democracy as if the two had formed as peas in a pod, a myth reinforced by the reformist left. In fact, the capitalist class, for whom democratic forms serve to cover its class rule, can and will resort to the most extreme police-state regimes to crush any working-class assault on the institution of private property. Writing in 1935 in the aftermath of the rise of Hitlerite fascism in Germany, British political philosopher Harold Laski explained the conjunctural and reversible nature of democracy under capitalism. Laski, a Marxist academic, was a left social democrat who wrote incisively on the capitalist state.



LENIN



TROTSKY

ical philosopher Harold Laski explained the conjunctural and reversible nature of democracy under capitalism. Laski, a Marxist academic, was a left social democrat who wrote incisively on the capitalist state.

The transition from feudal to bourgeois society was only accomplished by heavy fighting. There is no reason to suppose, unless we assume that men are now more rational than at any time in the past, that we can transform the foundations of bourgeois society without heavy fighting also; and the assumption of greater rationality is an illusion born of special historical circumstances and now fading before our eyes....

It was only when the combination of war-weariness and the Russian Revolution began to strip the mask from the tragic drama of war that men began to realize, in any numbers, how accidental was the union of capitalism with democracy. It was the outcome, not of an essential harmony of inner principle, but of that epoch in economic evolution when capitalism was in its phase of expansion. It had conferred political power upon the masses; but it was upon the saving condition that political power should not be utilized to cut at the root of capitalist postulates. It would offer social reforms so long as these did not jeopardize the essential relations of the capitalist system. When they did, as occurred in the post-war years, the contradiction between capitalism and democracy became the essential institutional feature of Western civilization....

What looms before us is a battle for the possession of the state-power. What is now clear is the vital fact that the class-relations of our society have become incompatible with the maintenance of social peace. They have brought to light the contradiction between our power to produce and our power to distribute in a way that makes the great paradox of our time—our poverty in the midst of potential plenty—intolerable to those who have to pay the price for it. Yet in the choice between peaceful transformation, and the maintenance of privilege at the cost of conflict, the owners of property now, as in an earlier day, are prepared rather to fight for their legal privileges than to give way.

—Harold Laski, *The State in Theory and Practice* (Viking Press, 1935)

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For Class-Struggle Leadership of the Unions!

American Airlines: Bankruptcy as Union Busting

When AMR, the parent company of American Airlines, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in November, management made no bones about it: the step was a declaration of war on the 88,000 employees at the carrier and its regional subsidiary, American Eagle. At the time, American, the third-largest domestic air carrier, was sitting on over \$4 billion in cash and investments. This was money the company had stolen from its workers by severely underfunding pensions and shoving massive concessions down their throats during the post-September 11 crisis in the industry. But now the carrier wants more, turning to the bankruptcy court to help cut 13,000 jobs, replace all pensions with 401(k)s, end retiree health care benefits and impose other “sacrifices,” altogether totaling \$1.25 billion annually.

From major airlines like Delta, United and US Airways to steel and auto corporations, the bosses have wielded bankruptcy as a bludgeon against the unions. In fulfilling their role in protecting the property and profits of the capitalists, the courts routinely void union contracts whenever companies in Chapter 11 make the request. Now the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in lower Manhattan is hearing AMR’s motion to toss out the contracts covering the 26,000 ground workers in the Transport Workers Union (TWU) as well as the members of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants (APFA) and the Allied Pilots Association (APA).

AMR went this route after it was unable to wrest even further concessions from union members as contract negotiations dragged out for years. In 2010, maintenance workers rejected by a two-to-one margin a tentative agreement that packaged benefit and work-rule givebacks with a 6 percent wage increase and a signing bonus. When presented last October with a benefit-slashing deal, fleet service workers formed a “Vote No Coalition,” although the company’s Chapter 11 filing ensured that there would be no vote. Just before the bankruptcy declaration, blowback from pilots convinced APA officials not to put the company’s latest proposal up to a vote. Recently, workers have gathered to protest the court proceedings in NYC and picketed outside airport terminals serviced by American Airlines across the country.

But the union leaderships are more interested in making the carrier profitable than engaging in a fight to defend the gains their members won in past struggles. They eagerly took up the Justice Department’s offer to take seats on the creditors committee, which represents those owed money by AMR—namely, the banks and the Boeing aircraft manufacturer. From this perch, the main stratagem of officials representing the three unions has been to support US Airways in its bid to take over American.

In kicking off a lobbying campaign for the merger, the TWU, APA and APFA issued a joint April 20 press release titled “Union Leaders Pursue Best Path to Restore American Airlines to Preeminence.” The simple truth is that the “preeminence” of any capitalist enterprise flows from maximizing profits by gouging its employees for all they’re worth. The union bureaucrats are trumpeting backroom deals reached with US Airways that would supposedly protect some



April 23: American Airlines workers rally in New York City to protest bankruptcy court hearings that threaten to toss out union contracts.

of their members’ jobs if the airlines merge. In exchange for empty promises from a gang of bosses who *might* rob them a little less, the union misleaders at American did an end run around US Airways workers, who were themselves shafted by the bankruptcy court eight years ago and are today locked in bitter contract negotiations. Airline mergers have repeatedly been carried out on the backs of the *combined* workforce. When US Airways and America West joined forces in 2005, the result was marked in lost jobs and service cuts, while workers from the two carriers were set against each other.

Hedging their bets, the TWU tops acceded to terms of surrender with American, which wants to wring concessions from one of its unions in order to strengthen its hand against the other two. With voting on this offer set to begin on May 10, the backs of TWU members are up against the wall, especially since their leaders have sworn off the possibility of strike action if and when the court tears up the existing contracts. In March, the same TWU bureaucrats declared “victory” when the bosses took up their suggestion to *stop* paying into pension plans. The union tops said this was preferable to turning over the funds to the government, which would likely pay pennies on the dollar. The end result, though, is the same: retirement security has been severely eroded. Even before bankruptcy, TWU leaders had agreed to put new hires on 401(k) plans, which shifts the burden for providing retirement funds onto individual workers.

Over the last decade, airline workers one after another have been hit with layoffs, wage slashing and pension-stealing. It will take determined struggle to stop the massacre of workers’ livelihoods. This path will not be easy. The capitalists have their state power, as seen in laws like the Railway Labor Act (RLA)—which puts enormous legal obstacles in the way of airline and rail strikes—and the courts and cops that enforce such laws. But the airline industry is still 60 percent unionized, and its workers have a lot of potential clout based on their ability to shut down the airports. Air transport is vital to a modern industrial economy, moving people, mail and highly time-sensitive cargo for businesses. In

fact, the dollar value of exports moving through JFK airport is greater than that shipped from the Los Angeles and New York/New Jersey ports combined.

But the workers’ power is held in check by the pro-capitalist union bureaucrats, who hide behind the RLA and court rulings to head off labor struggle and turn their backs on those who do walk off the job. In the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association strike at Northwest Airlines in 2005, leaders of other unions refused to shut down Northwest in solidarity, while officials from the IAM machinists union engaged in open strikebreaking.

Airline workers cannot effectively defend their livelihoods without overcoming the atomization of the workforce along craft and union lines and the divisions between workers at different carriers, regional affiliates and “third party” subcontractors. The way forward lies in joint labor struggle to defend hard-won gains and organize workers at non-union facilities, laying the basis for a single industry-wide union uniting everyone from cleaners to pilots. In the airline industry and elsewhere, the unions will be revitalized only through class battles against the capitalist exploiters. Such struggles will pose the need for a new labor leadership based on the understanding that the working class and the capitalist class have no common interests.

The Dead End of “Partnership Agreements”

In 2003, under the cloud of threatened bankruptcy, the union leaders at American agreed to cuts that slashed wages by up to one-third. Along with the concessions, they entered into “partnership agreements” with the bosses. Workers soon discovered how one-sided the “pull together, win together” partnership was, as top executives voted themselves million-dollar bonuses and a special trust fund to guarantee their own very generous pensions. Under pressure from outraged union members, the APFA and APA leaders pulled out of the arrangement, even as they continued to pursue the “partnership” by other means.

The TWU tops, though, clung to these agreements, claiming that such cooperation has kept aircraft repair work in-house. Exhibit number one for them is the Tulsa, Oklahoma, maintenance base,

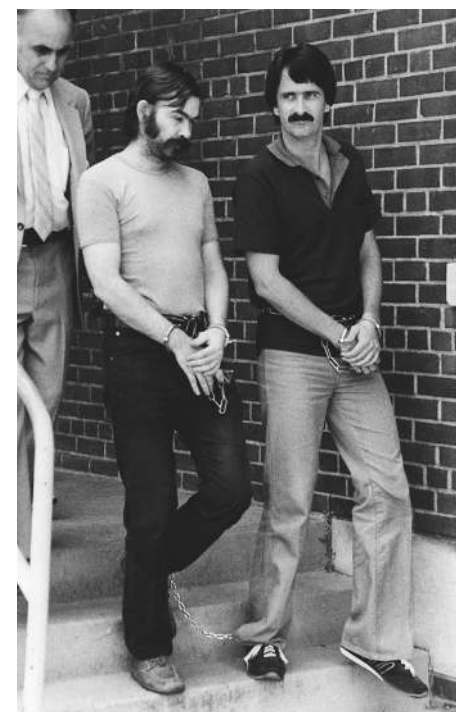
the largest in the world. The 6,000 union mechanics in Tulsa were made to swallow sizable cuts in salary, benefits and vacation in exchange for the pretense of input in running the operation. When management ordered its union “partners” to halve the time to complete major aircraft overhauls, the TWU helped provide the blueprint. Massive speedup was implemented in return for promises that no jobs would be lost as a result of increased efficiency.

The “groundbreaking business relationship” so reduced work-rule and compensation standards that American Airlines was able by the end of 2006 to win service contracts from 50 other companies, including some operating out of South America. With all the extra work pouring in, union officials widely touted this “insourcing” as the best strategy to save jobs. In the end, it did just the opposite.

