

Kiev Unleashes Fascist Terror in Odessa

U.S. Imperialism Behind Bloody Repression in Ukraine



Reuters



RT News

Left: Fascists assault trade-union headquarters in Odessa on May 2, killing more than 40. Right: The same day civilians block armored personnel carriers dispatched by Kiev government against Slovyansk in eastern Ukraine.

MAY 12—The May 2 massacre of more than 40 people in the Ukrainian city of Odessa is the direct result of the February 22 coup, spearheaded by fascists, that installed a new government in Kiev with the backing of Western imperialism. The neo-Nazi Right Sector, a leading force in the protests in Kiev's Maidan square that ushered in the coup, was in the vanguard of the assault on the trade-union headquarters where anti-government protesters had fled after being attacked. Fascist thugs torched an encampment near the building and then hurled firebombs that set the structure ablaze, shooting into it as people jumped to escape the flames. Several of those who survived the fire were shot or pummeled to death, including a supporter of the leftist Borotba group. Spray-painted on the building were swastika-like symbols and graffiti reading "Galician SS," referring to a Ukrainian force that fought alongside the Nazis in World War II.

The same day as the slaughter in Odessa, the Kiev government launched a military assault on Slovyansk, one of many cities and towns in eastern Ukraine where residents have revolted against the regime. The death toll from military repression in the eastern region and Odessa is already over 100 as the government under Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the current U.S. favorite, and Oleksandr Turchynov aims to crush resistance in the area before the presidential election scheduled for May 25. Barack Obama's response to the carnage: "The Ukrainian government has the right and responsibility to uphold law and order within its territory."

Far from quelling popular anger at the central government, the killing of protesters has moved Ukraine closer to civil war. As Prime Minister Yatsenyuk appeared in Odessa two days after the massacre, mil-

For the Right of Self-Rule in Donetsk, Luhansk!

itants freed 67 arrested anti-government protesters from a police station. Insurgents in predominantly Russian-speaking, industrial eastern Ukraine continue to occupy government and police buildings and to arm themselves. Protesters had risen up in dozens of cities and towns, enraged by the coup regime's attempt to ban Russian as an official language and by the presence of the fascist Svoboda party in the government, where it controls the Interior Ministry, among others, as well as the chief prosecutor's office. Derided by Right Sector as "liberal" and "conformist," Svoboda derives from the Ukrainian nationalists led by Stepan Bandera, who militarily collaborated with Nazi Germany and carried out mass murders of Jews, Communists, Soviet soldiers and Poles.

Mainly based in western Ukraine, the heartland of Ukrainian nationalism and the Vatican-controlled Uniate (Eastern rite) Catholic church, Svoboda and Right Sector are bad news for *all* of Ukraine's workers and minorities. They are an immediate deadly threat to the people of eastern Ukraine, where the main religion is Russian Orthodox, and cosmopolitan Odessa, site of a 1941 massacre of thousands of Jews by German-allied Romanian troops. Ukraine's newly formed National Guard, one of the forces fighting insurgents in the east, incorporates Right Sector and other fascist militias. In Odessa, Jewish officials have announced plans to protect Jewish children if right-wing violence again erupts in the city, where a Holocaust memorial and a Jewish cemetery were recently defaced with swastikas, Right Sector symbols and death threats. It is a mark of the virulent anti-communism of the "Banderovtsy" that statues of Lenin

have been defaced or toppled throughout western Ukraine.

Last week, it was reported that miners in Yenakiev, Donetsk province, seized the Iron and Steel Works plant owned by the Metinvest companies, chanting, "We shall not forgive them for Odessa!" The main owner of Metinvest is multibillionaire Rinat Akhmetov, one of the Ukrainian oligarchs who are widely despised by working people. Near Donetsk last month, some 2,000 coal miners reportedly went on strike to protest an outrageous 10 percent

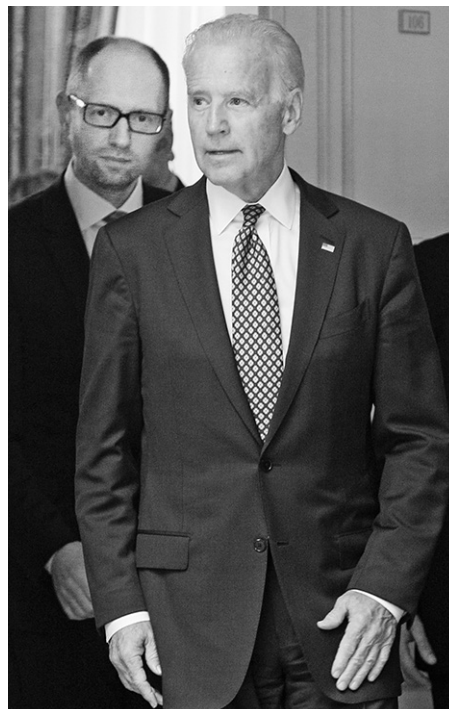
salary levy decreed by the central government to help pay for restoring central Kiev following the clashes that led to the coup. Slogans against the European Union (EU) raised by protesters in Donetsk, Slovyansk and other eastern cities speak to the fear that the government's attempt to join that body would spell economic disaster, particularly for miners and factory workers in this already depressed region. Heavily tied to the Russian economy, eastern Ukraine's relatively backward industries would be overwhelmed by competition from the advanced EU states, especially Germany.

The repression in the east and in Odessa has hardened hostility toward Kiev, as witnessed in the massive lines of people voting for self-rule in the May 11 referendums in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces. Organizers of the ballot earlier stated that "self rule" could encompass anything from a federated Ukraine (which seems highly unlikely with the imperialists and the Kiev regime out to smash all opposition in the east) to independence to adhesion to Russia. People turned out in droves in the coastal city of Mariupol, site of an attack two days before by soldiers that, according to the Kiev government, killed up to 20 people.

