

Fascists Mobilize Behind U.S./EU Against Russia

Since the end of November, tens of thousands of demonstrators have repeatedly flocked to Maidan Square in the Ukrainian capital city of Kiev, protesting the refusal of President Viktor Yanukovich to sign an association agreement with the European Union (EU). Leading bourgeois politicians from the capitalist West, such as American Senator John McCain and EU foreign affairs representative Catherine Ashton, flooded into Kiev to solidarize with the protesters. In some ways, it was a reprise of the so-called “Orange Revolution” of 2004 when the U.S. and other imperialists, backed by a phalanx of imperialist-funded organizations, financed and engineered demonstrations that forced the election of a pro-Western and anti-Russian president, Viktor Yushchenko.

The ongoing aim of the Western imperialists is to establish a client state on the border of Russia, which under the rule of capitalist strongman Vladimir Putin has increasingly become a thorn in their sides. And Ukraine would be a big prize. Its industrial base supplies the Russian market, and its Black Sea and Crimean peninsula territories are of strategic importance to the Russian military.

The protesters and their imperialist backers claimed that they were fighting for the alleged higher values of European culture and civilization. A measure of those “values” is the major role played in recent protests by outright fascists belonging to the Svoboda party. This organization derives from the Ukrainian nationalists led by Stepan Bandera who carried out mass murders of Jews, reds, Soviet soldiers and Poles during World War II. Underlining their rabid anti-communism, the fascists spearheaded the destruction of a statue of V.I. Lenin, whose Bolshevik Party led the Russian October Revolution of 1917 that liberated the toilers and subject peoples of the former tsarist empire—Jews, Azerbaijanis, Ukrainians, etc.—from capitalist and landlord oppression. After renewed protests last weekend erupted into pitched battles between riot police and balaclava-wearing men armed with steel pipes and firebombs, some reports pointed to the involvement of the Right Sector, which, according to the BBC (21 January), considers Svoboda “too liberal and conformist.”



Reuters



EPA

Last month, while McCain was shaking hands with Svoboda leader Oleg Tyagnibok, the Obama administration dispatched Victoria Nuland, assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, to Kiev. Nuland emphasized: “We stand with the

people of Ukraine who see their future in Europe.” At the same time, she stated that “the rule of law must be upheld,” which was understood by protest leaders to indicate U.S. reluctance to sponsor a forcible overthrow of the Yanukovich regime.

Such hesitation is a measure of Washington’s difficulties in pursuing its strategic interests around the world, not least its dealings with a more assertive Russian government. Capitalist restoration in the

continued on page 4

Ukraine Turmoil: Capitalist Powers in Tug of War



Reuters

Above: Rally in Kiev of imperialist-backed pro-European Union forces, including Svoboda fascists, 22 December 2013. Top left: U.S. Senator John McCain with Svoboda leader Oleg Tyagnibok (center) and Fatherland coalition’s Arseniy Yatsenyuk. Bottom left: Vladimir Putin with Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovich.

“Right to Life” Horror in Texas

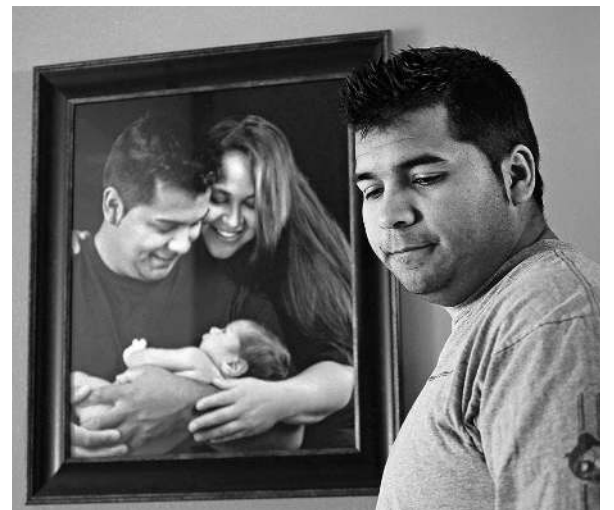
Anyone who doubts the depths to which the reactionary “right to life” forces will stoop should turn their attention to what is happening at John Peter Smith Hospital (JPS) in Fort Worth, Texas. Early on November 26, Erick Muñoz awoke to find his wife Marlise collapsed on the floor of their home. Despite his best efforts as a trained paramedic, he was not able to resuscitate her before the ambulance arrived. In the JPS emergency room, doctors restarted her heart but could not detect any brain activity after she had gone over an hour without oxygen. The diagnosis did not leave any room for hope. Her family members prepared to say their final goodbyes, only to learn that Marlise was going to be kept on life support simply because she was 14 weeks pregnant. Against the

family’s express wishes, hospital officials plan to keep her body hooked up to machines for as long as it takes to see if the fetus develops.

The torture visited on the family throws into sharp relief the reactionary nature of the “fetal rights” crusade, a major front in the “pro-life” war on abortion. Fort Worth is located in Tarrant County, a nest of anti-abortion bigotry where right-wing politicians and hospital board members alike have helped weave rules and laws stripping pregnant women of their rights. Now, unable to bury his daughter, Marlise’s father, Ernest Machado, has told of the “pure hell” caused by the prolonged grief. “All she is is a host for a fetus,” he said angrily.

Adding to the family’s torment are the “right to life” ghouls who have taken to news programs and social media, not to mention the “save the baby” prayer vigils outside the hospital. Any doubt expressed regarding the health of the fetus, which was also deprived of oxygen after Marlise lost consciousness, is heresy to the religious zealots who ooze ignorance and disdain for the family. And with medical costs mounting daily, the family’s ordeal may well not end any time soon. After

continued on page 2



Ennis/Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Erick Muñoz, whose brain-dead wife Marlise Muñoz has been kept on life support by hospital officials against family’s wishes due to pregnancy.



Texas...

(continued from page 1)

all, prying money from the insurance company parasites to cover vital care for the living is difficult enough. In a display of basic human decency, the fire department where Erick works has taken up a collection for the family.

Earlier this month, Erick filed a court motion to compel an end to the life support. For its part, the hospital board welcomed the opportunity to have it out in the courts. What it is doing with Marlise Muñoz’s corpse already goes beyond the bounds of a perverse state law that prohibits the withdrawing of life-sustaining medical treatment from a “pregnant patient.” By its doctors’ own determination, the “patient” in this case is a dead woman! If a judge signs off on the practice, however rare, of keeping the bodies of pregnant women warm long after their brains are gone, it would further legally enshrine the notion that women are first and foremost incubators. It comes as no surprise that the JPS general counsel in 1988 helped push through a ban on abortions at the hospital and currently sits on

the advisory board of a local “right to life” group.

As written, the Texas law exudes contempt for pregnant women by invalidating their advance directives on end-of-life treatment. On this score, Texas is far from alone. A total of 30 other states have similar or identical pregnancy exclusions on the books, while 14 kick the issue to the courts, leaving only five states in the U.S. that respect a woman’s advance directive if she is pregnant. Marlise did not have a written directive, but as a trained paramedic she was clear on the matter and had told her family that she did not want to be kept alive artificially. That should have been the end of the debate. The capitalist state should have no right to interfere in any such personal decisions, particularly involving issues of life and death.

Rallying behind the hospital are sinister anti-woman forces pushing a “personhood” agenda that defines human life as beginning at conception. Among them is Texas Alliance for Life, whose executive director ranted about Marlise: “There is an unborn child who is alive and deserves protection.” Counteracting the religious-based notion that the fetus is a human with a “soul,” we wrote in

“States Criminalize ‘Bad’ Mothers” (WV No. 1004, 8 June 2012): “Since a fetus and the mother are biologically united during pregnancy, all attempts to endow the fetus with rights come at the expense of those of the mother.” Indeed, the “personhood” campaign has served to abrogate abortion rights across the country and to throw the book at pregnant women for such activities as drinking and smoking marijuana.

In Texas, lawmakers made a mark last year with a bill that contains almost every one of the attacks on abortion rights recently enacted elsewhere in the nation. Its provisions include everything from a ban on abortions after 20 weeks due to supposed “fetal pain” to mandating clinics to make medically irrelevant upgrades to their buildings. The abortion providers not already forced to close their doors are now under tremendous strain, as the procedure is all but unobtainable in much of the state.

When it comes to general viciousness meted out to working people, minorities and women, the state of Texas takes a backseat to no other. Its execution chambers are the busiest in the nation. Its border guards are notorious for firing on desperate, unarmed immigrants from helicopters. Its health safety net is collapsing from too few resources, even as Republican governor Rick Perry opted out of the federal Medicaid expansion, keeping uninsured some one million black

people and others who need coverage. The bigots and bible-thumpers make it easy for Democratic Party politicians to pretend to be on the side of the oppressed. Last June, Democratic state senator Wendy Davis captured the national spotlight by staging a filibuster that delayed passage of the omnibus anti-abortion bill. Now she is a gubernatorial candidate. At best, the perspective of Davis and her Democratic Party cohorts is limited to preserving *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion but left the door open for state loopholes, a major factor in decimating abortion services across the country. The Democrats have also helped restrict access to abortion for poor and working women while coddling religious reactionaries. Democratic president Jimmy Carter signed the 1977 Hyde Amendment eliminating abortion coverage under Medicaid, a measure that has been renewed every year since, regardless of which party sits in the White House.

As the horror visited on Marlise’s family graphically shows in microcosm, such attacks on abortion rights redound against all women and all working people. Fighting for the democratic rights and needs of the mass of the population—including freely available, quality health care and abortion—requires mobilizing workers and the oppressed in struggle against both the Democratic and Republican parties that uphold the capitalist system of exploitation. ■



TROTSKY

The Liberating Promise of Socialism

In July 1919, less than two years after the victorious proletarian revolution in Russia, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin granted an interview to a U.S. news agency with the agreement that his answers would be published unaltered in over 100 newspapers. In one of his responses excerpted below, Lenin explained that capitalism had outgrown its historically progressive role and become a fetter on the development of society, as

starkly shown by the carnage of interimperialist World War I. In contrast, the fledgling Soviet workers state was a beacon of hope for the toiling masses worldwide. The news agency suppressed this answer as “unadulterated Bolshevik propaganda,” but Max Eastman’s left radical magazine The Liberator published it in October 1919.

Compared to feudalism, capitalism was an historical advance along the road of “liberty,” “equality,” “democracy” and “civilisation.” Nevertheless capitalism was, and remains, a system of *wage-slavery*, of the enslavement of millions of working people, workers and peasants, by an insignificant minority of modern slave-owners, landowners and capitalists. Bourgeois democracy, as compared to feudalism, has changed the form of this economic slavery, has created a brilliant screen for it but has not, and could not, change its essence. Capitalism and bourgeois democracy are wage-slavery.