The deepgoing concessions behind this arrangement are symptomatic of a race to the bottom between unionized maintenance shops and non-union “third party” subcontractors. While AMR mechanics were run ragged for far less wages, they were trained to view themselves as part of the company team, sapping the fighting strength of the union. Now management is dropping the ax. Before it emerges from bankruptcy, American plans to lay off 2,100 mechanics in Tulsa and to shrink its system-wide maintenance workforce by one-third to compete with the outsourcing of its rivals. It could not be clearer that defense of unionized workers requires a hard fight to organize the unorganized, whether at the carriers or subcontractors, in order to raise standards across the board.

In anticipation of the imminent cutbacks, TWU Local 514 in Tulsa jumped into a coalition involving the Chamber of Commerce, City Hall and the Oklahoma governor, among others. Joining hands with these viciously anti-union forces, Local 514 president Sam Cirri intoned, “It’s critical that our elected officials and community leaders fight to keep these jobs local, instead of allowing the work

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PATCO air traffic controllers union leaders hauled off in chains during 1981 strike.

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

We print below the second part of a presentation by Spartacist League spokesman Diana Coleman at a February 25 forum in Los Angeles. Part One was printed in WV No. 1001 (27 April).

Up North, after the ghetto upheavals in Harlem and Watts, it became clear that the explosions were part of a pattern and not isolated events. It also became clear that Martin Luther King's "turn the other cheek" pacifism had no relevance to the embittered urban black masses. The Spartacist League was very active around the black question during this period, as you can see by perusing *Spartacist* Bound Volume No. 1.

In Harlem in 1964, only the reds defended the Harlem ghetto masses against what was in reality a police riot. Bill Epton of Progressive Labor Party, organizer of the militant Harlem Defense Committee, was witchhunted by a bourgeois hysteria campaign that included all the usual black leaders. At a mass rally in the New York garment district, called by the Spartacist-initiated Harlem Solidarity Committee, we attempted to mobilize the power of labor to defend the black masses. We called for removal of the rioting cops from the ghettos and recognition of the masses' right to defend themselves against the police occupation. Contrast that with MLK calling for the cops to go into Watts!

It was in Chicago that the liberal premises of the civil rights movement came most clearly into explosive collision with economic and social reality. Blacks in Northern ghettos already had the formal rights won by the civil rights movement in the South—"equality under the law" and "one man, one vote"—but that did not prevent them from being forced to live as second-class citizens. Underlying the forcible segregation of blacks at the bottom of American society today are primarily the workings of capitalist civil society and the market economy, reinforced by various laws which, while they don't mention blacks, are nonetheless consciously directed at blacks. For example: the restrictions of student enrollment in public schools to children living in the neighborhood where the school is located, the mass incarceration of young black men under the anti-drug laws, the phenomenon of "driving while black." The speed limit may be the same for everyone, but it isn't enforced the same for everyone!

The contradiction between formal legal equality and the pervasive social and economic inequality that black people are subject to is enforced centrally through

systematic police terror and the race and class bias of the judicial system. As was made abundantly clear in Chicago, King and the rest of the liberal civil rights leadership got nowhere in the fight for "open housing" and had no program to fight the causes of racial discrimination, which are deeply rooted in the economic and social structure of capitalist society. These will not be dealt with by some new civil rights act, but only by socialist revolution.

In 1966, Stokely Carmichael, newly elected as chairman of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC),

must be clearly defined in *class*, not racial terms, for otherwise the 'black power' movement may become the black wing of the Democratic Party in the South" ("Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom," *Spartacist* supplement, May-June 1967, reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9, "Basic Documents of the Spartacist League"). This was prophetic, not only for the South but for the North, too.

Without the intervention of conscious communists fighting for a program of revolutionary integrationism and proletarian socialism, black militants turned

the North. It was still pretty hard. First courted by Henry Ford as a counterforce to unionism, most blacks refused to scab and joined the union. After World War II, blacks were a real presence in the auto plants and city. But it was still a highly segregated city, with blacks forced into substandard housing, rotten schools and the hardest and most dangerous jobs in the plants.

The book *Race Against Liberalism* by David M. Lewis-Colman gives a vivid picture of how Walter Reuther, United Auto Workers (UAW) president, with his



UPI

Left: Troops suppress Detroit ghetto rebellion, 1967. Right: Martin Luther King Jr. after being hit on head by rock during Chicago housing discrimination protest, August 1966.



Bettmann

raised the demand for "Black Power." This call electrified young radicals from the Jim Crow South to the ghettos of the North. We noted at the time that the Black Power slogan "represents the repudiation of tokenism, liberal tutelage, reliance on the federal government, and the non-violent philosophy of moral suasion" ("Black Power—Class Power," reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 [Revised], "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism" [September 1978]). But we also warned that "'black power'

away from MLK liberalism and embraced the dead end of black separatism. Most of these black nationalists quickly re-entered the fold of mainstream bourgeois politics, becoming administrators of the various poverty programs and supporters of local black Democrats. The Black Panthers and the Detroit League of Revolutionary Black Workers were considerably more radical, but both were deeply contradictory, for Marxism and black nationalism do not a coherent program make.

Detroit: Black Workers and the UAW

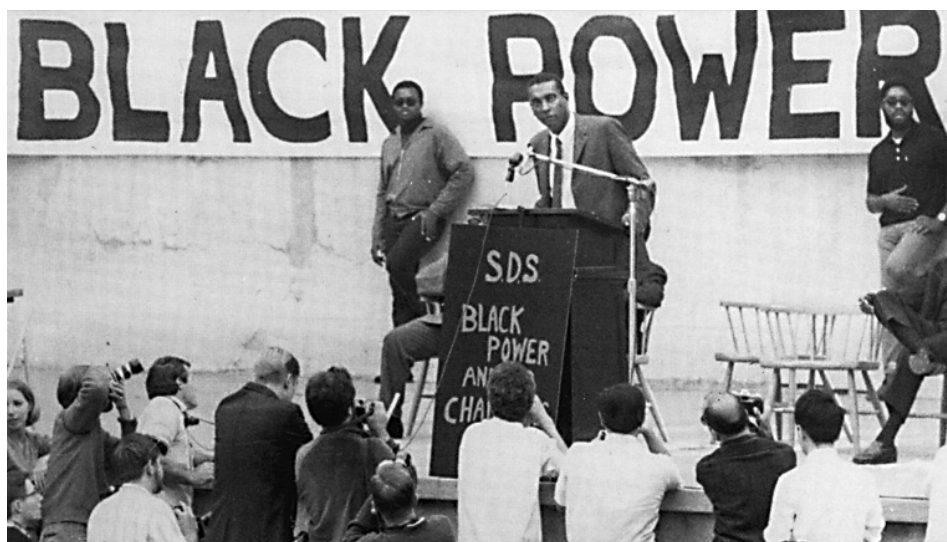
We have written a lot about the Panthers, so today I want to talk about the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit. Actually, there is one very good article about the League in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5R called "Soul Power or Workers Power?" *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* is still the best book to read on the subject. Unlike other black nationalist groups, the League insisted on the centrality of the working class and organizing at "the point of production." But this only made their internal contradictions more explosive. It is necessary to understand a couple of things about Detroit to understand why the League developed there.

Detroit, like Chicago, was a big destination for blacks during the "Great Migration" out of the Jim Crow South to what they hoped would be a better life in

social-democratic past, purged the union of Communist Party supporters and radicals of all varieties, black and white, working in tandem with the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). This included putting the giant Local 600 at Ford River Rouge in receivership in the early 1950s. Lewis-Colman writes:

"On March 14, two days after HUAC left Detroit, Reuther moved to neutralize the dissident local.... Reuther spent much of his presentation presenting evidence of communist domination of Local 600. He described the local's anti-Korean War stance as a response to the dictates of the Communist party and suggested that an aerial picture of the River Rouge plant printed in *Ford Facts* [the local newsletter] was evidence of espionage. At the end of the lengthy meeting, the executive board voted unanimously to take control of Local 600 and soon dismissed or suspended many of its leading Negro-caucus activists and their white progressive allies."

Lewis-Colman goes on, "In the late 1940's as the cold war intensified, Reuther became increasingly focused on civil rights and concerned about the race issue in the union. Like many liberal anti-Communists, Reuther believed that racism had become an effective issue for Communists." It was an issue he sought to deflect by giving support to Martin Luther King's pacifist liberalism in the South, while not dealing in the slightest with racist practices in the Detroit auto plants or in the UAW itself.



October 1966: Stokely Carmichael, who popularized call for "Black Power," denounces the draft during Vietnam War at UC Berkeley mass rally.

This situation led the few aspiring black bureaucrats in the '50s to set up an opportunist formation called the Trade Union Leadership Council, which involved people like venerable social democrat A. Philip Randolph (amazing how the same names keep coming up). They raised the question of discrimination, while keeping everything well within the context of liberal pressure politics. As our article in *MB* No. 5R says, “The combination of Reuther’s hypocritical liberalism and the impotent pressure-group politics of King and the black bureaucrats provided fertile ground for the spawning of more militant black nationalist political currents and organizations.”

The anti-cop ghetto upheaval in Detroit in the summer of 1967 was one of the biggest and bloodiest of that period. Geronimo Pratt, who died recently, was a framed-up former leader of the Black Panther Party whom the Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee defended for many years and who was freed after an outrageous 27 years in jail. With few job opportunities, at age 17 Geronimo had joined the Army. After his first tour of duty in Vietnam with the 82nd Airborne, they were sent to Detroit to quell the ghetto rebellion. It is said that military hardware was soon finding its way to the ghetto. Pratt recalled that his unit, which was 60-70 percent black, was supportive of the besieged ghetto. So they were sent back to Vietnam as a not-so-subtle punishment. This is an illustration of the Achilles’ heel of American imperialism: a heavily black and brown army is unlikely to be very loyal to the capitalist class and state when there is real social struggle in the country.