The *Wall Street Journal* (11 May) wrote that although recent polls had shown a majority wanted close ties to Russia but to remain part of Ukraine, "recent fighting between the government and separatists may have tipped many toward independence, hoping it might at least lead to some stability. 'Who likes it when a nation shoots at its own people?' asked retiree Natalia Vasileva, who cast her ballot in central Donetsk. 'We weren't against being part of Ukraine, but after the latest events, we've changed our minds.'"

The overwhelming vote in favor of self-rule in the two provinces, carried out with no organized local opposition, was a straw poll but strongly indicated the sentiment of the population to pull away from Kiev's control. The same U.S./EU/Kiev cabal

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Reuters

Kiev, April 22: Vice President Joe Biden with U.S. lackey, Ukrainian prime minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk.



NYC Transit Contract

TWU Tops Help Cuomo Knife LIRR Unions

MAY 12—New York City’s 34,000 transit workers are currently voting on a divide-and-rule contract cooked up in April by Democratic Party governor Andrew Cuomo and Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 president John Samuelsen. If ratified, the five-year pact with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), retroactive to January 2012, will give subway and bus workers a small wage bump of 8 percent over its life, an amount unlikely to keep up with inflation. The agreement contains various sweeteners but also serious concessions. Notably, new hires will have to slave away two years longer on the MTA plantation to reach top pay, an extension of the wage and pension tiers that weaken the union. The deal has also pulled the rug out from under Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) unions, making Local 100 members pawns in Cuomo’s

effort to spike a looming rail strike.

Samuelsen is especially trumpeting the agreement’s large increase in death benefits, even as workers are slated to pay more out of pocket for medical benefits. With a recent derailment on the F line spotlighting crumbling infrastructure and dangerous work conditions in the subway, one retired transit worker dubbed the pact “a contract to die for.” In this period of wage and benefit gouging by the bosses, the terms may not seem so bad. But make no mistake: this deal is poison to the unity and integrity of Local 100 as well as to basic union solidarity, and should be rejected.

The nearly 6,000 LIRR workers splintered in eight separate craft unions have been under the gun since their contract expired in 2010, with the MTA, which operates the LIRR as well as NYC transit, set on imposing a wage freeze. After



AP

April 17: TWU Local 100 president John Samuelsen (right) seals rotten deal with New York governor Andrew Cuomo.

mediation failed in 2013, a federally appointed Presidential Emergency Board recommended a 17 percent wage increase over six years and did not propose the work-rule changes and pension givebacks demanded by management. Convened under the federal Railway Labor Act (RLA), which imposes a series of obstacles to head off strikes, that board also mandated greater employee health care contributions. The MTA rejected the board’s recommendations out of hand.

LIRR workers voted in February to strike, which could happen in July if the MTA continues to hardline it. A summer walkout would disrupt commuter traffic to the city as well as peak-season tourist travel to the Hamptons and other shore destinations. Following the pattern-setting TWU pact, the MTA—whose board is appointed by the governor—proposed similar terms for LIRR unions, only worse. Meanwhile, NYC mayor Bill de Blasio is poised to use his nine-year contract agreement with the United Federation of Teachers to extract concessions from the 151 other municipal unions without contracts.

The MTA bosses, not to mention the city rulers, have plenty of experience playing one group of workers against another. For instance, to encourage racial divisions among workers, the MTA has historically paid the whiter LIRR workforce higher wages than the heavily black, Caribbean, Latino and immigrant NYC transit workers doing comparable work under harsh conditions. No small thanks to Samuelsen, Cuomo and the MTA have now succeeded in ratcheting up tensions between LIRR workers and Local 100 members. One LIRR conductor bitterly complained that, if ratified, the TWU contract would set a bad trend for rail workers. Meanwhile, the MTA has announced that it will pay for the TWU raises by forgoing “supplemental” payments to the massively underfunded LIRR pension fund.

Rather than rely on Democratic Party politicians who falsely posture as “friends of labor,” transit workers must forge a fighting alliance of rail, bus and subway workers, who have the power to cause a crisis for the bosses by withholding their labor. Joint negotiations and struggle could turn the tide of givebacks and lay the basis for the separate MTA workforces to draw together in one industrial union with a single contract.

Since he began his term imposing wage

freezes and layoffs on state workers in 2011, Cuomo has earned plenty of enmity from the working people of New York. In July 2012, union tops representing workers locked out by utility giant Con Edison begged the governor to intervene. Cuomo heeded their call—and stepped in on the side of the utility (see “Cuomo, Con Ed Strong-Arm Union into Concessions,” WV No. 1006, 3 August 2012). Cuomo’s anti-union track record has done nothing to slow Samuelsen from helping the conniving Democrat burnish his labor credentials on the eve of the governor’s re-election bid.

The Local 100 tops kept union members working under the expired contract for more than two years, arguing that more could be won by holding out until the economy improved. During that time, Samuelsen pledged support for an LIRR strike, but there was not a snowball’s chance in hell that he would call a secondary strike. Samuelsen disavowed the 2005 TWU strike and bows before the New York State Taylor Law, which bans strikes by public employees outright. Like his predecessor Roger Toussaint, he is just another in a long line of union misleaders who tie workers to the capitalist class enemy through the agency of the Democratic Party.

All wings of the TWU bureaucracy promote class collaboration. The Local 100 Executive Board unanimously endorsed the Cuomo deal, for which Train Operators chairman Steve Downs ran point. Downs’ April 28 letter to the *The Chief* is chock-full of fuzzy math intended to gussy up the contract’s terms. Supported by the reformist outfit Solidarity, Downs has played toady to Samuelsen and to Toussaint before him and was a founder of the now-defunct New Directions (ND) caucus, which was a vehicle for propelling phony “militants” into union office. ND’s trademark was court suits against its union opponents, a treacherous policy that exposed the TWU to meddling by the bosses’ state.