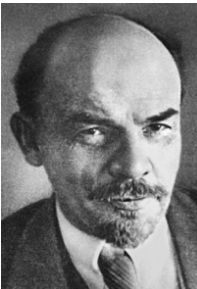
The gigantic progress of technology in general, and of means of transport in particular, and the tremendous growth of capital and banks have resulted in capitalism becoming mature and overmature. It has outlived itself. It has become the most reactionary hindrance to human progress. It has become reduced to the absolute power of a handful of millionaires and multimillionaires who send whole nations into a bloodbath to decide whether the German or the Anglo-French group of plunderers is to obtain the spoils of imperialism, power over the colonies, financial “spheres of influence” or “mandates to rule,” etc.

During the war of 1914-18 tens of millions of people were killed or mutilated for that reason and for that reason alone....

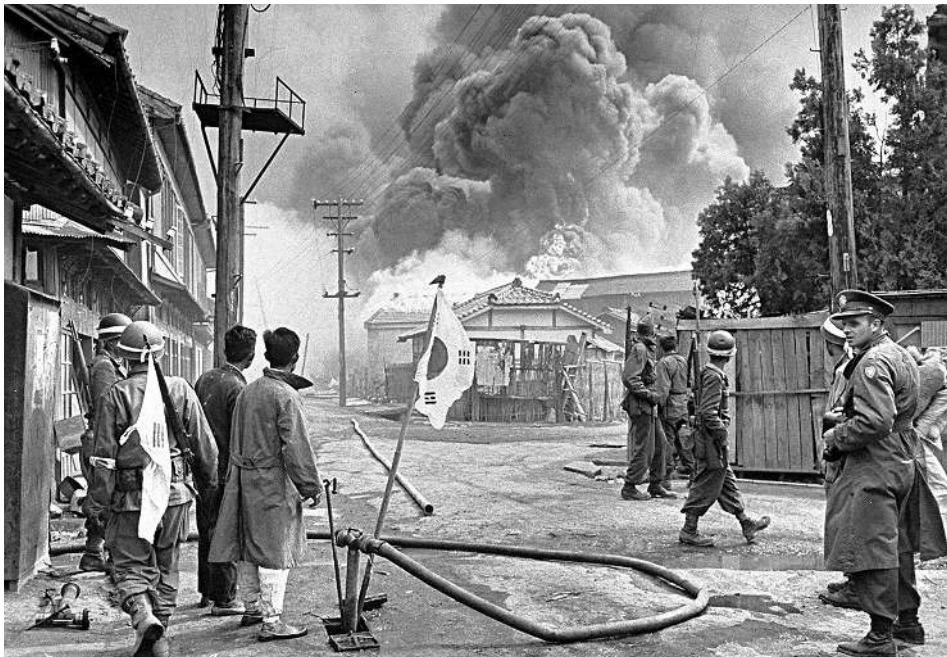
The capitalists, the bourgeoisie, can at “best” put off the victory of socialism in one country or another at the cost of slaughtering further hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants. But they cannot save capitalism. The *Soviet Republic* has come to take the place of capitalism, the Republic which gives power to the working people and only to the working people, which entrusts the proletariat with the guidance of their liberation, which abolishes private property in land, factories and other means of production, because this private property is the source of the exploitation of the many by the few, the source of mass poverty, the source of predatory wars between nations, wars that enrich only the capitalists.

The victory of the world Soviet republic is certain.

—V.I. Lenin, “Answers to an American Journalist’s Questions” (July 1919)



LENIN



Carl Mydans

October 1948: American and South Korean soldiers during U.S. occupation aimed at suppressing insurrectionary proletariat and peasantry.

On the U.S. Occupation of Korea

4 January 2014

Dear Editor,

“U.S./Japanese Imperialists: Hands Off China!” (WV No. 1036, 13 December) states: “Behind South Korea’s rulers stands a U.S. military presence that dates back to the 1950-53 Korean War.” This omits the American post-war occupation of South Korea. With the establishment of a U.S. military dictatorship during 1945-48, a countryside insurrectionary proletariat and peasantry were suppressed below the 38th parallel and the modern South Korean police state was forged.

Straight from U.S. victory over the Japanese in Okinawa, Gen. John Reed Hodge dispatched 21 ships, including five destroyers, to establish a military government in South Korea. Landing at Inchon on September 8, 1945, five years before the better known Korean War landing, his forces established the “U.S. Military Government in Korea” or USAMGIK in Seoul. On 16 October 1945 Syngman Rhee was flown into the South Korean capital on Gen. MacArthur’s personal airplane to put a Korean face on American occupation.

Under American tutelage, Rhee constructed an anti-communist police state based on Korean quislings who had served

in the Japanese colonial administration and armed forces to ruthlessly oppress their own people. Now serving American imperialism and with its military backing, the same forces proceeded to suppress militant labor struggle and peasant uprisings. Even when American troops were withdrawn in ’49, U.S. military advisers and equipment remained to aid the Rhee dictatorship in mopping up what had turned into a guerrilla war of resistance.

Cold War scholars often falsely portrayed the Korean War as having suddenly begun on 25 June 1950 when North Korean forces “invaded” the south. The most distinguished historian in the English language of post-WWII Korea, Bruce Cumings, devoted much of his academic career to combating this self-serving account, as exemplified in his two-volume *The Origins of the Korean War*, published by Princeton University Press in 1981 and 1990 respectively. As Cumings has pointed out in his writings, the American military occupation of South Korea was a harbinger of its murderous policies in Guatemala, Vietnam and Indonesia.

Comradely,
Reuben

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Racist State Assault on Native Protesters

Canada

The following article originally appeared in Spartacist Canada No. 179 (Winter 2013/2014), newspaper of our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste.

Oka, Gustafsen Lake, Ipperwash, Burnt Church, Caledonia. And now Rexton. These are some of the battlefields—in just the last 25 years—on which Native people have defied the racist powers-that-be

SPARTACIST CANADA

and in return have reaped a whirlwind of state violence. Rexton, New Brunswick became part of this brutal political geography on October 17, when more than 100 heavily-armed RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officers broke up a Mi'kmaq blockade against seismic testing and the threat of hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) by the SWN Resources oil and gas company.

After months of protests, on October 1 Elsipogtog First Nation Chief Arren Sock addressed Native protesters blocking a highway near Rexton: “SWN has been evicted from our territory according to tradition and conviction that we still own the land, and the province of New Brunswick has been put on notice.” Even the federal government acknowledges that the Mi'kmaq never surrendered their rights to lands or resources. That acknowledgment, of course, is hardly worth the paper it's written on. Two days later, on October 3, a provincial court issued an injunction on behalf of the company to force the Native protesters to remove their blockade.

They refused, and in the pre-dawn hours of October 17, the RCMP enforced the court's ruling. Three nearby schools were placed on lockdown. Clad variously in camouflage, body armour and fire-retardant coveralls, the cops moved in wielding machine guns, pistols, tasers and attack dogs. They fired rubber bullets and rounds of tear gas and pointed their rifles at children and seniors. “Crown land belongs to the government, not to f-king Natives,” one shouted. Six cop cars were burned. The message left on one: “SWN owns RCMP.”

In all, 40 were arrested. Six Mi'kmaq Warriors were thrown into solitary confinement. One, Aaron Francis, was beaten while being taken to a cell in handcuffs; another, Jason Augustine, suffered a concussion after a beating by an RCMP cop. The men were denied even basic necessities such as toilet paper and telephone access. “None of us got to talk to our lawyers,” David Mazerolle said, “we were just constantly in that hole” (Censored News, 31 October). They face 37 charges including mischief, unlawful confinement, obstruction and assault. As of mid-November, four of the original six—Francis, Coady Stevens, Germaine Junior Breau and James Pictou—were still behind bars. We say: Free the Mi'kmaq Warriors! Drop the charges!

Across the country, angry protests erupted against the police violence in New Brunswick. Protesters shut down highways in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs said what many thought: “This could easily happen in any First Nation community across Canada.... This display of brute force is completely ugly, outrageous and harkens back to the Oka, Ipperwash and Caledonia conflicts” (UBCIC media release, 17 October).



Jen Hudson

Rexton, New Brunswick, 17 October 2013: Brutal raid by Canadian police against Native anti-fracking protesters ended in over 40 arrests.

Against such solidarity, the New Brunswick NDP [New Democratic Party] stood on the side of repressive “law and order.” The New Democrats demanded that Tory premier David Alward “order the end to all road blockades before starting meaningful consultations with First Nations communities.” The NDP insisted that Alward “defend the rule of law in our province, make sure our children can go to school and our goods get to market without any interference.” In or out of power, the NDP social democrats are always loyal to capitalist rule.

Government War Against Native Peoples

Acting on behalf of the resource and energy industry magnates and trampling on the indigenous population, the [Prime Minister Stephen] Harper Tories have been shredding even the mildest environmental regulations. Utter indifference to the damage this will wreak on Native communities helped spark the Idle No More protests last winter. At the same time, the Tories have been siccing their CSIS [Canadian Security Intelligence Services] spies and provocateurs on aboriginal activists and smearing them as would-be terrorists.

The government's preoccupations are seen in an ominous report entitled “Canada and the First Nations—Cooperation or Conflict?” (May 2013) by a right-wing Tory-linked think tank, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. Brooding about a possible Native “uprising,” the report warns: “Canadians and First Nations people must be convinced—before any confrontation begins—that the government, supported by its security establishment, will prevail. Aggressive Aboriginal leaders should assume that Canada's security forces will always establish order.” To the extent that Native protests interfere even in a small way with the fabulous profits to be made in resource industries, the Canadian rulers will brook no opposition.

The state violence against the people of Elsipogtog has been augmented by threats of economic strangulation. In the lead-up to the October 17 attack, the Canada Revenue Agency demanded a payment of more than \$2 million from the Elsipogtog First Nation. Shortly before the feds backed off from their racist extortion, SWN Resources launched a punitive lawsuit against 13 Native protesters.

These coordinated attacks by the energy company, all levels of government and the cops, courts and prison system should come as no surprise to any militant worker or leftist protester. They are yet another confirmation of the Marxist

understanding of the state—at its core, bodies of armed men committed to ensuring that the economically dominant class also dominates all aspects of politics and, therefore, society as a whole.

Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx's close collaborator, described the state as the outgrowth of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms. In the modern epoch, a tiny capitalist ruling class monopolizes armed force in order to subjugate the working class and the poor. In 1917, the year of the Russian Revolution, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote *The State and Revolution*, where he hammered home the lessons of Marx and Engels. Lenin clearly outlined the tasks of the working class: to lead all the oppressed in a social rev-



Totem Pole Books

Gustafsen Lake, British Columbia, 1995: Social-democratic NDP government oversaw massive police/military operation against Native protesters.

olution to smash the capitalist state and replace it with a workers state. This alone will lay the basis for socialism, an egalitarian classless society representing the initial stage of communism.

Capitalist Barbarism and Native Oppression

On the Elsipogtog First Nation reserve, unemployment is 80 percent. An acute housing shortage means that up to five families live in some houses. On the poverty-stricken reserves or at the margins of the cities, aboriginal people everywhere endure poverty, illness and homelessness. Racist police repression falls more heavily on them than on any other sector of society.