Then there were the horrendous conditions in these old, decrepit auto plants, now with a heavily black workforce. Racism from foremen was common, as was speed-up, industrial injuries, etc., etc. The title of the book, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* came from a Detroit blues song of the '60s which starts, “Please, Mr. Foreman, slow down your assembly line. No, I don’t mind workin’, but I do mind dyin’.”

To give you an example, in 1970 at the Eldon Ave. Chrysler plant, one of the most dangerous plants, a black worker who had been fired flipped out and shot dead two foremen and a white co-worker. When I worked at the Post Office, we used to call this “going postal.” In any case, Ken Cockrel, a black lawyer and member of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, defended him, blaming the deaths on the working conditions at Chrysler and this worker’s lifetime experiences of racism. As a climax to the trial, Cockrel took the entire jury on a tour of the plant so they could see the conditions for themselves. The jury was so horrified they found the worker not responsible for his acts, and he was awarded workman’s compensation for the injuries done to him by Chrysler! When I was in Detroit in 1973 when we set up a local there, people were still talking about this.

Vacuum of Leadership

After the upheaval of 1967, a group of young black nationalists, centered at Wayne State University, coalesced around a community oriented newspaper, the *Inner City Voice*. Some of this initial group had been around the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), while others came from a Maoist background. Comrade Don Alexander recounts having met one of these guys, John Watson, abroad somewhat later. Watson told him that he and some of the others had attended a number of SWP Friday night Militant Forums in Detroit. They had been quite impressed with the SWP, but the SWP, far from trying to recruit them, told them to go off and form their own black political party. They were much influenced by this and did so.

Let me make the point that this gross idea that the SWP was a white party and shouldn’t recruit blacks was the corollary to the SWP’s refusal to intervene in SNCC. Here’s what the Revolutionary Tendency wrote in the document “For Black Trotskyism” [reprinted in *MB* No. 5R and

excerpted in this issue] in counterposition to the SWP majority in 1963: “The meaning of the line of the PC [Political Committee] draft is that we are not interested in recruiting these people to our white party because we have the revolutionary socialist program for the section of the working class of which we are the vanguard, and *they* (Negro militants) must lead *their own* struggle, although we would like to have fraternal relations with them. This is the meaning of the PC draft. To the concept of the white party must be counterposed the concept of the revolutionary party.” Indeed, for only an integrated revolutionary party can lead the socialist revolution in the U.S.

This grouping around the *Inner City Voice* was held together by a vague but militant determination to form a “black Marxist-Leninist party.” Maintaining their adherence to nationalism, they nevertheless saw that black workers played a key role in the American economy and working class. Black workers, they reasoned, would give their movement a more stable base than the lumpenproletariat to whom the Panthers oriented.

The *Inner City Voice* soon attracted a group of young black militants at the Chrysler Hamtramck assembly plant, Dodge Main, and these militants formed the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement, or DRUM. A wildcat strike over speed-up in May 1968 involving both black and white workers resulted in racist disciplinary actions being applied overwhelming to black workers.



Pan-African News Wire

Coming off of that, DRUM led a successful boycott of nearby bars that wouldn’t hire blacks, led another three-day wildcat strike, held a rally of 3,000 workers in the plant parking lot and established itself as the leadership of the 60 percent black workforce at Dodge Main. They contested a local union election and almost won, even though the election was totally rigged. Soon word of DRUM’s audacity spread to other plants. ELRUM was formed at Eldon Ave. Chrysler and a number of other groups were formed at other auto plants and even at United Parcel Service (UPRUM). Based on the apparent strength of DRUM and ELRUM, the *Inner City Voice* cadres moved to form the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in early 1969.

There was a vacuum, and they filled it. But the key question is always program. DRUM called for rehiring fired workers, entry of blacks into skilled trades, against speed-up and unsafe conditions and denounced the betrayals of UAW officials, etc. That’s all fine and good, but a lot of their demands were totally unsupportable. Let me give some examples: DRUM demanded 50 black foremen, ten black general foremen, a black plant manager; that “a black brother be appointed as head of the board of directors of Chrysler Corporation,” “50 percent of all plant protection guards be black, and that every time a black worker is removed from plant premises that he be led by a black brother”; that all black workers immediately stop paying union dues. These are demands that have to do with getting a few more “black faces in high places” and nothing to do



UPI

Detroit, 1970: Nationwide UAW strike against General Motors lasted 67 days.

with organizing proletarian struggle. It tells you a lot that DRUM could consider a black director of Chrysler or a black security guard to be a “brother”!

Some white workers did respect the picket lines and did want to work with DRUM, but DRUM consciously avoided organizing them, seeing them as the recipients of “white skin privilege” who had “a huge stake in the imperialist system.” This is false. White, black and Latino workers have a common interest in overthrowing capitalism, but you have to fight to bring this consciousness to the proletariat. The

the multiracial working class in struggle against racist discrimination and terror.”

What was needed was a class-struggle opposition to the sellout bureaucracy, not a rejection of the union as a whole. Dual-unionist in principle, the League’s caucuses nevertheless vacillated in their conceptions of whether or not it was permissible to work within the UAW. Sometimes they emphasized the commonality of black and white workers; that side of things comes across more in, for example, the movie about the League, *Finally Got the News*. But here is the ending of the much-quoted anonymous poem that came out of the DRUM struggles: “U.A.W. is scum/OUR THING IS DRUM!!!!”

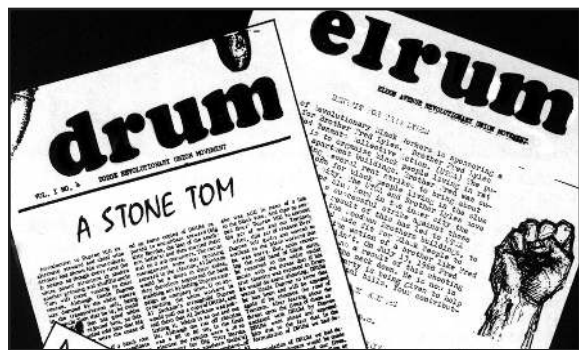
Like black nationalist groups generally, the League was bad on the woman question. There *were* activist women in the League, but they didn’t play leadership roles. Wanting an arena they could run, women League members set up a group for women hospital workers but disbanded it when it didn’t get the necessary backing from the League. And some League men actually referred to the woman activists as the IWW—the Ignorant Women of the World.

Even as the League was formed in 1969, there began to be conflicting orientations within the leadership: whether to expand into the community or orient toward a pan-industry workers organization; whether to be a union-type formation or a cadre group. The inability to square a nationalist orientation with the realities of class struggle in the plants led to a turn toward the black community. The League split in 1971, with both sides espousing nationalism. The community-oriented wing of Ken Cockrel, after a sojourn in the Black Workers Congress, moved toward Democratic Party politics, giving support to black Democrat Coleman Young. Cockrel was on the Detroit City Council and had aspirations to be mayor but died before he could run. His widow has been on the Detroit city council as has his son, who was also Detroit mayor at one point.

The more workerist wing of the League—General Baker and others—joined the Stalinist Communist League of Nelson Peery, with its crackpot theory of the Negro nation in the Deep South, and formed the Communist Labor Party (CLP). We set up an SL local in Detroit in 1973. It would have been good if we could have been there earlier; maybe we could have won over some of the League. But setting up a

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Attorney and LRBW leader Ken Cockrel (at left) in early 1970s. Below: Shop newsletters issued by Detroit-area Revolutionary Union Movements (RUMs), out of which emerged the League of Revolutionary Black Workers.



theory of “white skin privilege” was a cover for evading the difficult task of uniting the entire proletariat around a revolutionary program. Especially in Detroit of that time, while there were older, conservative white workers, there were also young white workers who didn’t like the war in Vietnam, had run into Students for a Democratic Society in junior college, and so on.

Black Nationalist Dead End

Then there was the dual union approach, which threatened to pull black workers out of the UAW altogether. As we have stated in the Spartacist League/U.S. Programmatic Statement:

“At bottom black nationalism is an expression of hopelessness stemming from defeat, reflecting despair over prospects for integrated class struggle and labor taking up the fight for black rights. The chief responsibility for this lies on the shoulders of the pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy, which has time and again refused to mobilize the social power of

City of Detroit

October 1978: Detroit mayor Coleman Young (center) with banking magnate David Rockefeller (left) and Henry Ford II.



For Black Trotskyism

July 1963 (Excerpt)

We print below a key portion of a document by James Robertson and Shirley Stoute of the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which was submitted for the party's 1963 National Convention. The RT, forerunner of the Spartacist League, was formed to combat the SWP majority's increasing abandonment of a Trotskyist perspective. This was reflected mainly in the party's tailing of the petty-bourgeois Castroite leadership of the Cuban Revolution and in its adaptation to both liberal pacifism and black nationalism in the civil rights movement.

The RT document argues against the criminally abstentionist policy of the SWP majority, as expressed in a draft resolution of the Political Committee (PC), which refused to devote party resources to intervene into the burgeoning struggles for black rights. RT members were bureaucratically expelled from the SWP beginning in November 1963 and continuing through the spring of 1964. The excerpt is from Part II of the RT document, subtitled "To the Socialist Revolution—The Broad Tasks." The document appears in its entirety in *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 (Revised), "What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism."

* * *

2. Our Point of Departure—The Socialist Revolution

Our point of departure comes in turn as the *conclusion* that the Negro question is so deeply built into the American capitalist class-structure—regionally and nationally—that only the *destruction* of existing class relations and the change in class dominance—the passing of power into the hands of the working class—will suffice to strike at the heart of racism and bring about a solution both real and durable. Our approach to present struggles cannot be "objective." Rather it rests on nothing other than or less than the criteria of what promotes or opposes the *socialist revolution*.