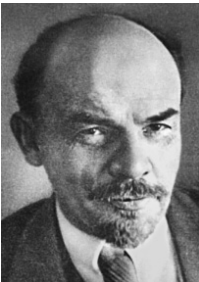
What is needed is a union leadership that strives to unite workers in struggle *against* the bosses, their political parties and their state. To put an end to the everyday savagery of the profit system and provide a decent living for all, workers must expropriate the capitalist exploiters. This requires forging a workers party, one that fights for a workers government in which those who labor rule. ■



TROTSKY

Socialism and the Fight Against National Oppression

Writing as the imperialist powers fought to redivide the planet in World War I, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin stressed that championing the right to national self-determination is crucial to promoting the unity of the toilers of the advanced and the colonial/semi-colonial countries in the struggle for world socialism, which will see the voluntary assimilation of nations.



LENIN

We Great-Russian workers must demand from our government that it get out of Mongolia, Turkestan, Persia; English workers must demand that the English Government get out of Egypt, India, Persia, etc. But does this mean that *we* proletarians *wish* to separate ourselves from the Egyptian workers and fellahs, from the Mongolian, Turkestan or Indian workers and peasants? Does it mean that *we* advise the labouring masses of the colonies to “separate” from the class-conscious European proletariat? Nothing of the kind. Now, as always, we stand and shall continue to stand for the closest association and merging of the class-conscious workers of the advanced countries with the workers, peasants and slaves of *all* the oppressed countries. We have always advised and shall continue to advise all the oppressed classes in all the oppressed countries, the colonies included, *not* to separate from us, but to form the closest possible ties and merge with us.

We demand from our governments that they quit the colonies, or, to put it in precise political terms rather than in agitational outcries—that they *grant* the colonies full *freedom* of secession, the genuine *right to self-determination*, and we ourselves are sure to implement this right, and grant this freedom, as soon as we capture power. We demand this from existing governments, and will *do* this when we are the government, *not* in order to “recommend” secession, but, on the contrary, in order to facilitate and accelerate the *democratic* association and merging of nations. We shall exert every effort to foster association and merger with the Mongolians, Persians, Indians, Egyptians. We believe it is our duty and *in our interest* to do this, for otherwise socialism in Europe will *not be secure*. We shall endeavour to render these nations, more backward and oppressed than we are, “disinterested cultural assistance,” to borrow the happy expression of the Polish Social-Democrats. In other words, we will help them pass to the use of machinery, to the lightening of labour, to democracy, to socialism.

—V.I. Lenin, “A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism”
(August-October 1916)

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El Salvador

Ex-Guerrillas Remain at Helm of Capitalist State

In early March, the small Central American country of El Salvador was deeply polarized by a presidential election pitting Salvador Sánchez Cerén, from the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), against Norman Quijano, from the right-wing National Republican Alliance (ARENA). Sánchez Cerén's victory by a margin of only 6,364 votes out of the three million cast marks the second time in a row that the presidency has gone to the ex-guerrillas of the FMLN, which entered electoral politics with the end of the bloody civil war of 1980-1992. During that war, the Salvadoran landowners and capitalists, as well as their U.S. imperialist overlords, had the military and ARENA-organized death squads slaughter tens of thousands of people. Tens of thousands more were turned into refugees. Few survivors of the civil war will ever forget its horrors: the bombings, the massacres, the mutilated bodies of suspected subversives dumped along roadsides. But today both the FMLN and ARENA are bourgeois parties opposed to the interests of working people and the oppressed.

The profound social divisions that sparked the civil war remain. Wealth is still concentrated in the hands of a tiny oligarchy while the downtrodden masses barely scrape by. Over one-third of the population lives in grinding poverty and 60 percent lacks electricity or running water. In such conditions, it is hardly surprising that El Salvador has one of the highest murder rates in the world and suffers under the weight of an exploding prison population, a situation made worse by the U.S. policy of mass repatriation of Salvadoran nationals deemed criminals.

Against the backdrop of deep economic inequality, Sánchez Cerén has pledged to expand the popular social spending programs initiated by the outgoing FMLN capitalist government, of which he was a part. In response, Quijano hysterically accused him of wanting to follow in the footsteps of such bourgeois populists as the late Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, whose

oil revenue-financed reforms benefiting poor and working people continue to raise the ire of U.S.-backed right-wing forces in that country. Despite Sánchez Cerén's protestations that he has no intentions of emulating Chávez, Quijano managed to narrow Sánchez Cerén's lead in the second round of the elections by fuming that his supposedly leftist policies would bring chaos and violence. Evoking painful memories of the civil war, Quijano even intimated that the



FBI trains Latin American cops at U.S.-sponsored International Law Enforcement Academy, San Salvador, December 2013.

army would intervene to prevent Sánchez Cerén from assuming office.

After a succession of military governments beginning in the early 1930s and then two decades of ARENA rule from 1989, the FMLN first took the reins of government in 2009 when Mauricio Funes was elected president and Sánchez Cerén vice president. A journalist with sympathies for the FMLN during the civil war, Funes was never a rebel, joining the party in 2008. Sánchez Cerén, on the other hand, is strongly identified with the courageous guerrilla struggle against the U.S.-backed butchers.

A former grade school teacher, Sánchez Cerén was an activist in the teachers union who moved closer to the rebels in

the 1970s as a wave of bloody repression befell Salvadoran union leaders. Under the *nom de guerre* of Comandante Leonel González, he rose to become one of the top five FMLN leaders. Even when he was speaking of the need to eradicate capitalism, Sánchez Cerén was known in the rebel movement as an advocate of “dialogue” with the blood-drenched junta. Later, he served as a negotiator in the UN-sponsored “peace” accords that

ended the civil war in 1992 but left the ARENA death squad regime in power.