This modern barbarism flows directly from the origins of Canadian capitalist society, which was founded on the destruction of the pre-existing aboriginal societies, initially by the French and, later, the English colonialists. The expro-

priation of these peoples through fraud and military conquest, along with the devastating impact of disease following European contact, foreclosed the possibility of independent development of indigenous nations.

Over much of the last century, a state policy of forced assimilation led to the abduction of Native children from their parents and their internment in church-run residential schools. New research has just revealed a grisly program of “experiments” in the 1940s and 1950s on already hungry people in Native communities, including children in residential schools. In the name of “science” they were deprived of sufficient food, vitamins and dental care.

Socialism is the sole means to ensure the massive outlay of resources necessary to redress the inequalities long suffered by Native peoples. Based on a working-class overthrow of capitalism through the seizure of the banks, energy companies and factories, the advent of a socialist society would mark the end of production for private profit; only then will human need take priority. Yet, in order to transform society, the working class must also transform itself. It must become a unified force that wields its social power both in its own interests and on behalf of all the oppressed.

An impulse in that direction was demonstrated by a section of the labour movement in 2006. Steelworkers (USW) Local 1005, which then represented 2,500 workers in Hamilton, sent several contingents to reinforce Native protesters who had been attacked by cops in Caledonia, a small community in Southern Ontario. The USW flag, along with that of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, was

prominently displayed at the Caledonia occupation site.

Such acts of solidarity remain few and far between because the bureaucratic misleaders of the unions are wedded to the illusion that workers and their bosses share a common “national interest.” This outlook spells only defeat for working-class struggles. During the 1999 Burnt Church crisis, leaders of the Maritime Fishermen's Union in New Brunswick organized a fleet of 150 boats crewed by white fishermen to destroy Native lobster pots in Miramichi Bay. In the aftermath, three Native men were brutally assaulted; one was hospitalized after he was struck on the head with a baseball bat.

Such orgies of racist violence are the logical outcome of the divide-and-rule stratagems of the capitalist rulers and their lieutenants atop the unions. And who benefits? Only the bosses. It is the same capitalist class that shreds the lives

continued on page 5

Workers Power was caught out supporting Yuri Butchenko, who was connected both to Russian fascists and a scab miners “union” in Britain. We remained true to the Trotskyist program: upholding unconditional defense of the Soviet degenerated workers state from imperialist attack and the forces of internal counterrevolution while fighting for a political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and restore a regime of workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

West, Russia Tussle for Influence

The capitalist counterrevolution that dismembered the Soviet Union dealt a severe body blow to the Ukrainian economy, which had been integrated into an all-Union economic division of labor. Throughout the former USSR, living standards plummeted. In Ukraine, real wages were at best only one-third of 1991 levels in 2000 and one-half by 2002. Industrial employment fell 50 percent between 1991 and 2001.

Lacking vital natural resources and economically impoverished, capitalist Ukraine is necessarily dependent on stronger capitalist powers. Since counterrevolution, the Ukrainian bourgeoisie has been torn, with some looking to the Western imperialists and others seeking to maintain existing trade ties with Russia. Notwithstanding the one-sided dependence of Russia's economy on natural resource extraction, the country's large nuclear arsenal gives it great-power status. With the imperialists trying to subvert Russian power, Poland has worked closely with the U.S., seeking to regain its former influence in Ukraine.

Putin has used the leverage provided by relatively high oil prices to pursue Russian interests in the region. The Russian bourgeoisie lords it over the minority peoples in its own backyard, as demonstrated by two bloody colonial-style wars fought to subdue predominantly Muslim Chechnya. Concerned about a possible

Islamic insurgency on its southern flank, Putin was happy to sign on to Bush Jr.'s "war on terror" and negotiated a deal allowing U.S. troops bound for Afghanistan to transit through Russia.

Gazprom, the Kremlin-controlled gas corporation, has also been an instrument of Moscow's foreign policy. Following the 2004 "Orange Revolution" that led to the defeat of the Kremlin's favored candidate in Ukraine, Gazprom threatened higher prices. When the Ukrainian government objected, Gazprom shut off the gas. Since most Russian gas exports to Europe go by pipeline through Ukraine, this action also

threatened the supplies of European customers. While a compromise was reached, prices went up and the Russians had made a point. Russia has also used its economic muscle with other neighboring countries. Thus, in an attempt to keep Moldova from seeking closer ties with Europe, Moscow declared a ban on imports of Moldovan wine, one of the country's major exports.

Russia has also sponsored its own free-trade zone, the Eurasian Customs Union, whose purpose is to keep former Soviet republics in Russia's orbit and away from the EU. Kazakhstan and Belarus have joined. More recently, Armenia, which



June 1993 rally of striking Donetsk miners in Ukraine. Slogans include: "Nationalism Shall Not Pass!!!" Ukrainian nationalism was given huge boost with counterrevolutionary destruction of USSR.

Canada...

(continued from page 3)

and livelihoods of workers and ensures the continued poverty and misery of aboriginal peoples.

Expropriate the Capitalist Class!

The New Brunswick government has signed a million hectares [3,861 square miles] of the province over to SWN Resources for seismic testing for shale gas. If successful, the surveys will give way to hydraulic fracturing, whereby horizontal drilling and pressurized water mixed with chemicals and sand fracture the shale deep beneath the surface of the earth to extract natural gas.

Royalties and tax revenues from the New Brunswick shale gas industry could be as high as \$7 billion, which gives a measure of the immense profits that the resource corporations hope to extract through grinding exploitation of the workers they may hire.

And it is all but certain that the impoverished aboriginal people of Elsipogtog will not see a dime. This points powerfully and logically to the Marxist program of expropriating the capitalist class.

Fracking is enormously unpopular in parts of Canada and the U.S. New Brunswick has seen numerous anti-fracking protests and tens of thousands of people have signed petitions against it. As Marxists we do not counsel the ruling class on the most effective way to run its economy. Accordingly, we take no position on fracking *per se*. Like most forms of resource extraction, fracking poses dangers and in the hands of the profit-driven capitalist class it will be carried out in the most destructive and short-sighted way possible.

But we do, vehemently, defend aboriginal peoples against the predatory resource companies and demand that they receive generous compensation for any deprivation of land or disruption of activity, based on completely consensual agreement. So long as the productive wealth of society remains in the hands of the capitalist class, technological progress comes at the expense of workers, the oppressed and pretty much everything on earth. It will take a workers revolution to uproot the system of capitalist exploitation for profit. A workers government will inaugurate a centrally planned economy under which the techniques of modern science will harness vast productive wealth in the service of human need.

This outlook is alien to the reformist left. In their statement “Solidarity with Elsipogtog Against Fracking,” the International Socialists (I.S.) declare: “Despite the possibility, and urgent need, of clean energy alternative [sic], fracking and tar sands are destroying the earth” (socialist.ca, 19 October). Nowhere does this article so much as mention capitalism, socialism or even the working class. The “ec-socialism” pushed by the I.S. offers no road forward for Native peoples.

So too the Fightback group. They call to “Support the New Brunswick Mi’kmaq

Anti-Fracking Protests” (marxist.ca, 21 October), but this must be weighed against their support last spring to a strike by the notoriously racist prison guards in Alberta, where Native people comprise 40 percent of all prisoners. Starting from a perspective of unshakable loyalty to the pro-capitalist NDP, Fightback bemoans the New Democrats’ “law and order” attack on the Native protesters because it will “damage the NDP in New Brunswick and across Canada.” Far from an aberration, Fightback’s beloved NDP has a long record of backing state repression against Native protesters. In 1995, for example, an NDP government in B.C. [British Columbia] oversaw one of the most massive domestic RCMP/military operations in Canadian history against Native protesters at Gustafsen Lake.

Labour Must Champion All the Oppressed!

Mobilizing workers to fight for the rights of the besieged Native population is central to our struggle to build a multi-racial revolutionary workers party. This perspective entails breaking workers from the social-democratic politics of the NDP and its left appendages. Such a party would be a tribune of the people, fighting all manifestations of capitalist barbarism and exposing the workings of the capitalist system for all to see. The Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyiste intervenes into social struggles with the understanding that because of its role in production the working class uniquely has the power and class interest to give leadership to all those who suffer under the capitalist order.

In cases where Native people have a land base, we call on the working class to defend such political autonomy as they have wrested from governments, including the right to govern their land and control its resources. Further, we demand the immediate abolition of the racist Indian Act and that the police, courts and state “welfare” agencies keep off the reserves and other Native land.

depends on Russia for military defense, has come on board. Membership was offered to Ukraine in a counter to the EU association agreement. However, Putin has dropped this proposal for the time being, no doubt aware that it would not fly in much of Ukraine, particularly the west.

Almost two decades ago the ICL discussed slogans pointing to the future necessary socialist revolutions in the various nascent capitalist countries that arose in the territory of the former USSR. In "On Slogans Regarding the Former Soviet Union" (WV No. 614, 13 January 1995), we observed: "The breakup of the Soviet Union has revealed a situation of considerable interpenetration of peoples and of economic production units which were inherited from and geared to a (bureaucratically) centralized planned economy. Thus in a number of regions (particularly eastern Ukraine, Crimea, northern Kazakhstan) a democratic resolution of the national question cannot be achieved except through a socialist federation or federations of workers states transcending national boundaries." The article pointed to the dangers inherent in any union of vastly unequal partners, such as Russia and other former Soviet republics, stressing that such federations must be *voluntary*.

Where will the population of eastern Ukraine go in the aftermath of proletarian revolution: with Russia, western Ukraine, a socialist federation linking them or some other variant? The answer depends very much on the course of future class struggle. But what is clear is that the future under capitalism is bleak for the working masses of Ukraine, Russia and elsewhere in the former USSR. The crucial task is to forge Leninist-Trotskyist parties that will wage a thoroughgoing struggle against all manifestations of nationalism and great-power chauvinism as part of patient but persistent propaganda aimed at winning the proletariat to the program of international socialist revolution. ■

Native people need access to jobs at union wages and massive education, health and housing programs, including the provision of clean water and electricity. The capitalist rulers will never provide such necessities. A fighting labour movement would not only use its power to champion Native rights; it would take concrete steps such as aggressive union-run recruitment and training programs. Such programs would be a first step toward breaking the cycle of unemployment and social marginalization. Labour must also be mobilized against acts of racist state terror to make it clear that Native people do not stand alone in their struggles.

The struggles of workers and oppressed minorities will go forward together or fall back separately. That was demonstrated vividly over 100 years ago when Native people were integrated into the strategic longshore workforce in British Columbia. One of the earliest West Coast longshore unions north of the 49th parallel was organized by Native workers in 1906. The union united aboriginal, British, Hawaiian and black workers; its hall was on a reserve. Today, amid a rising tide of Native protest, the Trotskyist League fights to revive and carry forward that tradition with the program of workers revolution.