Therefore we can find an amply sufficient point of departure in a key statement of the 1948-50 resolution:

"The primary and ultimate necessity of the Negro movement is its unification with the revolutionary forces under the leadership of the proletariat. The guiding forces of this unification can only be the revolutionary party."

3. Negro Mass Organizations and the Revolutionary Party

It would be fool-hardy and presumptuous to seek after any pat schema detail-

ing the road to be traveled in going from today's struggles to our ultimate goals. But there are certain qualities and elements which, as in all such social struggles, do and will manifest themselves along the way.

One such matter is that of the basic approach to organizations of Negro workers and youth. The generality is that in an American society in which large sections of the working people are saturated with race hatreds and intolerance of the

way a complex and shifting combination of work in already existing groups and the building of new organizations will be involved. But as long as we know what we are aiming for we can be oriented amidst the complexities and vicissitudes of the process.

At bottom what the Marxists should advocate and aim to bring about is a *transitional* organization of the Negro struggle standing as a connecting link between the party and the broader masses. What



Bettmann

Unionists picket Woolworth's in New York City, 1960, as part of national campaign in solidarity with Southern civil rights sit-in movement.

particular needs of other parts and strata, special organizations are mandatory for various strata. This consideration finds its sharpest expression in the Negro struggle. Today in the wake of the upsurge in mass civil rights struggles there is a felt and urgent need for a broad mass organization of Negro struggle free of the limitations, weaknesses, hesitations, and sometimes downright betrayal which afflict the currently existing major competitors. This need will be with us for a long time. Participation in the work of building such a movement is a major responsibility for the revolutionary party. Very likely along the

is involved in working from a revolutionary standpoint is to seek neither a *substitute* to nor an *opponent* of the vanguard party, but rather a unified formation of the largely or exclusively Negro members of the party together with the largest number of other militants willing to fight for that section of the revolutionary Marxist program dealing with the Negro question. Such a movement expresses simultaneously the special needs of the Negro struggle and its relationship to broader struggles—ultimately for workers' power.

This approach to the special oppression of the Negroes stems from the tactics of

Lenin's and Trotsky's Comintern. It was there that the whole concept was worked out for relating the party to mass organizations of special strata under conditions where the need had become evident and it becomes important

that such movements contribute to the proletarian class struggle and that their best elements be won over to the party itself. The militant women's organizations, revolutionary youth leagues, and radical Trade Unionists' associations are other examples of this form.

Parenthetically, it should be noted how little there is in common between this outlook and that of the 1963 PC draft. Thus even in the *hypothetical* case that a separate social and material base was somehow created sufficient to generate a mass Negro national consciousness, the Bolshevik response is *not* just to back away and talk of facilitating eventual common work between a "them" of that nationality and an "us" of the (white) socialist vanguard of the (white) working class. Even if a new state—a separate black Republic—were created, our Negro comrades, even at this greatest conceivable remove, would become nothing other than a new section of a politically common international party—the Fourth International. And their struggle for socialism would continue to be our cause too.

4. Toward a Black Trotskyist Cadre

To return to the realities of the Negro struggle as it is and to the SWP as it is, there is one vital element without which the basic working program remains a piece of paper as far as *actual* involvement in the struggle is concerned. That element is an existing section, however modest, of Negro party members functioning actively and politically in the movement for Negro freedom.

Viewed from this aspect the current PC draft is at once a rationalization and an accommodation to the weakness of our party Negro forces, and, moreover, will exacerbate this weakness. This organizational abstentionism is obtrusive in the draft's direct implication that it doesn't really matter about the SWP because the Negro movement can get along well enough without the revolutionary working class party and one day the Negro vanguard may turn in our direction anyway. The key paragraph of the PC draft quoted in this article sums up

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Black History...

(continued from page 5)

Detroit local required the recruitment of a hundred or so New Leftists to Trotskyism. I liked Detroit; there was a whole series of wildcat strikes in the summer of 1973, lots of left groups to argue with, and *Workers Vanguard* sold well. The level of political understanding was higher back then. I remember selling *WV* at an auto plant and a young black guy came up to me very purposefully and said, "I read the *Vanguard* and I have a dictionary, too; but I can't find 'Pabloism' in it. So what does it mean?"

In 1976, General Baker ran as a Communist Labor Party candidate for the Michigan state congress. It couldn't have been much of a communist campaign, because I distinctly remember seeing a big election billboard in Detroit that said "General Baker, democrat" and then

arguing with the CLP about it. When he ran in 1978, although still a CLPer, it was explicitly on the Democratic Party ticket. Despite the anti-UAW fulminations of the League, he became a UAW bureaucrat. In a photo that ran with an article in 2011, General Baker is smiling broadly as he receives a UAW award for those who "exemplify the teaching and life" of, of course, Dr. Martin Luther King.

In 1979, five anti-Klan protesters were shot down in cold blood by the Klan in Greensboro, North Carolina. This was shown on national TV. As always, the FBI was involved. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms was involved, and the local police knew not to get there until the fascist death squad had made a leisurely departure but in plenty of time to arrest the surviving wounded victims. When the Klan said they were going to celebrate this atrocity in black, working-class Detroit, the Spartacist League organized our first labor/black mobilization to stop the Klan. It was small but successful, and the Klan didn't march.

The black Democratic mayor, Coleman Young, tried to ban it, Ken Cockrel on the City Council refused to take a position on it, the big shots of the UAW refused to endorse the rally. But auto workers and black youth still turned out. In a real way, this integrated rally (about two-thirds black) against the Klan, built by the Marxist Spartacist League, was a refutation of



WV Photo

November 1979: Spartacist-initiated demonstration, joined by 500 mostly black auto workers, stopped planned KKK march in downtown Detroit.

both King's reformist program of looking to the government and the League's nationalist views on white skin privilege.

Today Detroit is a wasteland with no jobs, a shrinking population and whole areas going to weeds and rubble. The UAW, thanks to the massive betrayals of the labor bureaucrats, is only a shadow

of itself, and there's right-wing talk about legislation to make Michigan a "right to work" state. But there is still a proletariat in this country and internationally and the class contradictions haven't gone away. Capitalism cannot help but breed class struggle. In Longview, Washington, we have seen longshoremen battling the company with militant tactics not seen for decades in this country: mass picketing facing down cops, ports in the region shut down, grain dumped out on the tracks, etc. We look forward to more of the same, hopefully sooner rather than later.

Our study of the civil rights period is critical to exposing those who have been obstacles to the development of revolutionary consciousness. So let me conclude by again citing the Programmatic Statement of the Spartacist League/U.S.:

"The proletariat is the only revolutionary class in modern society. Only the revolutionary conquest of power by the multiracial working class, emancipating the proletariat from the system of wage slavery, can end imperialist barbarity and achieve the long-betrayed promise of black freedom. We seek to build the Leninist vanguard party which is the necessary instrument for infusing the working class with this understanding, transforming it from a class *in itself*—simply defined by its relationship to the means of production—to a class *for itself*, fully conscious of its historic task to seize state power and reorganize society."

We urge you to join us in this struggle. ■

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American Airlines...

(continued from page 3)

to be reduced or outsourced overseas.” This “coalition” is a recipe for disaster for AMR workers. The businesses represented by the Chamber of Commerce have one overriding interest: their own profits, which are created through the blood and sweat of workers. Providing an assist are the capitalist politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties.

With their chauvinist protectionism and reliance on bourgeois politicians, especially the Democrats, the union bureaucrats have kept the labor movement in retreat. However much the Democrats are pitched as “friends of labor,” they represent the class enemy, which is evident whenever workers brandish their strike weapon. A 1997 pilots strike at American Airlines was ended after 24 minutes when Democrat Bill Clinton invoked the RLA against airline workers for the first time since 1966. He banned a total of 14 strikes in this manner.

Barack Obama, who received the endorsement of the TWU, APFA and most other unions in 2008, has time and again stuck the knife in labor. This began with the bailout of the auto bosses that gutted the jobs, wages and benefits of the union workforce, with the collusion of the United Auto Workers officialdom, which signed a no-strike pledge. Obama then turned his fire on teachers, followed by a wage freeze on federal employees. Last October, Obama used the RLA to spike a potential strike of thousands of freight rail workers. Earlier this year, he signed a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill with provisions modifying the RLA to make it more difficult for airline and railroad workers to unionize and easier for the bosses to decertify existing unions.

“Partnership” with the bosses and their politicians sets American Airlines workers against their class brothers and sisters throughout the industry, including overseas. The offensive against airline workers is hardly limited to the U.S. Last year, the Australian airliner Qantas grounded its entire fleet in order to press for union concessions, while 2,600 workers were locked out by Philippine Airlines. British Airways and Japan Airlines have eliminated thousands of jobs. At home, industry subcontractors have taken it to the unions as well. One such company, Aviation Safeguards at Los Angeles International Airport, unilaterally terminated its contract with the SEIU service workers union in January and withdrew health care benefits.

Particularly in an industry whose daily operations are international in scope, the solidarity of unionized labor in other countries can be a crucial axis of struggle against the red-white-and-blue union-busters in the U.S. Like all major carriers, American Airlines employs workers around the world. But the TWU, APA and APFA bureaucrats undermine labor solidarity by imbibing flag-waving American patriotism, evident in official placards

at union protests and an online petition expressing support for “American jobs at American Airlines.”

Objections to maintenance outsourcing from union officials are shot through with the same chauvinist and protectionist poison. Typical is TWU International president James Little, who rants against “less secure poorly regulated maintenance facilities in third world countries.” The fixation on security is a salute to the reactionary “war on terror,” under which workers have been victimized through increased surveillance, background checks and other measures. The leaders of the TWU, IAM, Teamsters, etc. want to extend this crackdown to all maintenance facilities in the U.S. and overseas. Giving a taste of what that would mean, a 2005 federal raid on the non-union TIMCO aircraft maintenance facility in Greensboro, North Carolina, ended in the arrest and deportation of 27 immigrant workers.