Since then, Sánchez Cerén has explicitly pushed for reforming capitalism under the guise of promoting equal distribution of wealth. In his book *La Guerra Que No Quisimos: El Salvador, 1980-1992 (The War We Didn't Want: El Salvador, 1980-1992)*, published in 2013, he contends that the FMLN picked up the gun as the only way to win “democracy,” and refers to the guerrilla struggle as having been “patriotic.” During the election campaign, Sánchez Cerén pledged to protect private property and businesses in the name of reaching out to all Salvadorans, showing exactly what kind of democracy he meant. And in a nod to the Catholic hierarchy and social



FMLN presidential candidate Salvador Sánchez Cerén celebrates election victory, March 15.

conservatives, he is steering clear of legalizing abortion—in a country where mainly poor women are imprisoned as a result of an absolute ban on the medical procedure, which should be free and available.

Sánchez Cerén will now assume chief responsibility for the bourgeois state apparatus—not least the military—whose purpose is to enforce the rule of the exploiters and oppressors. In anticipation, he has taken steps to reassure his onetime foes. Extending an olive branch to the blood-stained ARENA killers, he called for reconciliation and unity shortly after the election results were announced. He also has promised to maintain good relations with the U.S. imperialists. No wonder that William Walker, who had been U.S. ambassador to El Salvador from 1988 to 1992, could opine that Washington “should not fear the prospect of another five years of F.M.L.N. rule” (*New York Times*, 30 January).

The FMLN and the Salvadoran Civil War

A few months before the outbreak of the civil war, we wrote in “Massacre on the Cathedral Steps” (*WV* No. 233, 8 June 1979):

“Little-known El Salvador is itself practically a caricature of a nineteenth-century Latin American oligarchic dictatorship in which a strutting military *caudillo* rules a country where 14 families have traditionally lorded it over a mass of impoverished *peones*. As one Salvadorean priest said, ‘The peasants live like serfs in Europe 400 years ago.’”

Earlier in the 20th century, these oppressive agrarian relations had triggered the first Communist-led uprising in the Americas, a 1932 revolt in which landless peasants rose up against the oligarchs. In retaliation, over a few short weeks some 30,000 people were killed in *la matanza* (the massacre). Subsequently, the peasants

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Occupy Protester Faces Seven Years

Overturn Conviction of Cecily McMillan!

NEW YORK CITY—One of the early organizers of Occupy Wall Street, Cecily McMillan, was convicted on May 5 of felony assault of a police officer. The supposed assault was, in fact, the reflexive elbowing of a cop who had grabbed her breast from behind during the NYPD's breakup of a 2012 Occupy gathering. The latest victim of the state crackdown unleashed on the populist movement, McMillan was remanded to Rikers pending sentencing on May 19. She faces up to seven years in prison and her conviction is the most serious among the thousands of arrests at Occupy protests.

In the course of a brutal police attack, McMillan was groped, beaten and kicked at a 17 March 2012 event in Zuccotti Park to mark six months of Occupy. After she was arrested and put in handcuffs, she went into seizures, only to be denied medical attention. Footage shows the police were more concerned with preventing people from filming than with calling

the paramedics. When Cecily appeared on *Democracy Now!* a few days later, she was limping and still in substantial pain from her ordeal. Clearly visible were several sizable bruises, including one over her right breast that was hand-shaped. In the interview she described how, in the 40 hours between her arrest and arraignment, she was taken from jail to hospital and back again several times without being told where she was or being allowed to contact anyone.

The cop who groped and beat McMillan, one Grantley Bovell, sustained a black eye from her elbow, but his “injury” did not prevent him from brutalizing other protesters that night. One such was Austin Guest, who has filed a suit alleging that Bovell dragged him down the aisle of a bus while “intentionally banging his head on each seat” of the MTA bus commandeered to transport arrestees that night. Bovell has faced several previous allegations of violence according to the



McMillan arriving at courthouse, April 7.

London *Guardian* (4 April), but the jury in McMillan's trial was not permitted to hear any details of the wrongdoing except for his involvement in a 2010 parking ticket scam in the Bronx.

More than the dirty work of a single cop, the whole apparatus of the capitalist justice system was out to railroad McMillan. The Manhattan District Attorney refused to allow McMillan to plead guilty to a misdemeanor and insisted on the felony charges. The prosecutor boldly contended that McMillan had acted out the seizures and subsequently bruised herself. The

judge placed a gag order on her lawyers and repeated the prosecutor's case as fact during the trial, leading McMillan's supporters in Justice4Cecily to aptly describe the judge as a “prosecutor in robes.” Her lawyers want a new trial and are preparing an appeal. After the trial, many jurors expressed shock when learning from the media of the likely prison term. Nine of the 12 have since signed a letter appealing to the judge for leniency.

Cecily McMillan joined the tamely reformist Democratic Socialists of America at college in Wisconsin and argued from the first that Occupy should embrace nonviolence. She was preparing her master's thesis on her political hero Bayard Rustin, a social democrat who was central to maintaining the nonviolent road of the liberal-led civil rights movement. During her testimony, she stated: “I'm a completely nonviolent activist and I've been through extensive training to make sure that no part of my body could ever be used to hurt others.”

Such an honest declaration means nothing to the cops and courts, whose job is to enforce the capitalist order of exploitation and oppression, and who have been ferocious against any form of social protest. This is clearly a trophy conviction for the city and its thugs in blue. All leftists and other targets of the NYPD must demand: **Free Cecily McMillan Now!** ■

French Troops Out of Central African Republic!