* * *

WV Update: Since the article reprinted above was first published, the racist state vendetta against the Native protesters in Rexton has continued. Three more people were recently arrested on trumped-up charges including mischief and intimidation. Among those originally jailed on October 17, Germain Breau was hit with an *additional 15 charges* and remains behind bars. Breau and Aaron Francis, who faces 16 charges, have pleaded not guilty and not yet been tried. James Pictou and Coady Stevens were released from jail, but only after pleading guilty and receiving probation, with Pictou also fined and under house arrest. *Drop all the charges now!* ■

[illegible]

Young Spartacus

From Maoism to Trotskyism



AP

1968 Democratic Party Convention, Chicago: Leftists wave flag of Vietnamese National Liberation Front in protest against Democrats' dirty colonial war (left). Spartacist banner at 1973 anti-Vietnam War protest in Washington, D.C. (right). Spartacist was for military victory of NLF forces but gave no political support to the Stalinists.

WV Photo



In 1968, a massive movement of radical students in the U.S. was attracted to Maoism. By 1972, the movement had already ruptured and was rapidly dissipating. What happened?

We print below an edited presentation by comrade Bruce M., who was a Maoist student activist and member of the Communist Working Collective (CWC) in Los Angeles during this period. The CWC eventually consolidated around a Trotskyist analysis and program, fusing with the Spartacist League in 1971. At a Spartacus Youth Club Forum at City College of New York on November 20, Bruce described his journey from Maoism to Trotskyism.

* * *

I want to touch on three areas. The first is: Why in the late 1960s, during a period of massive youth radicalization, were so many young people attracted to Maoism, a variant of Stalinism? The second is: How U.S. Maoism reached its terminal crisis, based on its own inherent contradictions. The third is: Maoist ideology is every bit Stalinist and proud of it. But Maoism has its own doctrine, which different Maoist groups pick and choose from. So I'll mention just a few of the central pillars of Maoist doctrines and show that, for all its occasional militancy, Mao-thought is Stalinist class collaborationism, a term that means subordinating the interests of the working class to the capitalist class enemy.

There is a kind of murkiness on what a social class is, particularly when you deal with Maoists. Marxists look at it in terms

of not who is richer than who else and who is meaner than who else, but in terms of actual social relations. The capitalists own the means of production (the factories, the banks, the mines, etc.) as their private property. Workers, proletarians,

The petty-bourgeois strata stand between the capitalists and proletarians, with no independent power. It is not about who is more oppressed or has more reason to hate this horrible, violent, racist capitalist society. It's about who has the power to



can own their clothes and so on, but they own nothing in terms of productive property. Instead, they have to sell their ability to work every day. They go to work and they get paid wages at the lowest possible level that the capitalists can get away with paying, and that's where the boss makes his profits.

As for the petty-bourgeois strata—and there are a lot of them—there are peasants in the Third World, there are intellectuals, shopkeepers, managers and so on.

lead all the others who have an interest in getting rid of capitalism, to establish a society where there isn't any exploitation. Only the proletariat has the social power and historic interest to lead this revolutionary struggle.

Student Radicals Look to China

In the mid 1960s, coming out of the failure of the civil rights movement to challenge capitalism (due to its liberalism and orientation to the Democratic Party),

followed by the embrace of “black power” by young black militants breaking with liberalism, the provocations against the Cuban Revolution by Democratic Party administrations, the escalation of the imperialist war in Vietnam (also by the Democrats), the draft and the backing of the Vietnam War by the liberal establishment, the growing student protest movement radicalized. In the late 1960s, during the height of student radicalism and black militancy, the bulk of student radicals considered themselves Maoists or were sympathetic to Maoism. The mass radical student organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), came to be dominated by Maoist ideology.

So why were radicals attracted to Stalinism a decade after the Soviet leadership itself had attempted to disassociate from Stalin? Further, the Soviets supplied North Vietnam with the vast bulk of its military hardware. Ho Chi Minh, the North Vietnamese leader most identified with the Vietnamese anti-imperialist struggle, clearly had a tight relationship with Moscow. Why, then, were those supporting the Vietnamese struggle attracted to *Chinese* Stalinism?

Well, I think you have to put it in the context of the time. This was the era of détente between the U.S. and the USSR. For example, I was told in junior high school that the danger of nuclear war had receded. For their part, the Soviets proclaimed that détente was the realization of “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism, the goal of all of their foreign policy.

Behind all this was that the U.S. bourgeoisie *temporarily* saw the main danger as the spread of revolution in Asia.

The 1917 Russian Revolution had brought the working class to power. But in 1923-24, a bureaucratic layer headed by Stalin usurped political power in a political counterrevolution. The bureaucracy rested on and derived its privileges from the proletarian property forms of the Soviet degenerated workers state; the gains of the revolution had been betrayed but not overthrown. Against V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks' program of world socialist revolution, Stalin's theory of building “socialism in one country” expressed the nationally limited interests of the Kremlin bureaucracy. It would be used time and again to justify their endless search for a treacherous rapprochement with imperialism.

By the mid 1960s, leftward-moving American students saw the Soviet leadership mainly as seeking a partnership



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USAF

Mao sealed anti-Soviet alliance with President Richard Nixon at 1972 meeting in Beijing, while U.S. imperialists rained terror on Vietnamese Revolution.

with U.S. imperialism. Following a period of upheaval in the colonial world—the Cuban Revolution, the Algerian independence struggle, turmoil in Latin America, now revolution in Vietnam—Soviet espousal of “peaceful coexistence” was rightly condemned as attempting to conciliate American imperialism at the expense of insurgent colonial peoples. The Soviet bureaucracy offered nothing to those attempting to fight racial oppression and injustice in the U.S.

The Soviet Union seemed gray, bureaucratic, antiquated and anti-revolutionary. Inspiration came from the Vietnamese Revolution, a guerrilla struggle deeply popular among the peasants in the countryside, echoing other anti-colonial struggles of the time. Antiwar students saw it as the people taking on the imperialist colossus. And it was led by a hard Stalinist party. Radicals, therefore, drew a false distinction: between Third World Stalinism, which appeared to offer an ideological framework to take on imperialism, and the Stalinism of the Soviet Union. Young radicals thought that Vietnam and China proved that Stalinism provided a revolutionary program.

I’ll show you the first radical newspaper that I got, and this was the one that convinced me to be a radical. It was published by a group in the Bay Area. The headline reads, “Vietnam: The Fight for Freedom.” And you open it up, and on the inside you read, “We Will Win” [see poster, top right on this page].

I looked at that and said, “That’s it, I’m with them.”

Now, there’s a bit of irony here. The Soviets were supplying the weapons that the guy’s holding up. But what we saw in it was armed popular struggle, and that was not the doctrine of the USSR. Vietnam appeared to vindicate Maoism and “People’s War,” that is, the idea of a peasant-guerrilla road to power.

Mao’s Brief Period of Radical Rhetoric

Capitalist rule was overthrown in China as the result of the 1949 Revolution, a victory for the world’s working class and oppressed. But the Stalinist-led peasant-based revolution resulted in a workers state that was deformed from its inception, ruled by a nationally self-interested bureaucracy that was fundamentally similar to the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy.

Early in the 1960s was the Sino-Soviet split, the total growing apart and antipathy between China and the USSR. And for each bureaucracy, “socialism in one country” meant the promotion of *its* national bureaucratic caste at the other’s expense. [For more on the Spartacists’ opposition to both sides in the Sino-Soviet split and our call for workers political revolution to oust the bureaucracies while defending the collectivized economies, see “Bureaucracy and Revolution in Moscow and Peking,” *Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965.]

Following Mao Zedong’s disastrous “Great Leap Forward” campaign in 1958-60, in which Mao’s policies brought China to the brink of starvation, China portended to be a drain on Soviet aid. The Soviets in turn saw the U.S.’s fear of revolutions around the world as an opening for an alliance with the U.S. China rightly suspected that the Soviets might sell them out to the imperialists.

And this initiated a period of Chinese propagandistic militancy and attacks on Soviet “revisionist” collaboration with the U.S. Mao announced that the USSR had been “revisionist” and “social imperialist” ever since 1956, although neither he nor anyone else seemed to have noticed in 1956. So the duality of “non-aligned” peoples allied with progressive China against the U.S. and USSR was set up. The Chinese rhetorical left turn in the mid 1960s was brief and transitory. But it coincided with the politicization of radical students.

China was utterly isolated worldwide at the time. With his utopian “self-reliance” variant of socialism in one country, Mao attempted to rhetorically inspire popular nationalist movements in the world to erode the Russian and U.S. power blocs. So I’m going to show you an example of Chinese left rhetoric from that period. This is by Mao in 1970, toward the tail end of their left period, and it’s titled “People of the World, Unite and Defeat the U.S. Aggressors and All Their Running Dogs!” We were inspired by passages such as this:

“A weak nation can defeat a strong, a small nation can defeat a big. The people of a small country can certainly defeat aggression by a big country, if only they dare to rise and struggle, dare to take up arms and grasp in their own hands the destiny of their country. This is a law of history.”

Mao also wrote this:

“While massacring the people in other countries, U.S. imperialism is slaughtering the white and black people in its own country. Nixon’s fascist atrocities have kindled the raging flames of the revolutionary mass movement in the United States. The Chinese people firmly support the revolutionary struggle of the American people. I am convinced that the American people who are fighting valiantly will ultimately win victory and that the fascist rule in the United States will inevitably be defeated.” (*ibid.*)

There are a couple of little ironies there. The first irony is that less than two years after this pamphlet was written, Mao Zedong would be shaking hands with “fascist” Nixon, sealing an alliance against the Soviet Union. The other irony is that this passage is one of the very few, less than a handful, of things Mao ever wrote about the U.S., attempting to give any direction to revolutionaries in America.

So this left turn, what it meant diplomatically, was China attempting to form a worldwide “anti-imperialist united front” among what was called “non-aligned”—with the U.S. or USSR—“progressive”



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Cultural Revolution, 1967: Mao used student Red Guards in intra-bureaucratic power fight.

bourgeoisies. And the argumentation kind of went like this: Mao said that the fundamental contradiction in the world is between U.S. imperialism and the oppressed nations and peoples. So the anti-imperialist united front was sort of modeled on Mao’s portrayal of the Chinese revolution. The idea was that the world “countryside”—the oppressed peoples of the world—would surround and strangle the world “cities,” i.e., the imperialist powers.

And it seemed pretty left, but it denied the primacy of class contradictions. The Maoist goal was not revolutions around the world to overturn class exploitation, but rather an international bloc of “progressive peoples” to thwart imperialist

Poster inside 1969 radical newspaper showing Vietnamese fighter.

Radical Student Union, Berkeley



bullying, viewing the world as a giant conflict of small vs. big. “Unite all who can be united”—their terminology—in an alliance that included the capitalist rulers of weak semi-colonial powers who exploit and repress their own peoples. We will see later what this meant when the oppressed in these countries rebelled against their *own* “progressive” oppressors.

This view was appealing to New Leftists who themselves interpreted blacks and other minorities as constituting internal colonies of the U.S., rather than viewing black oppression as rooted in the system of capitalist class exploitation. These leftists thought the “primary contradiction” between the U.S. and the oppressed peoples held for inside the U.S. too.