Little & Co. present the very real safety

labor movement in Florida, the first “right to work” state, and a powerful force in breaking down Jim Crow norms, including by establishing a program to train black workers in semi-skilled trades.

Beginning a series of job actions, 2,000 Miami Pan Am workers—white mechanics, unskilled workers and black porters—conducted a sitdown strike in late 1945. Although TWU head Mike Quill branded the strike “illegal” and ordered strikers back to work, it continued until workers unanimously agreed on a settlement. The TWU’s workplace activism and political stands made it a lightning rod for death threats from the Ku Klux Klan, spurring efforts by the union to defend its members and their families. To this day, the fighting unity of black and white as well as Latino workers is key to labor organizing, especially in the South where non-union airlines such as Delta are based.

However, even in its formative years, the union was hamstrung with a leader-

Airlines thanked Reagan for “reestablishing respect for law and controlling inflation” and thereby creating “a business environment in which the temporary losses we suffer now can be more than fully recouped.”

The destruction of PATCO was not preordained. There was plenty of sentiment to beat back the union-busters, as seen in a half-million-strong “Solidarity Day” labor demonstration in Washington, D.C., that September. But from the outset of the strike, the pro-capitalist labor officialdom refused to call out the airline unions—the IAM mechanics, the ALPA pilots, the Teamsters who fuelled the planes and others—to strike in solidarity with PATCO, instead pushing impotent consumer boycotts.

The smashing of the PATCO strike was a watershed in what has been a decades-long drive by the capitalist rulers to turn back the clock on the entire labor movement. These attacks have been intensified

**December 1951:
Pan American
Airways workers
picket at
NYC’s Idlewild
(now JFK)
Airport during
nationwide TWU
strike for better
wages.**



concerns at repair stations as a matter of “poor regulation,” calling for increased U.S. government safety inspections and protectionist legislation. As agencies of the capitalist class, the FAA and related government bodies are complicit in covering up the U.S. airline bosses’ brazen disregard for safety. Despite an FAA directive and inspections, American Airlines management got away with not arranging a check of the wiring in its fleet of MD-80s for five years after Boeing flagged possible problems. Only after revelations that Southwest Airlines had for years been flying uninspected planes, many with structural damage, did American ground the aircraft to have the necessary work done, in April 2008.

Both workers and passengers have suffered from cost-cutting by the airlines. Travelers are packed like sardines into aircraft stripped of amenities, while the companies roll the dice with their lives by compromising on safety. Meanwhile, the workers handling their luggage, the flight attendants serving them, the mechanics making the planes airworthy and the pilots managing the cockpit are overworked and underpaid. Matters are made worse with workers compelled to pick up extra hours or a second job to make ends meet. Now, even with a couple dozen accidents over the past two decades in the U.S. linked to pilot fatigue, American wants its pilots to fly more hours, a disaster in the making. By organizing non-union shops and fighting for union-run training and union safety committees, the airline unions would stand up for workers on the job and could win a lot of support from the public.

Break with the Democrats!

It took hard struggle, at crucial times transcending craft and racial divisions, for airline workers to make substantial gains in wages and working conditions in the period following World War II, when the industry was undergoing great expansion. Women flight attendants got union protections that gave them a measure of respect on the job, propelling many to become leading union fighters. The TWU gained its initial foothold in the industry at Pan Am in Miami after black porters and cleaners brought white mechanics into the union in 1945. In short order, the TWU established itself as the heart of the

ship loyal to the Democratic Party and the capitalist order. Mike Quill was himself a longtime fixture in the Democrats’ “New Deal coalition” in New York City, including in the 1930s when he was a supporter of the reformist Communist Party (CP). Following the outbreak of the anti-Soviet Cold War in the aftermath of World War II, Quill spearheaded a red purge of the TWU, breaking with his former CP allies. (For more on this subject, see “New York City: Transit Workers Under the Gun,” WV No. 1001, 27 April.)

It was Democrats like Senator Ted Kennedy and President Jimmy Carter who would unleash the war on airline unions by pushing through deregulation in 1978. The same year, Carter’s FAA began to hammer out a strike-breaking plan in advance of the 1981 contract negotiations with the PATCO air traffic controllers. When the 13,000 PATCO members went on strike in August 1981 in defiance of the law, Republican Ronald Reagan fired them all and hauled PATCO leaders off to jail in shackles. Despite the extended drop in air traffic, the airline bosses stood by the president. The chairman of American

in the ongoing, grinding economic crisis, during which capitalists in the U.S. and elsewhere have taken the ax to pensions and jobs in their onslaught against public employees and other workers.

The destructive irrationality of capitalism is also evident in the daily workings of the airline industry, with its wild swings that follow the vicissitudes of the price of oil and the health of the economy as a whole. The contradiction between the inherently international character of the industry on one hand and its operation by nationally based rival carriers on the other is a prime example of the generalized anarchy of capitalist production for profit. There will be no end to such chaos short of socialist revolutions that establish a collectivized economy with centralized planning on a world scale. The prerequisite to achieving this goal is the building of revolutionary workers parties that can lead the fight to shatter the capitalist order. In the U.S., that task requires breaking the political ties binding the bulk of the working class, blacks and other minorities to the Democratic Party. *For a workers party that fights for a workers government!* ■

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many expected to revive the New Deal is out to bury it instead.”

The ISO is here promoting a long-held myth, stemming from the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, that the interests of workers and minorities can be defended and advanced through the liberal wing of the Democratic Party. Roosevelt’s New Deal consisted of palliative reforms intended to stifle the huge workers upsurge that created the mass, integrated industrial unions of the CIO in the 1930s and to legally hamstring the burgeoning labor movement. In his efforts to subordinate the working class to the capitalist state, FDR was aided by the Communist Party (CP) and other reformists who helped channel the workers’ upsurge into support for his Democratic Party.

It was under FDR that the secret police became the FBI. In fact, Democratic administrations have led the efforts to unleash such forces against the workers movement. The origins of both the U.S. political police and domestic spying apparatus were in interimperialist World War I and, following the Bolshevik Revolution, the Red Scare of 1919-21 under Democratic president Woodrow Wilson. The central agency in this apparatus was the newly formed Bureau of Investigation and its General Intelligence Division (GID), headed by J. Edgar Hoover. Within months of its formation in 1919, the GID had compiled a list of 55,000 names—antiwar dissidents, left-wing socialists, members of the Industrial Workers of the World—and went on to pursue the fledgling U.S. Communist movement. The Wilson administration also carried out the deportation of thousands of foreign-born radicals in the 1919-20 Palmer Raids.

Amid the wave of working-class radicalization that broke out in the period of the Great Depression—epitomized by the 1934 citywide strikes in Minneapolis, Toledo and San Francisco, all led by reds—FDR rechristened Hoover’s organization as the FBI in 1935. A year later, he gave Hoover the authority to run secret intelligence activities against the U.S.’s

“enemies.” The FBI proceeded to investigate virtually every member of the Communist Party and its affiliates as well as left-wing labor leaders in the coal mining, steel, shipping, garment and newspaper industries. The FBI expanded the wire-tapping of phones, which was explicitly authorized by FDR in 1940 despite being earlier declared illegal by the Supreme Court.

In 1939, five days after the outbreak of World War II in Europe, FDR gave the agency greater powers. For 20 years, Hoover had demanded an anti-subversive law. Now he got it in the form of the 1940 Smith Act. Ostensibly directed against Nazi sympathizers, the law outlawed the

sters Local 544. The SWP denounced the Second World War as an interimperialist war in which revolutionaries took no side between the competing Allied and Axis powers, while standing foursquare in defense of the Soviet Union.

It is well known that in 1942, Roosevelt ordered the roundup and detention of 120,000 Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Less well known is that more than two years earlier the FBI had started drafting lists of thousands to be rounded up in the case of a national emergency, overwhelmingly leftists. At the height of the post-WWII Cold War against the Soviet Union, liberal Democratic Congressman Hubert Humphrey

attorney general Ramsey Clark, the anti-Communist COINTELPRO program was expanded into a bloody vendetta against black radicals, especially the Black Panther Party, 38 of whose members were killed by police and Feds and hundreds more railroaded to prison.

For a Workers Party, Tribune of the People!

In his book *Revolutionary Socialism* (1918), Louis Fraina, who would play a leading role in the early American communist movement, wrote: “Government having engaged itself to promote finance-capital in its imperialistic projects, it becomes increasingly un-democratic.” He also noted the increasing power of the imperial presidency, a tendency which is “particularly strong and typical in the United States.”

Ultimately, what the government gets away with in its increasing drive to regiment the working class and most everyone else in this society is dependent on the level of class and social struggle. From the rights for workers to organize in unions to the smashing of legalized segregation, every gain for the exploited and oppressed has been won through hard and bitter struggle. And the bourgeoisie, driven by the lash of capitalist competition, has fought to take back their concessions to the masses. Formal legal restrictions were placed on the cops and the government’s political police in the wake of the massive struggles for black civil rights in the 1950s and ’60s and against the Vietnam War. But those restrictions have since been largely eroded.

The Spartacist League is dedicated to building a revolutionary workers party that would champion the struggles of the exploited and the oppressed against the vicious capitalist rulers. In so doing, such a party would impart the consciousness that the depravities of capitalist rule can only be ended once and for all with the expropriation of the bourgeoisie by a workers government—the dictatorship of the proletariat. ■



WV Photo

February 2002: Oakland united-front protest initiated by Labor Black League and PDC against USA-Patriot Act and Maritime Security Act.

advocacy of revolution and membership in organizations deemed guilty of such advocacy. The Smith Act’s first victims were 18 leaders of the then-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and leaders of the militant Minneapolis Team-

was the driving force behind the 1954 Communist Control Act outlawing the CP. This was the period that gave birth to the NSA, whose overriding purpose was to spy on the Soviet Union. In the 1960s under Lyndon Johnson and his

Black Trotskyism...