Since December, the French military has been openly involved in a civil war raging in the Central African Republic that has claimed the lives of thousands of civilians and uprooted hundreds of thousands from their homes. Behind this sordid communally-based conflict between Muslim militias (the Seleka) and their Christian counterparts (the “anti-balakas”) are cynical maneuvers by French imperialism to further its

LE BOLCHEVIK

neocolonial aims. After a falling out between Paris and François Bozizé—the Christian president whom France had put in place in 2003—the French imperialists gave a green light to the Seleka rebellion to overthrow him. When the regime was later toppled, the leader of the Seleka, Michel Djotodia, became the country’s first Muslim head of state, and the anti-balakas were formed in opposition.

Here is a classic illustration of *Françafrique*, a term that has come to signify the neocolonial system by which France controls its former sub-Saharan colonies. While France granted them formal independence in the early 1960s, it has kept these countries in a de facto dependency through both official and unofficial means. Most are simply ruled by France via puppet presidents, with the French government always having a local opposition at hand to ensure that its lackey in office toes the line.

France currently has eleven military bases and some 10,000 troops in its African neocolonies, which are forbidden to conclude military alliances with any other country unless France permits it. Paris has the first right to buy the natural resources found in its ex-colonies, and French companies must be given priority for government contracts. Economic subordination is further enforced by the fact that these countries share a common currency, the CFA franc, which was pegged to the French franc (and now to the euro), and most of their cash reserves must be deposited in the French national bank.

This neocolonial system was widely denounced after the role of France in the Rwanda genocide of 1994 came to light. While repeatedly denying that *Françafrique* still exists, all French governments have continued its practice, albeit in a more covert manner.

The following article is translated from *Le Bolchévik* No. 207 (March 2014), newspaper of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

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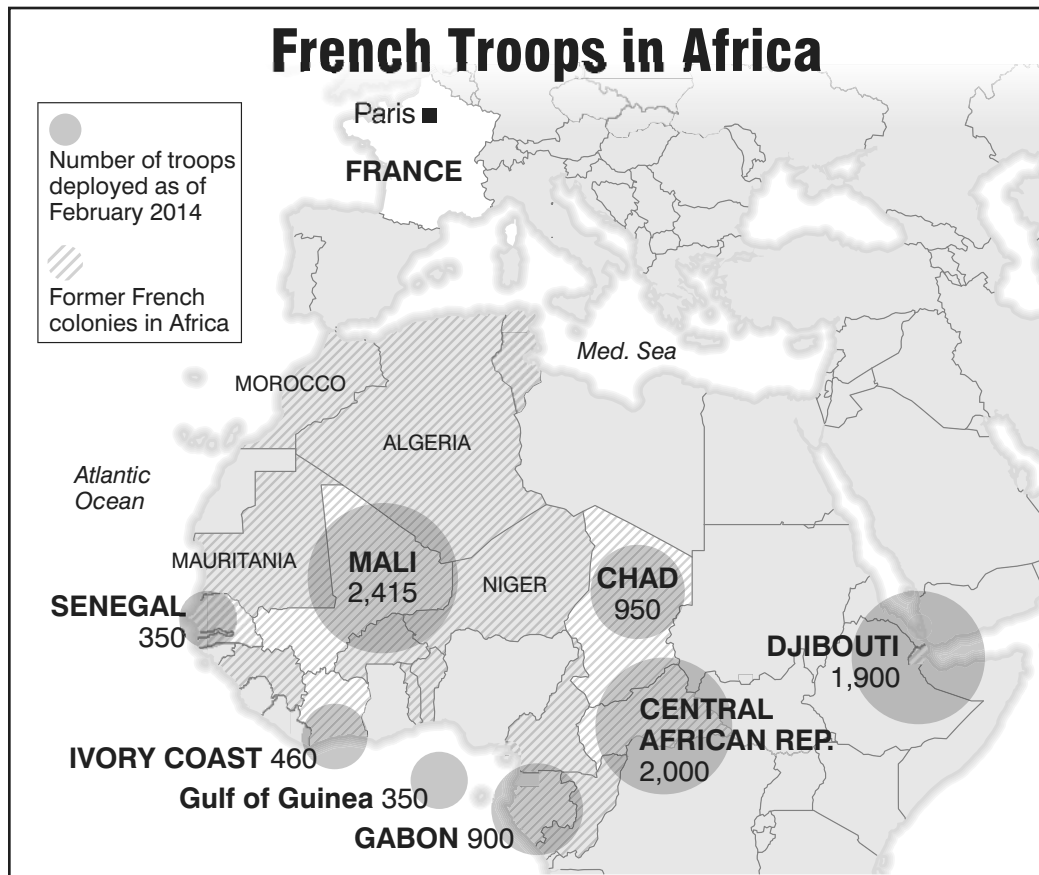
FEBRUARY 14—After less than two years in office, the Socialist Party-Green Party government of President François Hollande already has an impressive record as a neocolonialist. Hollande had made his intentions clear at his inauguration in 2012 when he paid special homage to Jules Ferry, one of the main architects of French colonialism as France carved out its colonial empire at the end of the 19th century. In early 2013, Hollande sent thousands of French troops to Mali—for the first time since that country’s independence—to set up a puppet regime headed by Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. Then, in the Central African Republic (CAR), he dumped a puppet president, François



AFP

Fifty Interventions in Fifty Years of African Independence

Above: French soldiers arrest alleged Seleka militiaman in Bangui, Central African Republic, December 2013. Below: Numbers of French troops in former African colonies.



Reuters map/Sources: Ministry of Defense, France; Chester Fritz Library

Bozizé, who had been put in place by French imperialism ten years earlier. Subsequently, last December Hollande deployed 1,600 troops to Bangui, the country’s capital, before finally replacing the newly installed president Michel Djotodia with another pawn, Catherine Samba-Panza.