Mao’s Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution: Neither Proletarian, nor Cultural, nor a Revolution

About the Cultural Revolution in 1966: First I’ll tell you the *real* story. By 1965, Mao’s “anti-imperialist united front” was failing. A conservative wing of the Chinese bureaucracy, Mao’s opponents, wanted to abandon the failing “world anti-imperialist united front” and pursue more pragmatic policies in response to the consequences of

tively revolutionary youth, who believed they were fighting bureaucratism, *against* workers defending their standard of living and Mao’s bureaucratic opponents. [On the Spartacist League’s opposition to both bureaucratic factions, see “Maoism Run Amok,” *Spartacist* No. 8, November-December 1966.]

But none of that story got out. The Cultural Revolution had a huge impact on New Leftists in the West. Foreign radicals were impressed with the official Chinese line that the masses of Chinese people, led by Red Guard student radicals not different from themselves, were being mobilized against “capitalist roaders” in order to keep China on the “socialist road” and to keep “the people” in power. This appeared to be the Chinese people taking their destiny into their own hands on a gigantic scale, and it was all being led by Mao, giving a worldwide boost to his authority.

Maoist appeal in the late 1960s was based on a specific time-limited conjuncture. The Vietnamese Revolution appeared to vindicate China’s short period of radical rhetoric, during the spell after China’s break with the Soviet Union, but prior to its alliance with the U.S. Confronted by imminent danger from the U.S., China attempted an “anti-imperialist” alliance with the Third World bourgeoisies.

Mao’s Alliance with U.S. Imperialism

So what brought U.S. Maoism to a crisis? There were basically two factors: The abject failure of attempts to apply Maoist strategy to the U.S., and also the abject failure of Mao’s diplomatically left period, leading to an abrupt right turn. Both demonstrate the complete uselessness of Maoism as a revolutionary doctrine. By 1971, before Nixon’s trip to China, U.S. Maoism was already at a complete dead end, in utter crisis. When Mao’s left period failed, Chinese policy flipped into an overt embrace of U.S. imperialism. But even in its period of isolation and consequent militancy, Mao’s doctrine was always constructed with class collaborationism at its foundation [see “Chinese Menshevism,” *Spartacist* No. 15-16, April-May 1970].

There were a series of Chinese policy disasters. The biggest disaster was in 1965, in Indonesia. Indonesia’s Communist Party (PKI), a Maoist party, was the biggest Communist party in the world not holding state power. Beijing supported the PKI’s bloc with Indonesian president Sukarno and the allegedly “anti-imperialist” bourgeoisie at all costs. With Mao’s direct backing, the PKI saw its task as a “bloc of four classes”—which means unity of the workers, peasants, urban petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie—leading to “New Democracy,” Mao’s term for the coalition regime with the “progressive” capitalists that supposedly represents the first stage in Stalinist two-stage theory (more on that later).

PKI chairman D.N. Aidit wrote in 1964: “The character of the Indonesian revolution at the present time is bourgeois democratic and not proletarian socialist.” With CIA aid, the supposedly “progressive” national bourgeoisie massacred the party,

continued on page 8

From Maoism to Trotskyism...

(continued from page 7)

exterminating it. Over one million people were killed. When the “democratic” generals struck, the party was politically disarmed and militarily unprepared. This was two-stage theory at work.

Meanwhile, coups overthrew Chinese “progressive” allies in Africa. Chinese diplomacy could not replace the economic ties that bound the semicolonial bourgeoisies to the U.S.

By 1968, the Cultural Revolution itself was at a stalemate and Mao called a halt. Mao began looking for a different sort of alliance. In the meantime, Mao put China in direct service to bourgeois rule in countries that he sought as allies. Mao directly supported the regime in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), a leader in the “non-aligned” Third World, in its bloody suppression of a 1971 rural-based youth uprising inspired, in fact, by ideas akin to Maoist concepts of People’s War. [For more on Mao’s betrayals in Indonesia, Ceylon, and other neo-colonial countries, see *China’s Alliance with U.S. Imperialism*, Spartacus Youth League pamphlet, 1976.]

And after 1971, Chinese propaganda openly supported the imperialist NATO military alliance against so-called “Soviet social imperialism.” None of this was lost on the imperialists. Far-sighted American politicians such as Henry Kissinger already saw that, even though the U.S. was losing in Vietnam, there weren’t going to be “two, three, many Vietnams.” U.S. rulers again viewed the Soviet Union, and not China, as the main threat. Time for a U.S. shift in alliances. In February 1972, as the U.S. was bombing Vietnam, Nixon was welcomed in Beijing. Nixon’s trip hit the U.S. Maoist movement like a hand grenade. But Maoism in the U.S. was already in crisis.

American Maoism at a Dead End

In the second half of the 1960s, simultaneously as Students for a Democratic Society was growing on the campuses, the ghettos seethed with rage and the Black Panther Party was growing. There was a ubiquitous sense on college campuses that, if the struggle was conducted correctly in the U.S., a revolution could happen. Revolution was conceived as a Vietnam-Panthers-students axis with China providing the guidance. By 1969, all major factions of SDS considered themselves Maoist. The Panthers quoted Mao’s Red Book.

But the Panthers, who attracted the



Bettmann

Jakarta, October 1965: Chinese student victimized during roundup of Communists. More than a million Communists, workers, peasants and ethnic Chinese were massacred by Indonesian military, Islamic fundamentalists in 1965-66.

best of radicalized black youth, rejected the organized working class as the agent of black freedom and revolution. Instead, they looked to black unemployed ghetto youth to be the vanguard of struggle. However, the lumpen poor, removed from the means of production, have no real social power. When the government launched its campaign of systematic assassinations, police raids, frame-ups and imprisonment of the Panthers, the ghettos did not rise up in their defense. The organized working class, dismissed by the Panthers as “bought off,” remained passive. The Panthers came up against the dead end of their lumpen-vanguard strategy [see “What Strategy for Black Liberation? Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism,” *Marxist Bulletin* No. 5 (Revised), 1994].

SDS came up against the dead end of student vanguardism. In 1968, a nationwide general strike brought France to a standstill, posing a prerevolutionary situation and demonstrating the power of the working class. In 1969 there was a General Electric strike in the U.S., which had wide active appeal among young leftists.

Meanwhile, the very success of the wave of *student* strikes demonstrated their impotence: They closed down campuses all over the country; the war didn’t end, racism didn’t relent and student militancy remained isolated on the campuses. Young Maoists entered a profound ideological crisis. All wings saw that the revolution required formulating strategy and program. And it was here that Mao’s strategy of the countryside surrounding the cities offered no direction whatsoever. On top of this, Mao wrote almost nothing, as I mentioned, on the U.S. or any advanced capitalist country. An American Maoist could say “People of the world unite against U.S. imperialism,” but what was *he* supposed

to do? The character of the coming American revolution became a central question placed before young radicals.

The vast and utterly heterogeneous Maoist movement became increasingly polarized around the question: “Will the American revolution be a one-stage revolution or a two-stage revolution?” Those with impulses toward revolutionism or opportunism aligned themselves along these poles.

A one-stage revolution can only mean a working-class revolution to end capital-



Helena Hermes

Paris, May 1968: 800,000 workers at protest called by CGT union federation, led by Communist Party. Prerevolutionary situation showed power of working class, but was betrayed by Stalinist misleaders.

ism and move immediately into a collectivized society, which can only mean the class dictatorship of the proletariat. The working class would mobilize all those oppressed and ravaged by vicious, racist, imperialist capitalism to establish a workers government that would transition at the speediest possible pace into a socialist order. Maoist “one-stagers” were moving in the direction of this approach.

Two-stage revolution assumed an intermediate stage, a coalition government of all “revolutionary” forces—that is, a multi-class government that would somehow administer capitalism without imperialism and oppression—preparing for socialism at some future stage. This conception embodied the ideological core of reformism: that the state can serve the interests of more than one social class. It was an application to America of Mao’s “bloc of four classes,” New Democracy (which I’ll discuss later). In practice, it has to mean an incremental approach of attempting to mobilize any and every social layer to pressure the liberals, who in turn look to the capitalist rulers to implement a government that more represents “the people.” To one-stagers, the task of a revolutionary party was to fight to build class consciousness in the working class and lead it to power, not to seek ongoing multi-class blocs.

In this context, older hard *Stalin*-Stalinist organizations, which cared little for Mao-thought but called themselves Maoist because Mao upheld Stalin, were able to

intervene in SDS with huge effect. They had a proletarian orientation, but from a Stalinist reformist framework. The most important of them was Progressive Labor Party (PL). In the 1969 SDS split, which was polarized by PL’s crude orientation to the proletariat, the Spartacist League critically supported PL’s wing. The issue of proletarian centrality was a principled, decisive question. Within the PL wing of SDS, the Spartacists argued that a proletarian revolutionary perspective could only be implemented through a Trotskyist program.

Maoists in Search of a Revolutionary Program

Another old-style Stalin-Stalinist-Maoist organization, the California Communist League, recruited a bunch of SDSers at my school. They initiated a hard-fought split in our high school SDS over the issues of one-stage revolution and proletarian orientation. Soon after that split, these kids broke with the California Communist League. They were criticizing Stalin, but from a Maoist perspective. These pro-working-class, former SDS kids became the younger component of the Communist Working Collective (CWC), which congealed with a perspective of regrouping a Leninist party out of the Maoist milieu, with an orientation toward a one-stage workers revolution. Through intense theoretical examination, the CWC (which I was a member of) would eventually be won to Trotskyism and fused with the Spartacist League in 1971.

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

CHICAGO

Saturday, Feb. 8, 2 p.m.

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

University of Illinois
Student Center East, Room 610
750 S. Halsted St.
(Take blue line to UIC-Halsted stop)
Information and readings: (312) 563-0441
chicagosyc@sbcglobal.net

TORONTO

Thursday, Feb. 13, 7 p.m.

**NDP Social Democracy
and the Fake Left—
the Bosses’ Lackeys**

Sidney Smith Hall
100 St. George Street, Room tba
Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartacan@on.aibn.com

LOS ANGELES

Saturday, Feb. 1, 2 p.m.

**The Capitalist State:
Racist Police Terror, Imperialist
War, and NSA Surveillance**

3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215
Information: (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net

VANCOUVER

Thursday, Feb. 6, 6:30 p.m.

**Defend, Extend the Gains of the
1949 Chinese Revolution—
For Workers Political Revolution!**

UBC, Irving Barber Learning Centre
Room 157

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

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

the few”—to apply the anti-imperialist coalition to the U.S. What that meant was: *Now*, “People’s Unity of all those against imperialist policies,” socialism *later*. Freedom Road Socialist Organization also has its origins in the right-wing, two-stage strategy of late 1960s/early 1970s Maoism.

Thus before Nixon’s trip to China in 1972, U.S. Maoism was in intense ferment and self-evaluation, polarizing on left-right lines. But Nixon’s trip cemented an anti-Soviet alliance between Mao’s China and the butchers of Vietnam. Now Maoists had to defend *that*.