(continued from page 6)

a permeating thread of the entire resolution, places the party’s role as one of fraternal relationship between two parallel structures: the (white) working class and its vanguard on the one side, and the Negro people and their vanguard on the other. This conception denies the fundamental necessity that the party will lead, must lead, or should even try to lead the decisive section of the working class in America. The resolution gives credence to the concept that “we cannot lead the Negro people.” This is absolutely contradictory to a revolutionary perspective. *Our leadership* means the revolutionary class struggle program carried out by revolutionists in the mass movements, fused into the revolutionary party. Just as trade unionists will not join the revolutionary party if they do not see it as essential to winning the struggle, so Negro fighters for liberation will not join the party on any basis other than that the *only* road to freedom for them is the revolutionary socialist path of struggle through the combat army. Negro militants will *not* see any advantage in joining a party which says in effect: “We cannot lead the Negro people. We are the socialist vanguard of the white working class, and we think it is nice to have fraternal relations with *your* vanguard (that of the liberation movement).”

Likewise, once we have recruited Negro militants to the party, the line expressed in the PC draft serves not to help them to develop as Trotskyist cadre and to recruit other black workers on the basis of our program, but rather would serve to waste and mislead them. When the party denies its role of leadership of the black masses, then for what reason do

we need a black Trotskyist cadre? The logic of this position means that there is no role for a Negro as a party member that differs from that he could play without entering the party, or, as in the case of the position taken on southern work, membership in the party would actually *isolate* him from important areas of work because “the party is not needed there.”

Some comrades, in response to the criticisms made here, will say that the party is not giving up a revolutionary perspective, but is only being realistic and facing the fact that the majority of our membership is white and that we have only a tiny and weak Negro cadre. We must seek to become *in reality* what we are *in theory*, rather than the reverse—i.e., adapting our program to a serious weakness in composition. If we take this road of adaptation the party program in a process of gross degeneration will become based on a privileged section of the working class.

Negroes who are activists in the movement, such as, for example, the full-time militants around SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee], are every

day formulating concepts of struggle for the movement. The meaning of the line of the PC draft is that we are not interested in recruiting these people to our white party because we have the revolutionary socialist program for the section of the working class of which we are the vanguard, and *they* (Negro militants) must lead *their own* struggle, although we would like to have fraternal relations with them. This is the meaning of the PC draft.

To the concept of the white party must be counterposed the concept of the revolutionary party. For if we are only the former, then black workers are misplaced in the SWP. There are three main elements which we recruit to the party: minority workers, white workers, and intellectuals. In the process of the work which brings these elements to the party there are special considerations which must be made with reference to the suspicions of minority peoples (“white caution”) in regard to personnel, etc. However, once *inside* the party we are all only revolutionists. All of these elements are fused in the struggle to achieve the revolutionary program

into revolutionists who as a whole make up the revolutionary party. Thus the “white caution” in Negro organizations is wrong inside the party. An internal policy of “white caution” equals paternalism, patronization, creation of “party Negroes,” etc., and has no place in a Bolshevik party.

The statement by Trotsky, quoted at the head of this article, that if the SWP cannot find the road to the Negroes then it is not worthy at all, finds its concurrent counterpart in the choice now before us. Either the revolutionary perspective in the U.S. has become blunted and lifeless *or else* its expression today as a living aim of the party pivots, in the context of relative working-class passivity and active Negro struggle, upon the development of a black Trotskyist cadre.

The principal aim of this article is to show that this deficiency in forces is not the fault of objective conditions—isolation and the like—but is rooted in the complex of related political and organizational faults stemming from a loss of confidence and orientation toward the proletarian revolution by the SWP majority. ■

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(continued from page 12)

a bourgeois state,” and “since capitalism is organised on the basis of particular national states, itself the cause of repeated imperialist wars to redivide the world, it is impossible to cohere a stable pan-European bourgeois state” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 670, 13 June 1997). If Greece were to be propelled out of the euro—and the EU—under the impact of mass opposition to EU-dictated starvation policies, it would be a defeat for the imperialists and a step forward for the working class, in Greece and the rest of Europe. Meanwhile working-class militants in Germany and other imperialist countries should oppose the extortionate demands that Greece pay its debt.

Opposition to the EU is a necessary starting point for the working classes of all European countries, but it is not a solution in itself. The crisis being played out in Greece—and threatening to engulf Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Italy—stems from the world system of capitalism. Russian revolutionary leader V.I. Lenin in his 1916 work, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, noted that: “Imperialism is capitalism at that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established,” and “in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.” A small club of wealthy imperialist powers subordinate and oppress the vast majority of the world’s population. Dependent countries (such as Greece, or Argentina today) “politically, are formally independent, but in fact, are enmeshed in the net of financial and diplomatic dependence.”

Under imperialism, each country becomes more closely connected to the world market, while industry becomes increasingly concentrated, laying the basis for the socialist organisation of society. However, capitalism is based on individual nation-states which inevitably come into conflict with each other in the drive for profits and new areas of exploitation. The capitalist nation-state is thus a fetter to the further development of the productive forces. For the working class and oppressed, the only way out is through socialist revolutions which will expropriate the bourgeoisie and establish an internationally planned economy under workers rule.

Over the past two years Greek workers have staged many one- or two-day general strikes, trying to beat back the joint offensive of the European imperialists and the Greek bourgeoisie. In the run-up to the parliamentary vote on the latest austerity package, workers staged a 48-hour general strike. On the day the cuts were approved a massive demonstration converged on parliament and fought pitched battles with rampaging cops. But the government's relentless attacks on jobs and living standards have continued.

The Greek working class has a long history of militancy and self-sacrifice. But again and again its struggles have been



Immigrant youth in Greek detention center near Turkish border, November 2010.

dissipated—or crushed—as a result of its reformist leadership which salvaged the rule of the Greek bourgeoisie at crucial moments. The critical need is for an internationalist revolutionary workers party, based on the programme of Lenin and Trotsky. The Trotskyist Group of Greece is dedicated to building such a party to fight for workers revolution throughout the region. Our programme is for a socialist united states of Europe.

The KKE's Class Collaboration

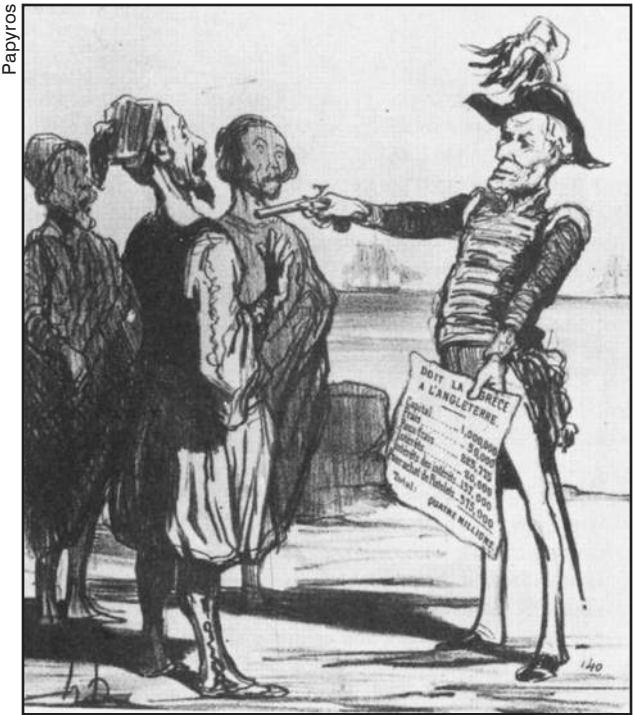
The two main union federations—the General Confederation of Workers of Greece (GSEE) and the Confederation of Public Servants (ADEDY)—are run by supporters of PASOK and New Democracy, the parties primarily responsible for pushing through the austerity measures. These trade-union leaders make no pretence of opposition to the EU. Likewise, throughout Europe the reformist leaderships of the working class either explicitly or tacitly accept the EU, promoting illusions in a “social Europe.”

An exception to this rule is the KKE, the Greek Communist Party, which opposed the EU and the 1992 Maastricht Treaty that authorised the introduction of the euro. With the KKE gaining ground in the polls, the social-democratic left in Greece like Xekinima (Start—the Greek section of the Committee for a Workers’ International) and the International Marxist Tendency’s affiliate Marxist Voice, are openly touting a “left” coalition of the KKE and Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left, dominated by Synaspismos, formed out of the old “Eurocommunist” wing of the Communist Party). But the KKE rejects such a coalition, correctly criticising Syriza for “being consistently pro-E.U.” and for the fact that “it has voted for the Maastricht treaty after all” (Wiki-news.org, 13 May 2010).

The KKE has the allegiance of the most militant sections of the Greek working class. Its trade-union organisation, PAME, purports to offer a “class-oriented”

opposition to the sell-out bureaucrats in GSEE and ADEDY, whom it correctly denounces for class collaboration with the bosses and their government. However the KKE cannot offer a way forward for the working class beyond the cycle of one-day general strikes, which amount to a militant form of lobbying parliament. The KKE does not have a programme for the working-class seizure of power. It is wedded to nationalism which is the main obstacle to building a revolutionary workers party in Greece. A strategic task in building a revolutionary party is to win the working-class base of the KKE to the

In 1850 cartoon by Honoré Daumier, England demands that Greece pay for capital, expenses, false expenses, interest, interest on interest and pistols.



internationalist programme of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks.

The KKE has adopted, on paper at least, a leftist posture against the Greek capitalists and their anti-working-class austerity. In the theses of party conferences, and in particular on its Internet postings, the KKE spouts Marxist-sounding rhetoric. It even says in its 18th Congress Resolution on Socialism that “In the place of the bourgeois army and repressive organs, which will be completely dissolved, new institutions will be created, based on the armed revolutionary struggle for the destruction of the resistance of the exploiters and for the defence of the Revolution” (February 2009).