All the while, Hollande was proclaiming more loudly than ever that the days of French interference in Africa are “a thing of the past.” The interventions follow a well-established script: French imperialism, with the leaders of the region’s vassal states securely on its side, gets a resolution passed in the UN Security Council, launches its dogs of war from pre-existing bases on the African continent and then (sometimes) “hands

over” control to an African force.

Hollande made sure that the usual French practices in its neocolonial African backyard, commonly referred to as *Françafrique*, were properly packaged for public consumption. Each time he launched a military operation, it just happened to be welcomed if not requested by part of the local population—the black people in southern Mali, the Christians in the Central African Republic—so as to make the French legionnaires appear as their saviors. In the case of the Central African Republic, the official reason was to put an end to the bloody religious clashes that had dramatically mounted throughout 2013.

The rebel militias of the Seleka (which means “alliance” in the Sango language)

are a heterogeneous conglomerate of Bozizé’s opponents, who are mainly Muslim. After the Seleka took Bangui in March 2013, violence and plunder against the Christian population and former soldiers increased considerably. The Christians then organized into poorly equipped militias known as “anti-balakas” [“anti-machetes” in Sango]. After a failed coup attempt by these anti-balakas in early December, presumably launched in anticipation of the French intervention, violent reprisals against Christians escalated. With the proliferation of militias in Bangui, the conflict spread and several thousand civilians were massacred. The situation worsened following Djotodia’s ouster.

The French troops of the current military “Operation Sangaris” in the Central African Republic are accused of taking sides in these religious conflicts, which were greatly exacerbated by French colonialism. That is because the French have mainly disarmed the former Seleka militias, leaving the Muslim population defenseless. Meanwhile, the children of refugees who fled terror carried out by a pro-French regime in Chad between 1975 and 1979—called “Chadians” although many have never set foot in that country—are increasingly fleeing to the north [toward Chad and other countries]. Thus, the situation looks increasingly like large-scale religious and ethnic cleansing.

The imperialist operation that Hollande, Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian and Minister of Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius thought could be conducted smoothly in a few days time has encountered some setbacks, with two French soldiers killed during the first four days. Moreover, Hollande was rebuked by his European partners, who in practice refused to help out the French bourgeoisie by reaching into their pockets or supplying troops.

French Imperialism and Its Former African Empire

The real reasons for the French intervention have nothing to do with humanitarian concern and everything to do with the brutal reassertion of French imperialist rule over its ex-colonies, which have been getting out of line lately. François Bozizé, the president who was thrown out in March 2013, was a source of concern for the French. He had signed some defense agreements with South Africa that undermined French hegemony over the CAR. Those agreements, which have been kept secret, were concluded in 2007 for a duration of five years, and were then renewed in 2012. According to an 8 January 2013 report by the IRIN press agency associated with the UN, “That agreement is providing CAR’s army with an array of military training, from infantry, artillery and special forces training to logistics and driving courses, as well as ‘refurbishment’ of military infrastructure in Bouar and Bangui.”

Noting that this arrangement constituted an implicit confrontation with France, IRIN summarized the analysis of David Zounmenou of the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies (January 2013):

“It was France’s recent move to boost its troops in CAR from 250 to 600 that may have provoked South Africa’s increase in its own military presence.... “It can be seen [sic] viewed as ‘a new battlefield between France and South Africa.’ “South Africa, the continent’s powerhouse, has championed the AU’s [Afri-

can Union’s] mantra of ‘African solutions to African problems.’”

That explains why the French military in Bangui was so unconcerned when the rebels of the Seleka, upon taking power in March 2013, killed 13 soldiers from the South African contingent, which then withdrew from the country.

Imperialism’s Anti-Communist Hostility to China in Africa

To understand France’s maneuvers, they must be seen in a broader context. U.S. imperialism is trying to wind up its disastrous adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to focus instead on the “pivot” to China, the most powerful remaining deformed workers state. This gives French imperialism an opportunity to attempt to restore its supremacy on its former colonial African turf. As such, France is seeking to limit Chinese penetration and to become a subcontractor in the global “war on terror.”

In its former colonies, French imperialism runs up against China even more than South Africa. The exploration license for the Boromata oilfield in the northeast of the CAR was awarded to the American oil company Grynberg RSM [in December 2000]. This company, invoking the unrest caused by rebel attacks, did no exploration and their permit expired in 2004. The granting of the license to China sealed the fate of Bozizé, all the more so since the Central African subsoil is rich in gold, diamonds and uranium. These resources also risked falling into the hands of the Chinese. So Bozizé had to go.

And that’s not all. In 2009, for example, China concluded an agreement to provide economic and technical assistance to the Central African Republic. It included a 7.8 billion CFA francs [about \$16 million] grant, in particular for the construction of schools.

In a recent report submitted to the Minister of the Economy and Finance in preparation for the December 2013 Africa Summit at the Elysée [French Presidential] Palace, Hubert Védrine, chief adviser of former president François Mitterrand and Minister of Foreign Affairs under Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, clearly pointed to China as being the main cause of the decline in French trade with Africa: “Between 2000 and 2011, France’s share of the market in sub-Saharan Africa declined from 10.1 percent to 4.7 percent.... It is above all China that has established itself in the past two decades as the main economic partner of the African continent. China’s share of the African market went from less than 2 percent in 1990 to more than 16 percent in 2011.”

It is, indeed, difficult to compete with China. As we commented in an earlier article (“Hue and Cry over China’s Role in Africa,” *Le Bolchévick* No. 198, December 2011 [reprinted from WV No. 987, 30 September 2011]), Chinese contracts in Africa are attractive because investments by the Chinese state “are driven not by the profit motive but by the need for raw materials for its collectivized industries at home.” That is why the impact of Chinese investments—in hospitals, schools and other infrastructure—contrasts sharply with the plunder of capitalist colonialism.