When Nixon’s trip was announced in the summer of 1971, that is to say, when he accepted China’s invitation to come, the CWC was already Trotskyist and in fusion negotiations with the Spartacist League. We were intervening in the Maoist milieu, predicting a right turn in Chinese policy and arguing that these Maoists could not be revolutionaries unless they examined Trotskyism. After 1972, those who remained Maoists, lining up behind U.S. imperialism against the USSR, underwent a corrosive process that made them different political animals than the subjective anti-imperialists they had been.

In fact, our pamphlet *China’s Alliance with U.S. Imperialism* opens with this: “There comes a point at which every supporter of a Stalinist organization, if he is to remain organizationally loyal, must abandon the values and attitudes which drew him to revolutionary politics in the first place.” Maoists were now apologists for China’s alliance with U.S. imperialism. In the coming years many simply left politics. Many former Maoists who didn’t want to leave politics were recruited by the SL in the early 1970s.

Beginning in 1974, China militarily aided U.S. and apartheid South African forces in Angola against Cuban- and Soviet-supported forces. This was overt, direct military aid to counterrevolution. It was impossible to defend this while maintaining any revolutionary impulses. Bob Avakian defended it.

After Mao’s death and the triumph of the “market socialist” wing of the bureaucracy, most remaining Maoist groups conveniently broke with Beijing, becoming eclectic reformist “Marxist-Leninists” who declared that China was now capitalist. This was simply evasion. There had been no objective change in the class structure of Chinese society. But calling China capitalist fit well for those not wanting to be held accountable for China. And it smoothed the way for alliances with anti-communist liberals.

The Maoists of today refuse to defend the Chinese deformed workers state, and they support whatever forces in the world they can concoct as battling imperialism at any given moment “to unite the many to defeat the few.” This can only lead to betrayal. It is the task of Trotskyism, and no other tendency, to construct an internationalist Leninist party, part of a revolutionary international world party to lead socialist revolutions around the world.

In the early 1970s, Maoists sought to avoid political contradictions facing them by following Mao’s dictum to immerse themselves among the people like a fish in the sea. They went deep into low-level trade-union work. Most were never heard from again. Some became union bureaucrats. Some emerged as Democratic Party politicians.

Mao’s New Democracy vs. Trotsky’s Permanent Revolution

I want to just mention a couple points on Maoist ideology. When we were Maoists, the Avakianites were, in fact, right against us: Two-stage theory *is* the core of Maoism. It is woven into the very fabric of Mao’s writings. For Maoists, socialist demands are *always* for later and now is *always* the “democratic” stage.

When Maoists seek arguments against Trotskyism, they read Stalin, not Mao. So, according to the Stalinist construct, Trotsky

July 1917 demonstration in Petrograd. Banners read: “Down With the Capitalist Ministers! All Power to the Soviets of Workers’, Soldiers’ and Peasants’ Deputies!” and “Long Live Socialism!” Inset: First issue of journal of Communist International, founded in 1919 to advance cause of world proletarian revolution.

VAAP



was against the peasantry, he wanted to skip stages, etc. That’s what you were told. When we in the CWC read Trotsky’s *Results and Prospects* [1906] and *The Permanent Revolution* [1930], it turned our world upside down. As revolutionary-minded Maoists, we had been looking in the wrong place for an alternative to revisionism. Our fellow left-wing Maoists were making the same mistake, because they refused to examine and break with Stalin. But class collaborationism is embedded in Stalinism. Maoism was simply a variant of two-stage Stalinism.

We wrote in “From Maoism to Trotskyism” (*Marxist Bulletin* No. 10, 1971): “If it could be shown, however, that the ‘two stage’ theory did not apply *even* to the most backward of countries—countries bound hand and foot to foreign imperialism without even so much as a democratic land reform—then the [Maoist] theory would fall of its own weight for the rest of the world.”

Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution solved the riddle plaguing revolutionary-minded Maoists trying to both forge a strategy in the advanced capitalist countries and support anti-imperialist revolutions in semicolonial countries under imperialist subjugation. Trotsky noted that the weak and dependent bourgeoisies in backward countries are tightly bound with both precapitalist forms of oppression and with imperialist interests. Therefore, they cannot be a force for agrarian revolution and national emancipation. The victory of the revolution is only possible if waged *against* the national bourgeoisie.

What classes, then, are making this revolution? The peasantry, numerically the largest oppressed class in certain countries, occupies an intermediate social position between the bourgeoisie and proletariat. Furthermore, the peasantry is so heterogeneous—divided between rich peasants and poor peasants, propertied peasants and landless peasants—that it is incapable of taking an independent role. To galvanize the power of its numbers in a concerted way, it must follow the lead of either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. A victorious revolution is possible only in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the peasantry.

While carrying out democratic tasks and land distribution, the proletarian state must inevitably move against the right to bourgeois property, that is, expropriate the capitalists’ holdings. Thus the revolution directly passes over to socialist

tasks, without pausing at any arbitrary “stages.” In the era of imperialism, there aren’t going to be revolutions that stop at bourgeois-democratic tasks; feudal social relations and other precapitalist holdovers are interpenetrated with and held in place by modern capitalism. They will be overthrown only by socialist revolution.

So let’s talk about Mao’s “New Democracy.” New Democracy is the coalition that is to be brought to power as the outcome of colonial revolution. For Maoists, New Democracy is the unassailable fortress, the goal of revolution in the colonial world and the key to achieving it. Let me give you Mao’s definition—I’ll let the Great Helmsman speak for himself: A socialist republic, Mao wrote in *On New Democracy* (1940), is “not yet suitable for the revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries. Therefore a third form of state must be adopted by revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries during a given historical period, namely, the new-democratic republic.” Further, Mao writes:

“The multifarious types of state system in the world can be reduced to three basic kinds according to the class character of their political power: (1) republics under bourgeois dictatorship; (2) republics under the dictatorship of the proletariat; and (3) republics under the joint dictatorship of several revolutionary classes.... The third kind is the transitional form of state to be adopted in revolutions in colonial and semi-colonial countries.”

The New Democratic revolution, “with

its central task of combating foreign imperialism and domestic feudalism, is a bourgeois-democratic revolution and not yet a socialist revolution which aims at the overthrow of capitalism.” So this coalition of all progressive classes will be the New Democratic state. What are the criteria for joining the coalition?

“No matter what classes, parties or individuals in the oppressed nations join the revolution, and no matter whether or not they are conscious of this fact and fully understand it, so long as they oppose imperialism, their revolution becomes part of the proletarian-socialist world revolution and they themselves become allies of this revolution.” (*ibid.*)

Well, that’s broad enough, isn’t it? How convenient; to be “proletarian-socialist” one need be neither proletarian nor socialist!

Only One Class Can Rule

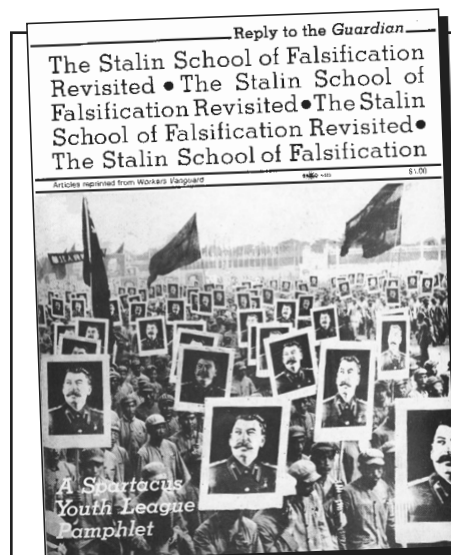
But New Democracy is simply Mao’s version of Stalinist two-stage theory, as applied to the Third World. First a coalition government administering capitalism with (perhaps) some reforms—but not so many reforms as to upset the national bourgeois forces leading the alliance. Second, the workers come to power sometime in the indefinite future. The interests of workers and peasants are to be sacrificed to reassure the local capitalists not to abandon the coalition, that is, in no way must the national bourgeoisie see its interests as better protected by the imperialists. For Stalinists, it’s always “too soon” for socialist demands; we must go through a “democratic stage” before peasants can seize the land and the workers can expropriate the capitalists.

When we in the CWC studied the Chinese Revolution, we found that it did not follow the New Democratic forecast. After Stalin’s “bloc of four classes” strategy led to the massacre of the revolution in 1927, Mao attempted numerous times to cement an alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, to no lasting avail. When Mao’s forces took power, the 1949 Revolution resulted in a workers state, albeit deformed. There was no New Democratic stage! The Revolution happened *despite* Mao’s prescriptions, not because of them.

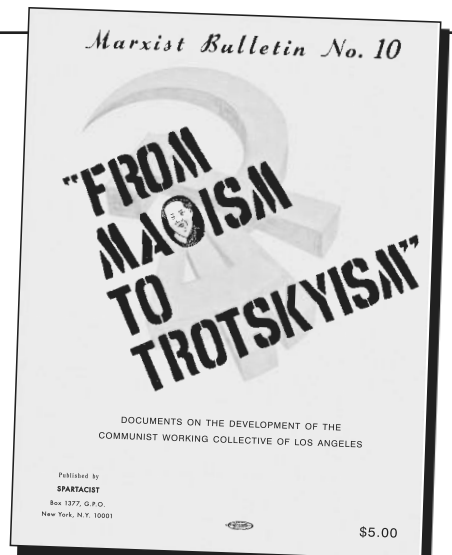
The core of Maoism centers on an impossibility: a multi-class state. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the only alternative to the dictatorship of capital. That is why there must be a one-stage revolution.

Two-stage reformism is the inextricable outcome of the ideological centerpiece of Stalinism: the theory that socialism can be built in one country alone if only the imperialists won’t attack it. This is false. Although the dictatorship of the proletariat may be established in an isolated and backward country (as was the case in the Russian Revolution of 1917), achieving socialism—i.e., a classless society of abundance—requires economic aid resulting from the joint achievement of revolutions in at least several advanced

continued on page 10



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Port Truckers...

(continued from page 12)

servicing the Port of New York and New Jersey also voted to become Teamsters. Some Toll workers joined Green Fleet and American Logistics truckers on their picket lines in November. So, too, did owner-operators who work for Pacific-9 Transportation, demanding an end to the “independent contractor” charade. In 2012, port truckers in Seattle waged a two-week strike in order to be reclassified as workers. More recently, truckers at the Savannah port, many of whom are American blacks, have held meetings to protest their classification.

Breaking the chains that presently enslave the owner-operators to the trucking companies will take hard class struggle by the unions on the waterfront. Such a mobilization of union power in defense of port truckers would win vital allies for organized labor in the battle against Wal-Mart, Target and the other multibillion-dollar shippers as well as the stevedoring companies. Coupled with a fight for these drivers to be paid at full union-scale wages and benefits, the whole owner-operator scam could be shattered, breaking through the petty-bourgeois consciousness it induces. Port truckers would come to view joining the ranks of organized labor as wage workers as a far better alternative to their present destitution.