This verbal leftism is so much hot air, as shown in the KKE's actual practice. On the question of the capitalist state, i.e., "the bourgeois army and repressive organs," the KKE's real programme is common-or-garden variety reformism. In an article in *Rizospastis* (25 May 2011), the KKE reports on a meeting of the Panhellenic Confederation of Police Officers, which its members attended. The KKE's representative, one Spiros Halvadji, lectured the cops that "the role of the police must not be repression against the popular movement, but must have as its primary role the prosecution of crime." The cops, together with the courts, prisons and mili-

tary, make up the core of the bourgeois state, which Lenin described as “the ‘special coercive force’ for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, of millions of working people by handfuls of the rich” (*The State and Revolution*, 1917). Today in Greece, the reactionary crusade against “crime” is the pretext for rounding up hundreds of immigrants and throwing them into concentration camps.

A Leninist party would combat national chauvinism, which is whipped up by the capitalist rulers, particularly against Turkey, Greece's historic enemy, as well as towards neighbouring Balkan countries. In the context of heightened Greek nationalism caused by the EU's trampling on the country's national sovereignty, the government has launched a racist campaign against immigrants, opening up new detention centres and arresting hundreds. Attacks on immigrants have increased, as fascist organisations such as Golden Dawn have been emboldened.

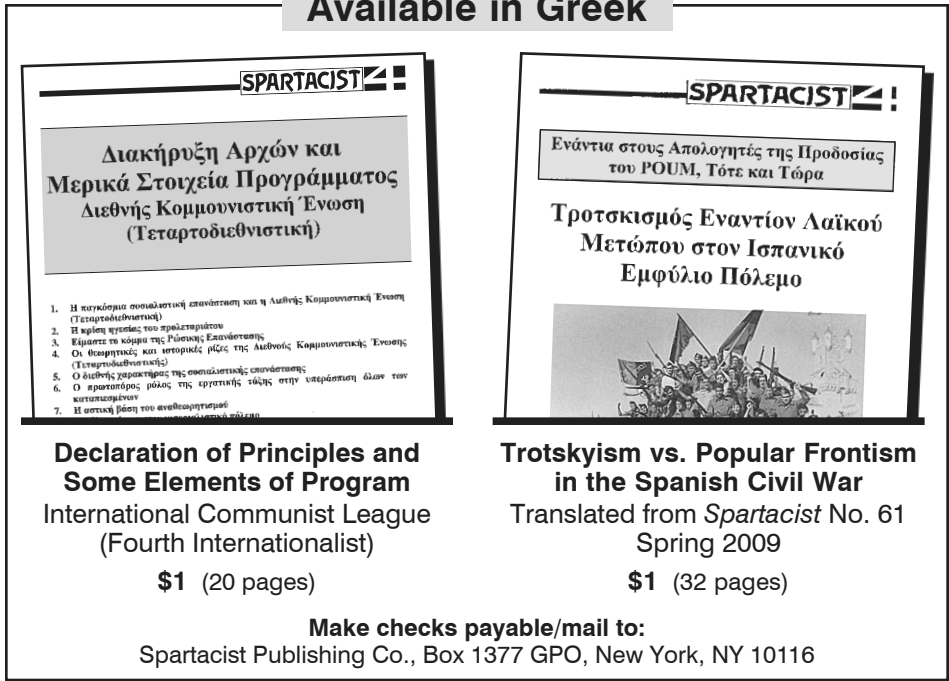
Defence of the rights of oppressed nationalities and immigrants is essential to working-class unity in the struggle for socialist revolution. Nationalism sets workers of different nationalities against each other, poisoning class consciousness and aiding the capitalists to drive down the wages of all workers. Workers from Albania, South Asia, Africa and elsewhere must be drawn into common struggle alongside their Greek class brothers and sisters. A class-struggle leadership in the trade unions would fight for jobs for all and for full citizenship rights for immigrants.

The KKE has the social power to mobilise powerful contingents of workers to

defend immigrants and to sweep the fascist vermin off the streets, but their nationalism is a barrier to such a perspective. In the early 1990s, an intense wave of Greek chauvinism over Macedonia contributed to the growth of Golden Dawn. When the former Yugoslav republic included the word “Macedonia” in its name, posters across Greece declared, “Macedonia Is Greek!” At the time we wrote that “the response of the KKE to the tidal wave of chauvinism is a sustained capitulation to Greek nationalism,” expressed in KKE statements such as: “we don’t let any foreign nationalist lay claim to even a centimeter of Greek soil” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 565, 11 December 1992). Our article demanded: “**For the right of self-determination for Macedonia, including Greek Macedonians! For full democratic rights for minorities in Greece! For a Balkan Socialist Federation, including Greece!**”

In contrast to the proletarian socialism of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party, the KKE espouses nationalist populism. This is apparent in incessant, anti-Marxist demands for "people's power," sometimes expressed in the absurd coupling "working-class people's power." For example, they argue "the basic direction of the people's movement must be the overthrow of capitalism. The only way out is the working-class popular power

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with disengagement from the EU and unilateral cancellation of the debt. There is no other solution for the people” (“The List of the Measures Included in the New Memorandum,” 16 February).

By preaching the common interests of “the people,” the KKE dissolves the proletariat into the whole of the population and obscures the class divisions of bourgeois society. With its hands on the levers of production, the working class is the only force with the potential power and objective interest to overthrow capitalism. The interests of the Greek capitalists, who make their profits from the exploitation of workers, and of the working class cannot be reconciled. The petty bourgeoisie comprises a heterogeneous layer between the capitalists and the workers, everything from teachers to small farmers to students. It includes the substantial proportion of the Greek population employed in family-run businesses. The strong influence of nationalist populism in Greek society is rooted in the fact that the industrial proletariat is very small and the urban petty bourgeoisie correspondingly large.

The KKE’s vision of “socialism” is a reactionary programme of national autarky based on the exploitation of the supposed wealth of natural resources, including energy resources within Greece alone. What the KKE envisions is a variety of “socialism in one country,” the dogma adopted by Stalin in late 1924 when the bureaucracy usurped power in a political counterrevolution that led to the degeneration of the Soviet workers state. “Socialism in one country” expressed the nationalist opportunism of the Soviet bureaucracy and ran counter to the Bolshevik Party’s historic revolutionary, internationalist programme. It provided the Stalinist bureaucracy with an ideological justification for transforming the foreign Communist parties into bargaining chips in an illusory search for “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. Lenin had explained at a Bolshevik Party congress in 1919: “We are living not merely in a state, but *in a system of states*, and it is inconceivable for the Soviet Republic to exist alongside of the imperialist states for any length of time. One or the other must triumph in the end” (“Report of the Central Committee,” 18 March 1919).

Despite its degeneration under Stalinism, we Trotskyists defended the Soviet Union, and fought for workers political revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy, whose policies of appeasement of imperialism undermined the existence of the workers state. Capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union in 1991-92, after decades of military and economic pressure from world imperialism, definitively demonstrated the bankruptcy of Stalinism. If “socialism in one country” was impossible in the Soviet Union, covering one-sixth of the earth’s surface and rich in mineral wealth, in the context of Greece it is simply absurd.

The KKE’s History of Betrayals

In February, as the Greek parliament debated the second bailout and workers outside battled with police, government spokesmen evoked the spectre of civil war. KKE leader Aleka Papariga responded by referring to the Greek bourgeoisie’s repression against Communists in the 1940s. The 1946-49 Civil War continues to haunt all sides in Greece today. To the Greek bourgeoisie the KKE, the oldest party in Greece, embodies the hatred of the working class and peasantry for its rule. In reality, it is a travesty that the KKE retains a reputation as a militant fighter against capitalism based on the Resistance against the Nazi occupation and the subsequent Greek Civil War.

The KKE’s long history of betrayal of the Greek proletariat begins with the Stalinisation of the party in the late 1920s. The KKE faithfully followed every twist and turn of policy emanating from the Stalinist leadership in the Soviet Union. During the economic crisis of the 1930s,



Top: KKE banners on the Acropolis, February 11. Bottom: General Sarafis (left) of KKE-supported ELAS Resistance force with British commander and anti-Communist guerrilla leader Zervas, circa 1944. Stalinists entered capitalist government, disarmed working class.



Greece was convulsed by massive workers strikes, notably the May 1936 general strike in Salonika. The KKE dominated the whole working-class movement and enjoyed strong support in the countryside. But the KKE subordinated the fight for working-class power to pursuing an alliance with the bourgeois Liberal Party, paving the way for the military dictatorship of Ioannis Metaxas. As our Trotskyist forebears explained:

“Instead of organizing the workers for decisive *revolutionary* action and working to draw the peasants in the countryside into the struggle, throughout the fateful months between April and August 1936, when the working class was in deep revolutionary ferment, the Stalinists busied themselves with a campaign to force the Liberal Party to organize with them a People’s Front. The Liberal Party, however, had heard its master’s voice and turned down the Stalinist offer. They were busy easing the way for Metaxas.”

—“Civil War in Greece,” *Fourth International*, February 1945

Far from forming an alliance with the KKE against the right wing of the bourgeoisie, the Liberals united with the right to crush the workers.

During the brutal Nazi occupation of Greece in World War II, the KKE established itself as the leadership of the Resistance. The Greek workers and peasants flocked to the military wing of the Resistance—ELAS—and fought heroically against both the Nazi occupiers and the Greek bourgeoisie’s anti-Communist quislings like General Zervas, a tool of the British imperialists who also collaborated with the Nazi occupiers. By the time the German forces withdrew from Greece, the entire country was in the hands of the ELAS fighters and the hated Greek bourgeoisie was at their mercy.