China remains a workers state, despite the development and ongoing consolidation of a capitalist class within China itself. In Africa as well, there is a growing layer of private Chinese entrepreneurs profiting from big state contracts. Carried out by a peasant-guerrilla army led by Mao Zedong’s Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the 1949 Revolution established a workers state that was bureaucratically deformed from its inception. Unlike in Russia following the October 1917 proletarian revolution, China never had a regime of soviet democracy. Sooner or later, the Stalinist program of the nationalist bureaucracy in power in Beijing will bring China to the brink, posing pointblank the alternatives: either capitalist counterrevolution or a proletarian political revolution that replaces the CCP regime with a regime of workers democracy committed to the struggle for world socialism.

We stand for the unconditional military defense of China against imperial-



Reuters

Above: Camp of some 100,000 refugees, both Christian and Muslim, near Bangui airport, December 2013. Below: Muslims fleeing the capital, February 14.

AP



ism and internal counterrevolution. We support China’s right to trade in order to procure what it needs to further its development. At the same time, as we wrote in our previously cited article on China in Africa: “We recognize, however, that China’s investment and aid programs are determined not by proletarian internationalism but by the CCP bureaucracy’s narrow nationalist interests.” And we denounce the support by the Chinese regime to bourgeois African dictators—and to the imperialists. For example, China voted in the UN Security Council in favor of the resolution authorizing the French intervention in the Central African Republic.

Colonialism Paved the Way for Today’s Massacres

Throughout the colonial period, since the sole interest of the imperialists was to exploit this vast country, the only major communication routes that they built were two roads linking the Central African Republic to the Atlantic Ocean: from Bangui to Pointe-Noire [in the Republic of Congo] and from Bangui to Douala [in Cameroon]. Both are in the west, thus isolating the northern and eastern Muslim regions.

Moreover, as elsewhere, the colonizers combined military repression with Christian proselytizing. Thus, the first president of the Central African Republic, just before independence in 1959, was a defrocked priest, Barthélémy Boganda, who also was the first Central African ever ordained. The entire history of postcolonial political life in the Central African Republic has been dominated by Christians.

The outbreak of the recent cycle of violent conflict can be dated with precision: The day that French imperialism got its resolution passed by the UN Security Council “the streets of Bangui were piled high with dead bodies and the cycle of religious warfare was unleashed” (*Figaro*, 26 December 2013). According to that newspaper, “The outraged population is calling for the immediate departure of Djotodia and of all Muslims, including the former Seleka militiamen. The abuses perpetrated by the latter dug an unbridgeable chasm. They and their families, but

also the Muslim minority, are now nothing but outsiders on reprieve, surrounded by popular hatred.”

Since that time, the French forces have constantly been accused of partiality. “We don’t want the French. You are the accomplices of the anti-balaka forces that are massacring people,” shouted a soldier in Bangui at French troops in late December, according to the newspaper *Le Figaro*. The residents of the Begoua district will long remember “Operation Sangaris.” *Le Figaro* (17 January) described a scene that took place two days earlier:

“In the Nour al-Iman mosque, the Muslim residents reveal five bodies rolled up in rugs, three men and two women.... At the scene of the shooting, in front of a gate where a Toyota with a bullet-ridden windshield is parked, the residents recount: ‘The French arrived poised to fire. They were led by Christians from the neighboring district, who pointed out the houses of the Muslims. People came out onto their doorsteps. And all of a sudden the soldiers started shooting. Five people were killed!’”

This sums up the cynicism of French imperialism. After relying on the Seleka Muslim militias to get rid of Bozizé, they now cede the terrain to pro-Bozizé Christian militias to take care of the Seleka. Civilians on both sides were victims of the perversity—one can hardly call it anything else—of the Socialist Party-Green Party government.

French and UN/African Union Troops Out!

After imposing their colonial domination over more than a dozen black African countries, most of them for a century, the imperialists in Paris, acquiescing to formal independence in the early 1960s, have enforced their political, economic and military domination over these countries in the most brutal manner. De Gaulle simply put in place a neocolonial scheme concocted by social-democrat Gaston Defferre with his 1956 law. Granting independence to these countries while handpicking their leaders was the only way that France could maintain its hold after its humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam and with the National Liberation Front fighters in Algeria determined to win freedom from the colonial yoke on the battlefield.

The fact is that French imperialism, confronted by more economically dynamic competitors, has little else than its “influence” in Africa to survive as a power on the international stage. All the governments in France over the past 50 years, right or left, have had the same policy. Hollande at the Franco-African Summit on December 6 had the nerve to proclaim that “Africa must take full control of its own fate, and in order to succeed in this it must fully ensure its own security,” while at the same time launching his operation in the Central African Republic to disarm the “security” forces. This is reminiscent of Sarkozy’s outrageous racist declaration in Dakar, Senegal, that “the African man has not sufficiently entered into history”—blaming imperialism’s victims for the situation in which imperialism keeps them.

Examples of how France has sought to maintain its influence range from carrying out political assassinations to fomenting rebellions against insufficiently pliant regimes and directly supporting the bloodiest and most genocidal rulers. The military intervention into the Central African Republic is just one example among many others in Africa—there have been more than 50 such interventions in as many years since independence. Particularly criminal was the role of Mitterrand’s France and Dominique de Villepin in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, capped by “Operation Turquoise” to protect assassins fleeing to neighboring Zaire. Today, just weeks before the 20th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, Hollande is prosecuting in the French courts a Rwandan cop involved in the massacres, a clever way to hide the role played by French troops and special forces.

The enslavement of colonial peoples is done at the hands of the same capitalists who exploit French workers. The struggle for workers liberation must be linked to solidarity with colonial peoples and uncompromising opposition to one’s own imperialism. The revolutionary Communist International in 1920 made such solidarity a condition for accepting workers parties into the International. ***French troops out of the Central African Republic!***

The Sordid History of French Colonialism

France’s conquest of Central Africa at the end of the 19th century—when the colonial powers were competing to divide up the continent—was carried out in a particularly brutal manner in the face of bitter resistance. The first French outpost, Bangui, was set up on the shores of the Ubangi River in 1889, and from there bloody military expeditions increasingly advanced into the territory.