Minneapolis, July 1934: Striking Teamsters in flatbed truck (top right) intercept scab vehicle guarded by police convoy. Hard class struggle built Teamsters union.

In turn, the unions would be infused with immigrant workers, many of whom have experiences in class battles and other struggles in their countries of origin, which range from Mexico and Central America to the Horn of Africa, the Indian Punjab and beyond. As a Sikh port trucker remarked amid a two-week strike in Seattle in 2012: “We are not scared. We come from India, and we fought there against the British and kicked them out. We are fighting for the same thing here—integrity and simple respect.” If the unions in the U.S. rallied behind the port truckers, demanding full citizenship rights for all

immigrants, it would forge a vital link of international working-class solidarity in the ever-expanding global cargo chain.

A Class-Struggle Policy

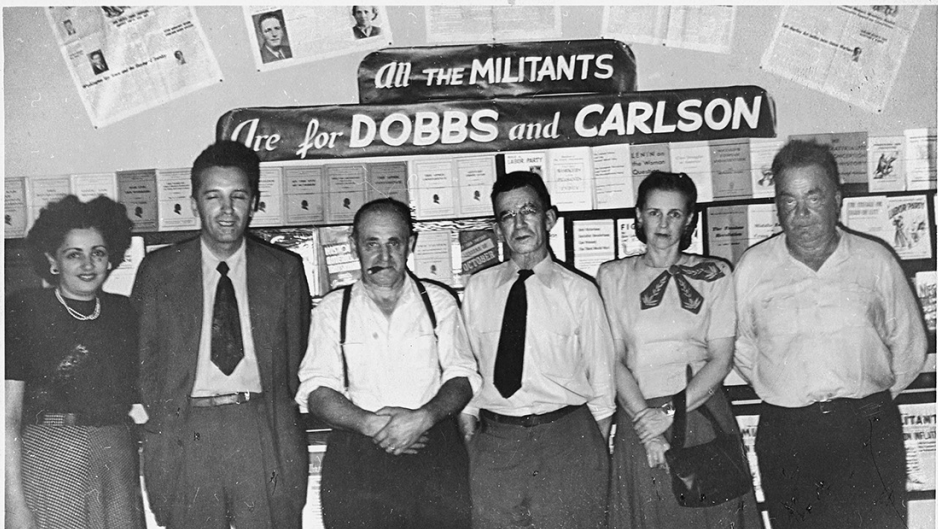
The idea of the unions waging such a campaign might seem far-fetched, particularly in a day and age where the wages, working conditions, benefits and very organizations of the working class have been ravaged. But such battles are what originally laid the basis for organizing the Teamsters as a bastion of labor power nationwide. The breakthrough came in 1934 in Minneapolis, a notoriously open shop city where the fight to organize truckers sparked citywide strikes. What made the difference was that these strikes were led by Trotskyist union militants, supporters of the Communist League of America. As James P. Cannon, the founding leader of American Trotskyism, put it: “Our people didn’t believe in anybody or anything but the policy of the class struggle and the ability of the workers to prevail by their mass strength and solidarity.”

Prominent among these militants was Farrell Dobbs, who would go on to play a key role in the early drive to organize over-the-road truckers nationally. Dobbs documented these struggles in a series of books beginning with *Teamster Rebellion*. In an appendix to *Teamster Politics*, titled “How the Teamsters Union Organized Independent Truckers in the 1930s,” he wrote of the policies pursued to win owner-operators who were not employers

to the union’s side. In Minneapolis, the union won the solidarity of many of these drivers by supporting their demands for higher rates from the trucking companies. In turn, many owner-operators provided the trucks that transported flying squads of picketers around the city to shut down scab operations and served on the front lines in pitched battles with the cops and other strikebreaking forces.

The union was victorious in Minneapolis despite the opposition of the Teamsters International union bureaucracy under Daniel Tobin. When the Trotskyists and other militants from Minneapolis launched a multistate drive to organize over-the-road truckers into the Teamsters, they had to confront the surge in owner-operators during the Great Depression. Unemployed drivers who could make the down payment were lured into investing in their own trucks as the ticket to getting paid to run supplies for government “make work” projects for the millions of others out of a job. Dobbs described the situation:

“Firms holding carrier rights issued by the government employed many of these independents, paying them flat rates by the mile, ton, or trip for rig and driver. It was truly a cut-throat setup. Diverse methods were used to heap inordinate trucking costs upon the owner-operators, thereby shaving down their earnings as drivers. At the same time, devious patterns were woven to confuse the true nature of the employer-worker relationship and turn the individuals involved in an antiunion direction.”



Farrell Dobbs (second from left), leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strikes, during 1948 Socialist Workers Party campaign for U.S. presidency.

From Maoism to Trotskyism...

(continued from page 9)

countries, thereby both aiding development in the backward countries and removing the imperialist threat. For these reasons, the revolution in a backward country must extend itself or perish.

“Socialism in one country” is directly counterposed to permanent revolution. It is the “theory” with which parasitic bureaucratic cliques in China, Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, Laos and formerly the USSR have sabotaged the spread of revolution

whenever it breaks out elsewhere. Under the guise of this “theory” revolutions have been betrayed around the world time and again in pursuit of illusory peaceful coexistence with imperialism.

We unconditionally defend the bureaucratically deformed workers states against imperialism and the threat of capitalist restoration. As part of that defense, we work for political revolutions to overturn bureaucratic rule and establish internationalist democratic workers rule.

Eliminating Scarcity Requires World Socialist Revolution

Supposedly, Mao’s contribution to Marxism is that the dictatorship of the proletariat

is socialism, and that classes and class struggle continue under socialism. This “discovery” was used to explain the Cultural Revolution. Read Lenin’s *The State and Revolution* (1917) along with Marx’s *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (1875). They make Mao’s misrepresentation impossible. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a *transitional* period between capitalism and socialism in which the proletariat wields its state power to suppress counterrevolution while increasing productive output under a planned egalitarian system.

The point is to eliminate scarcity, thereby enabling classes to cease to exist and the state to wither away. That’s socialism, the first phase of communism. That kind of economic development can only build on what capitalism has already put in place: a world economy. Thus, for revolutions in backward countries to survive, they must spread, ultimately to the advanced imperialist countries. And under international workers rule, the advanced countries will provide industrial aid to develop the rest of the world.

Mao’s equation of the dictatorship of the proletariat with socialism was not just wrong; it took socialism out of the context of a world system with higher productive capacity than capitalism [see “‘Radical Egalitarian’ Stalinism: A Post Mortem,” *Spartacist* No. 25, Summer 1978]. His redefinition of socialism justified Chinese *idealism* “self-reliance” as sufficient for socialism in China, while supporting bourgeois forces internationally.

Idealism is the false view that ideas exist above and apart from material reality [see Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (1880)]. And Maoism is permeated with anti-Marxist idealism. In lieu of a revolutionary program, it offers “Dare to struggle, dare to win” exhortations. “Socialism in one country” supposedly works if you believe enough in self-reliance. And the nature of a state is determined by what the leaders are thinking. The USSR became capitalist, according to them, when Khrushchev made a speech in 1956 denouncing some of Stalin’s crimes. And China supposedly became capitalist when the Gang of Four, Mao’s cothinkers, did not prevail in an intra-bureaucratic fight following Mao’s death in 1976.

Worldwide, the economy is already at a point where we can create a society where everyone has enough to eat, a society that is collectively run with nobody exploiting anyone. And that’s what we are about. And we motivate this based on a historical materialist study of the social reality capitalism has already created. So in our conflicts with the Maoists and other left groups, the dispute is about how are we going to win? How are we going to bring this society down and create a society run collectively in a planned way? And what social class can make that happen? That’s where the primacy of the working class comes in. We can make that happen, if we build a leadership that fights to change the consciousness of the working class. We must convince the workers that not only do they need to get rid of capitalism, they can. ■

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To win owner-operators to the union's cause, Dobbs argued that the companies should be made to pay them union-scale wages and cover all the costs of operating their trucks. To cut against the small-business aspirations that went with owning a truck, union organizers were clear that their purpose was to make the companies bear the costs, not to help the drivers secure a profit. The aim was to put an end to the whole owner-operator scam by eliminating its advantage for the companies and fostering the understanding among these drivers that they would be better off as unionized wage workers.

This course was reversed when the Trotskyists were purged from the union leadership during World War II through the collusion of the Teamsters International bureaucrats and the Democratic Party administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The crackdown on the Trotskyists, which was criminally supported by the Stalinist Communist Party, foreshadowed the later purges of Communists and other militants who had led the battles that forged the CIO industrial unions in this country. In addition, in 1949-50 eleven unions associated with the CP were expelled from the CIO. Those purges helped consolidate a trade-union bureaucracy that renounced the very class-struggle means through which the unions were built.

In the 1930s, Trotskyists who were leaders of Teamsters organizing campaigns fought it out class against class, mobilizing workers and their allies in opposition to the bosses and their government. Today, the Teamsters tops are telling port truckers to seek redress through the very state agencies that exist to defend the employers' interests. As part of an alliance with environmentalists, the union pushed for the Port of Los Angeles to add a provision to its 2008 clean truck plan that required trucking companies to provide low-emissions trucks and hire drivers as employees. Predictably, the capitalist courts shot down the provision after the American Trucking Associations challenged it.

Now the Teamsters bureaucrats are lobbying for a federal clean-ports bill, begging the Department of Labor to challenge the owner-operator classification and flooding the courts with lawsuits claiming back pay for truckers who have been misclassified. Port truckers should take whatever redress might trickle down from legal challenges and suits. But the entire history of the American labor movement shows that it took defiance of anti-labor laws and court decisions, not bowing before them, to make the unions what they were.

ILWU Local 10 Tops Issue Scabbing Orders

In 2001, the Teamsters, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) announced an alliance to make the ports "100 percent union." More than a decade later, the longshore unions are virtually the last bastions of organized labor at the ports amid a sea of predominantly non-union workers, from port trucking to the warehouses, intermodal rail facilities and the mammoth cargo ships. As we wrote following port truckers' strikes in Oakland in 2008: "The ILWU will either take up



May 1934: Strike by longshoremen and seamen shut down San Francisco port, sparked citywide general strike.

the fight to extend union rights and union-scale wages, benefits and conditions to these workers or it will sooner or later face government-backed union-busting by the capitalist employers *without union allies* on the docks" (WV No. 916, 6 June 2008).

It's now sooner. Even in the face of its own impending battle with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) shipping bosses when the union contract expires this July, the leadership of Bay Area ILWU Local 10 stabbed the Oakland port truckers in the back. During the truckers' strikes in August and October, many Local 10 longshoremen initially respected trucker picket lines. But the bureaucrats later told them to report to work. On the eve of their November strike, the Port of Oakland Truckers Association (POTA) sought to reverse this course, issuing a statement appealing for Local 10's solidarity:

"Longshoremen and truckers are two links in the same chain. Together, we provide the labor that is necessary for international commerce to flow in and out of the Port of Oakland as truckers and longshoremen do at every port in the world. Shippers and terminal operators to retailers and manufacturers, every industry that relies on the port of Oakland to generate billions of dollars in profit, also relies on our labor. Each of our workforces, when united, hold tremendous power and leverage. Together in solidarity, we are unbeatable."