The workers and peasants, however, were cheated of their victory by the betrayal of the KKE leadership. The Stalinists joined the capitalist government and, in February 1945, signed the Treaty of Varkiza, disarming the KKE-led resistance fighters and handing power back to the miserable Greek bourgeoisie. In this, the KKE embraced the anti-revolutionary perspective of Stalin, who, at the Tehran Conference with Churchill and Roosevelt in 1943,

had agreed that Greece would remain capitalist and under the thumb of British imperialism. Thousands of Communists were killed in the subsequent civil war. After the final defeat of the KKE’s Democratic Army in 1949, thousands were forced into exile. Those who could not get away were rounded up and put in concentration camps on prison islands. There they were subject to torture unless they renounced the party. The KKE was banned for decades and its members blacklisted.

What the comrades of the Fourth International wrote at the end of World War II holds true for the role of the Stalinists throughout the Civil War:

“The Greek masses were burning with revolutionary determination and wished to prepare the overthrow of all their oppressors—Nazi and Greek. Instead of providing the mass movement with a revolutionary program, similar to the Bolshevik program of 1917, and preparing the masses for the seizure of power, the Stalinists steered the movement into the blind alley of People’s Frontism. The Stalinists, who enjoyed virtual hegemony of the mass movement, joined with a lot of petty bourgeois politicians, lawyers, professors, who had neither mass following nor influence, and artificially worked to limit the struggle to the fight for capitalist democracy.”

Today the KKE continues the Stalinist tradition of popular-frontism and class collaboration that historically has politically disarmed the working class and bound it to the Greek bourgeoisie.

Imperialism and Greek Capitalism

The dependent character of the modern Greek state did not begin with its accession to the EU, but was stamped on it from birth. At the treaty which carved an independent Greek state out of the decaying Ottoman Empire in May of 1832, no Greeks were present—only representatives of the “protecting” powers: Britain, France and Russia. An absolutist monarch—Otto of Bavaria—was imposed on the new country. Throughout the 19th century Greece was a pawn of British diplomacy, particularly vis-à-vis tsarist Russia. Despite early attempts to modernise the country Greece remained overwhelmingly agrarian, dependent on the export

of currants. While there was very little investment in industry, a very wealthy commercial bourgeoisie developed, based on merchant shipping and, later, banking.

In the early 1830s, to pay for the war against the Ottoman Turks, the Greek government contracted loans in the City of London on ruinous terms. By the 1880s Greek debts to Britain exceeded 630 million drachmas, the service of which consumed a third of the state’s revenues. When the currant market collapsed, Greece went bankrupt. This established a pattern that has persisted to the present. British imperialist policy towards Greece was geared to using loans in order to subjugate the country and to bring about its complete financial and diplomatic dependency. Following WWII, in the latter phase of the Greek Civil War, the U.S. supplanted decaying British imperialism in Greece, and similarly employed aid and loans as a weapon to subordinate the country.

The Greek bourgeoisie has always depended upon one or another imperialist power to guarantee its position, jointly exploiting the Greek proletariat. Such relationships of dependency are inevitable as long as imperialism exists. The only way out is the road taken by the Russian workers and peasants in the 1917 October Revolution. Led by Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks, they seized state power, expropriated the capitalist class and the landowners and swept away the tsarist autocracy and the state church. Lenin established the Third (Communist) International as the world party of proletarian revolution, conscious that, to survive, the workers revolution in backward Russia had to be extended to the advanced capitalist countries—especially Germany.

Proletarian internationalism is a life-and-death question for the working classes throughout Europe, who must struggle against the attacks of the national bourgeoisie and against the EU robber barons. Workers in the imperialist countries, in struggling against their “own” bourgeoisies, have the potential to strike a blow in the interests of all those, throughout Europe and worldwide, who are ground under the heel of imperialism. In countries such as Britain and Germany, immigrant workers from Greece, Turkey and elsewhere bring with them traditions of militant struggle and form an organic tie to struggles in their countries of origin.

The global economic crisis starkly poses the need to do away with the boom-bust cycle of capitalism. This can only be done through workers revolutions that expropriate the super-rich exploiters and reorganise production to meet human need. To transform the working class into a class fighting for power at the head of all the oppressed requires the leadership of a revolutionary party. ■



Berlin: German Trotskyists raise sign reading “Down With Police Terror in Greece! For Workers Protests!” at 2008 demonstration.

WORKERS VANGUARD

Down With the Bosses' European Union— For a Workers Europe!



Left: Shipyard workers demand unpaid wages outside Finance Ministry in Athens, March 15. Right: Greek prime minister Lucas Papademos with German chancellor Angela Merkel in Brussels, December 2011.

Banks Starve Greek Working People

MAY 7—The results of yesterday's parliamentary elections in Greece reflected mass discontent with the European Union (EU) and the starvation policies mandated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The two bourgeois parties that had enforced the austerity measures, the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement and the right-wing New Democracy, received less than a third of the vote between them. Syriza (Coalition of the Radical Left) came in second behind New Democracy with 16.5 percent of the vote. Syriza, which stands in favor of the EU and the euro while offering to renegotiate the terms of austerity, is calling for a "left government." According to the Greek Communist Party (KKE) newspaper, *Rizospastis* (7 May), the KKE, which opposes the EU and the euro, won 8.4 percent of the vote. Ominously, the fascist Golden Dawn received nearly 7 percent.

We print below a 5 May article, adapted for WV, written by our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain and appearing in *Workers Hammer* No. 218 (Spring 2012).

WORKERS HAMMER

The 6 May parliamentary elections in Greece are taking place amid fears of economic meltdown. The Greek capitalists have triggered popular outrage by imposing brutal austerity, including cuts to jobs, pensions and public services. Behind the Greek bourgeoisie stand the imperialist European Union and the U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund with whom the Greek government negotiated a 130 billion euro [\$170 billion] bailout in February to stave off a default on the country's loan obligations. This was the second "rescue package" in the space of two years and, like the first, was in fact a bailout of the country's creditors—mainly French and German banks—as

well as Greek ones. The EU bloodsuckers are intent on ensuring that when Greece goes bankrupt, it does not take the whole euro zone down with it.

For the Greek working class, the crisis has become a catastrophe. Wages have been slashed; unemployment is running at over 20 per cent, reaching 51 per cent for youth. Homelessness has increased by 25 per cent over the past year while one in three Greeks lives below the official poverty line. The suicide rate has rocketed. In a case which has come to symbolise the anger and desperation of the population, in early April 77-year-old retired pharmacist Dimitris Christoulas shot himself with a handgun outside the parliament in Athens' Syntagma Square. His suicide note said that he could not face the prospect "of scavenging through garbage bins for food and becoming a burden to my child" (*New York Times* online, 5 April).

The Greek capitalist rulers are more than willing accomplices of Wall Street, the German banks, the City of London and the French Bourse. The leaders of the EU, the European Central Bank and the IMF—the so-called "troika"—continually ride roughshod over Greece's national sovereignty. When then prime minister George Papandreou proposed a referendum on the EU-dictated austerity package last November, EU leaders orchestrated his removal and replacement by Lucas Papademos, former vice president of the European Central Bank. The deposed Papandreou was hardly an opponent of EU austerity: he was leader of the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), a bourgeois populist party, which governed since 2009, imposing the most savage cuts the country has seen since World War II.

Now led by Evangelos Venizelos, PASOK continues to govern in coalition with the right-wing conservatives of New Democracy, led by Antonis Samaras. EU leaders have demanded that Greece enshrine a commitment to repay the bankers into its constitution. This would be legally binding on whatever government emerges from the election.

As proletarian internationalists, we have consistently opposed the imperialist EU on principle. It was originally established as an adjunct of NATO, the imperialist military alliance against the Soviet Union. From its beginnings it has been a mechanism by which the combined capitalist powers impose austerity on their own working classes. The dominant powers, led by Germany, subordinate the weaker ones such as Greece, Ireland, Portugal and the East European member states. Under the banner of the "flexible labour market," the EU has rolled back trade-union rights and imposed low wages and precarious work contracts.

The misery being inflicted on the Greek working people is a template for attacks on workers across Europe. Heavily indebted Spain, with the highest official unemployment rate in Europe (24 per cent), was engulfed by a one-day general strike on 29 March against the government's budget cuts. A week earlier, a 24-hour general strike against austerity in neighbouring Portugal brought most of that country's transport system to a standstill. It is not only in the poorer nations of southern Europe that the working class is under attack. German imperialism has driven down wages and drastically reduced welfare spending at home. The German proletariat, the most powerful working class in Europe, is potentially the Achilles' heel

of the imperialist EU, but it is led by the Social Democratic Party. In government from 1998 to 2005, the Social Democrats carried out draconian attacks on the working class which helped sharpen German imperialism's competitive edge in the world market.

In the face of a wave of chauvinism against Greeks, our comrades in the Spartacist Workers Party of Germany wrote: "The workers movement in Germany must mobilize in solidarity with Greek workers and all the other victims of the EU imperialists—after all, they'll be confronted with similar attacks in the immediate future" (reprinted in *Workers Hammer* No. 211, Summer 2010 [reprinted in WV No. 960, 4 June 2010]). Last year our comrades stated that there is "no way out for debtor countries like Greece under the set-up dictated by the German bourgeoisie." Noting that Greece might be much better off if it defaulted and left the euro zone, they warned that, "while this might provide relief from the downward spiral, leaving the euro zone will not insulate the Greek proletariat from the world economic downturn and capitalist devastation" (reprinted in *Workers Hammer* No. 217, Winter 2011-2012 [see WV No. 992, 9 December 2011]).

The single currency has helped the German bourgeoisie make huge profits. The Greek capitalist rulers too have benefited from the EU and seem determined to retain the euro, despite the fact that it prevents Greece from devaluing its currency to lessen its debts or to increase the competitiveness of its exports. The International Communist League opposed the introduction of the euro and pointed out that a single currency spanning several different capitalist countries is not sustainable. In 1997 we wrote: "Control over the quantity of money within its boundaries is a basic economic prerogative of

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