As reported on *Indybay* (30 November 2013), a contingent from POTA attended the Local 10 union meeting in November asking for the support of longshoremen. After a contentious debate, the membership voted two-to-one to honor the truckers' picket lines. These ILWU members understood that their union needs all the allies it can get.

But the membership's decision was reversed by the local ILWU tops, who ordered longshoremen to go to work. Local 10 officials cited an arbitrator's ruling that the truckers' picket lines were not "bona fide" as well as the PMA's threats of court injunctions and fines if the ILWU respected the picket lines. The port was turned into an armed police camp, with cops preventing the pickets from block-

ing longshore entrances to the terminals. Truckers expressed bitterness at the Local 10 leadership for repudiating the pledge of solidarity as picket signs reading "Thank You ILWU For Your Support" littered the ground. Nonetheless, many jobs were not filled when some longshoremen refused to follow their leadership's scabbing directive.

Longshoremen would do well to remember that like the truckers today, they were once treated as contract labor, lining up for the "shape up" in which they were hired by the day by gang bosses based on favoritism and kickbacks. In 1934, their picket lines were also not considered "bona fide" by their then-union leaders in the ILA. But the 15,000 West Coast ILA members went on strike in defiance of their leadership and were soon joined by seamen. The Teamsters at the port honored the picket lines, ensuring that no cargo was moved. This solidarity was crucial to the eventual victory of this strike, out of which the ILWU would be forged as a powerful industrial union. The struggle united black workers and others of many ethnic backgrounds behind the union, in opposition to the employers' efforts to wield racism and anti-immigrant chauvinism to keep the longshore workers divided and beholden to the gang bosses.

These days it is a common myth in the ILWU that the port truckers are the makers of their own fate because they "opted out" of the Teamsters in the late 1970s. But the vast majority of these drivers today were not even in this country at the time. Indeed, many port truckers have no idea that there ever was a union in port trucking, much less consider there to be

a real prospect of organizing one. Why would they? The labor misleaders have waged little if any struggle in defense of their own members, to say nothing of the growing millions of unorganized workers. Their subservience to the employers only serves to reinforce the owner-operator scam, as many port truckers weigh the thousands of dollars they have been made to invest in their trucks against the benefits of unionization. Such calculations are amplified by the hostile, often anti-immigrant treatment the truckers experience from some longshoremen.

By ordering their members to cross the truckers' pickets, the ILWU Local 10 tops have created potential enemies out of potential allies. As a self-serving alibi, the bureaucrats and others argue that the truckers are not only non-union but don't want to be organized in one. If such is the case for some truckers, no small part of the responsibility can again be laid at the doorstep of the union misleaders. In 1996, 5,000 port truckers went out at the L.A./Long Beach ports demanding union recognition. They confronted the same shipping interests that the ILWU faces. But rather than mobilizing their power behind the truckers' strike, the ILWU crossed their picket lines and continued to work. The strike was defeated, ushering in a wave of demoralization among the truckers.

The Road Forward for Labor

The 1934 Minneapolis strikes showed what a militant union could accomplish during a period of rising class and social discontent. It wasn't simply a question of militancy but of the political program that guided the Trotskyists who led these battles. Their strategy was rooted in the understanding of the social power of the working class when mobilized in opposition to all the agencies and institutions of the capitalist ruling class. Today, the class struggles of the workers are at low ebb, a condition reinforced by decades of betrayals by the trade-union bureaucracy.

But the rulers, aided by their labor lieutenants, cannot extinguish the class struggle that is born of the irreconcilable conflict of interests between labor and its exploiters. The very conditions that grind down and demoralize workers today can and will propel them into battle, together with their allies, against their class enemy. Although avowed socialists today have virtually no significant base in the unions, radical leaders will arise once again, and they will be no less militant than the labor pioneers. For the workers to prevail against their exploiters, they must be armed with a Marxist political program that links labor's fight to the building of a multiracial workers party capable of leading the struggle to do away with this entire system of wage slavery through socialist revolution. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Break Bosses' Owner-Operator Scam! For a Class-Struggle Fight to Organize Port Truckers!

With the latest round of “clean air” regulations at the Port of Oakland threatening their very livelihoods, hundreds of truck drivers at the port went on strike three times in the months before the New Year. Just a few years ago, the port truckers had to shell out thousands of dollars to retrofit their trucks to comply with environmental standards. Now they faced a January 1 deadline requiring the replacement of all trucks whose model year was older than 2007, a cruel Catch-22 for truckers who do not even make enough to maintain their current rigs. Demanding subsidies to help cover these costs as well as compensation for increased hours of unpaid waiting time, they formed the Port of Oakland Truckers Association. Setting up picket lines, the truckers braved an army of cops mobilized to prevent them from stopping the flow of cargo in and out of waterfront terminals. In the end, they did not prevail. Up to 800 truckers who couldn't afford new rigs can no longer work at the port.

In November, drivers who work for Green Fleet Systems and American Logistics International, which service the Los Angeles/Long Beach ports, carried out a three-day strike to protest company retaliation against their efforts to unionize. Unlike the port truckers in Oakland and the bulk of the 100,000 others in the U.S., who are classified as owner-operators and barred from unionizing under anti-trust laws, the striking L.A. drivers are part of the small fraction of port truckers employed directly by the trucking companies. Although making marginally more in wages than what many owner-operators earn, these overwhelmingly unorganized “employee” truckers are subject to similar long hours and grueling work conditions.

The harsh reality of the job today is the product of the deregulation of the trucking industry. Beginning in the late 1970s and codified in the 1980 Motor Carrier Act enacted under the Democratic Party administration of Jimmy Carter with the strong backing of liberal Senator Ted Kennedy, the push to deregulate trucking was one of the opening shots of the union-busting onslaught that has swept this country ever since. The resulting proliferation of owner-operators was a harbinger of the flood of non-union contracts and casual labor in the U.S. as well as in Europe and beyond.

Union power in port trucking, which had been organized by the Teamsters in the U.S., was strangled. Companies sold their trucks to their previously unionized drivers and then contracted with the new “owner-operators” on a per load basis. Through this swindle, the trucking companies dumped most costs onto the drivers. As owner-operators, port truckers were made responsible for maintaining their rigs and for fuel, licenses and tolls, as well as for loans taken out to purchase or lease their trucks. They also were no longer covered by workmen's compensation, social security or unemployment insurance and had no paid sick leave or vacation time, much less health or pension benefits.

The purpose was not just to give a huge boost to profits, particularly of the top shippers as well as the cargo and ste-



WV Photo

Port of Oakland, 27 November 2013: Port truckers' picket lines blocking trucks during work stoppage demanding relief from added costs imposed by new California Air Resources Board (CARB) regulations.

vedoring companies. It also was to foster ambitions within a layer of what was then a majority white workforce that as independent contractors they could not only be “their own boss” but potentially open their own trucking business. Meanwhile, the National Labor Relations Board ruled that the port truckers were the legal equivalent of small businessmen. As such, they were made subject to antitrust laws that blocked their unionizing.

New trucking companies began to spring up at the ports, with each trying to undercut the other in a race to capture business. Rates for individual drivers tumbled as costs rose. Today, there are some 5,000 port trucking firms, most of them small-time local operations, with the dominant companies varying by port. It is a cutthroat, cockroach capitalist industry. Benefiting from this patchwork system are the giant retailers and manufacturers. Their shipping rates already plummeting due to containerization, these companies backed the deregulation of the trucking industry to obtain further rate cuts.

As Rutgers University Labor Studies professor David Bensman vividly documents in *Port Trucking Down the Low Road: A Sad Story of Deregulation* (2009): “Drivers who couldn't make a living as owner operators fled the industry, creating chronic shortages.... Port trucking had changed from a good union job to an industry of last resort—a place shunned by workers with alternatives.” Those without alternatives were largely desperate immigrants, many of them refugees from the brutal depredations of the U.S. and other imperialist powers.

But unlike most options open to immigrants, such as precarious and starvation-wage jobs in the textile industry and agribusiness, port trucking seemingly offered a foot in the door of the “American Dream” through petty entrepreneur-

ship. This has overwhelmingly proved a cruel and cynical hoax. Paid by the load, not the hour, port truckers are under constant pressure to speed up, working at least 10-12 hour days, with long, unpaid waiting time. Their estimated median earnings are a miserable \$28,000 a year.

Far from “independent,” most owner-operators are beholden to the trucking companies. As detailed in *The Big Rig: Poverty, Pollution, and the Misclassification of Truck Drivers at America's Ports* (2010), the trucking companies determine “how, when, where, and in what sequence drivers work” and “unilaterally control the rates that drivers are paid.” Lacking the funds to buy their trucks outright, many have to take out bank loans or make leasing arrangements with the trucking companies, a form of debt bondage that has only worsened with the implementation of clean-air regulations. Not satisfied with simply deducting payments from drivers' paychecks, trucking companies at the L.A./Long Beach ports have devised terms that allow for repossession if the truckers can't pick up and deliver a designated number of containers a week. As a representative of the Owner-Operator Independent Driver Association described it, this “rent-to-own scheme” makes “the payday loan industry” look ethical by comparison.

The Owner-Operator Scheme

As a vital part of the port workforce and a key link in the vast global cargo chain, the truckers have tremendous potential social power that could be brought to bear in taking on the trucking, shipping and stevedoring companies. However, their classification as independent contractors is not simply a legal barrier to organizing their collective power in a union. It also poses the question of which class they identify with—the work-

ers or the bosses. On this score, the port truckers are riven by conflicting interests and consciousness.

A handful of former truckers have established companies that own a small truck fleet as well as lease the trucks and services of individual owner-operators. Making profits through exploiting the labor of others, they are petty capitalists. So, too, are the owner-operators who still drive their trucks but also own one or two others for which they hire drivers. In contrast, those who drive company-owned trucks and work directly as employees—either paid by the load or by the hour—are workers with interests clearly counterposed to those of their bosses. However, such drivers are estimated to be slightly less than 18 percent of port truckers nationally.

Most port truckers own and drive their own trucks, leasing their services to the trucking companies. Their trucks are not simply expensive tools like those that other workers, particularly in the skilled trades, may have to buy. On the contrary, these rigs are a capital investment that many hoped to leverage into their becoming small-time bosses. The reality has overwhelmingly been far different, with the trucking companies driving these truckers to the wall. Their desperate scramble to survive has impelled several strikes, including struggles for unionization, particularly at the L.A./Long Beach ports in the late 1980s-early '90s. Within the growing layer of drivers today enduring what amounts to debt servitude are those who see through the owner-operator scam.

The Teamsters have made some small but important inroads in organizing port truckers who are employees. In 2012, drivers for Toll Group at the L.A. port won the first union contract in port trucking since deregulation. Last summer, more than 100 drivers who work for Toll in

continued on page 10