It was necessary to quickly demonstrate who was the master. Subsequently, a murderous system of forced labor was established for portorage inside this landlocked

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French Troops...

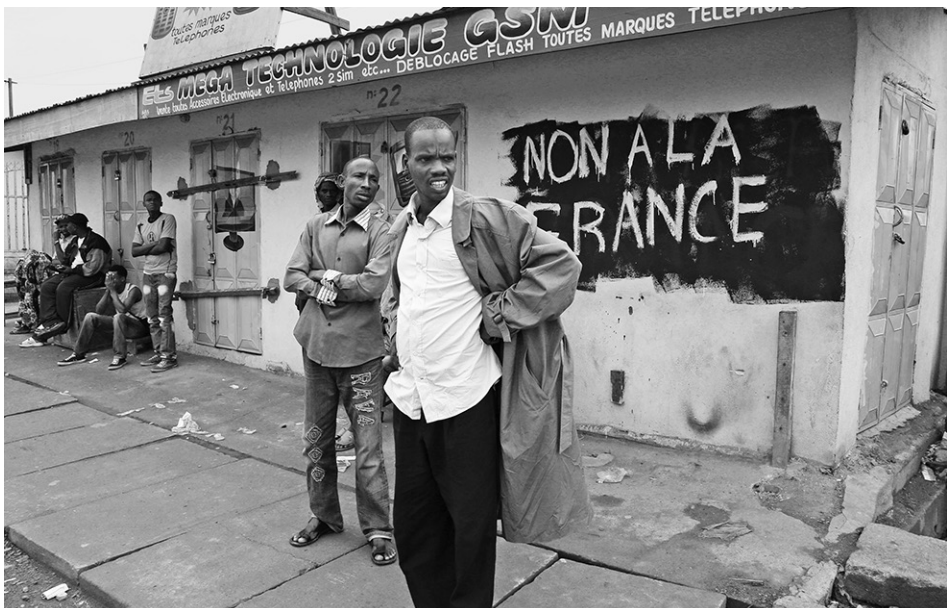
(continued from page 5)

country as well as for the building of roads, administrative outposts and the Congo-Ocean railway. In order to exploit the vast resources of “French Equatorial Africa,” the French colonial administration decided to build a railway line from the Congolese capital, Brazzaville, to the port of Pointe-Noire on the Atlantic Ocean.

And they intended to do it no matter what. Albert Londres, an investigative reporter who traveled in French colonial Africa in 1928, denounced the horrible fate visited on the indigenous populations by the imperialists in pursuit of their ambitions. Forcibly seized in their villages, transported by river on barges built to carry animals, a quarter of them died before reaching Brazzaville. They were then forced to do all of the construction work practically without any tools, such as digging tunnels bare-handed under the whip of the “capitas” (village chieftains serving as overseers) without food and exposed to disease. And when they ran out of strength, Albert Londres testified, “I saw Saras, Zindes and Bayas, who no longer had the strength to work, walk into the forest to die” (*Terre d’Ebène*).

Once the occupation of the country was stabilized and all resistance crushed, the initial accumulation of capital was carried out less through the import of finance capital than through the destruction of the subsistence economy, forced labor and the pure and simple plunder of the forest (rubber, ivory and wood). The forced cultivation of cotton using primitive techniques followed later.

The French colonial administration divided the country into sectors, which



Reuters

April 30: Bangui neighborhood after Muslims were driven out. Slogan on wall reads, “No to France.”

Chari—as the Central African Republic was called at the time—Congo and Gabon) plummeted from four million to two million inhabitants (*L’Humanité*, 19 January 1929).

For such a primitive system, the colonial administration saw no need to build schools. Before World War I, there were barely a few hundred schoolchildren in Ubangi Chari; in 1953, just a few years before independence, a mere 8 percent of children attended school. So much for France’s “civilizing mission”!

The Kongo-Wara Rebellion (1928-1931)

Suffering under the yoke of the colonizers and their state—which had destroyed their ancestral way of life, used their labor for free, burdened them with exorbitant taxes and sent them to faraway regions to build colonial infrastructure—

French West Africa, as well as aid from a Cameroonian sultan, the colonial troops defeated the insurgents. The deportation of thousands of peasants followed. The population of the territory fell by more than 20 percent between 1926 and 1931. The last pockets of resistance were eliminated in the “war of the caves” when rebels were asphyxiated with smoke, a barbaric tactic used in the conquest of Algeria nearly a century earlier.

In France the blackout of this insurrection was finally broken on 19 January 1929. *L’Humanité*, the newspaper of the French Communist Party (CP), headlined that day’s issue “Under the Imperialist Jackboot: In French Equatorial Africa the Negroes Are Rising Up Against Bloody Colonization.” In the article, the CP, which was in the throes of becoming fully Stalinist but not yet the pathetic social-democratic organization it is today, wrote:

“The facts which we cite, and which are recognized even by some colonialist newspapers that cannot be suspected of sympathy for the native peoples, justify the Negroes’ reaction and their desire to vanquish imperialism, the bloodiest potentate that black Africa has ever known. These facts also make it a duty for the working class in France to support the resistance of the oppressed in the colonies, through the highest level of solidarity in common struggle against the imperialist regime and for the independence of the subjugated countries.”

Two days later, *L’Humanité* addressed the soldiers being sent to crush the rebellion:

“The soldiers who are supposed to play the role of executioners must understand that the black people, whose villages were burned and destroyed by French imperialism, are legitimately defending themselves and that their fight is the fight of all the exploited and oppressed. “They must repeat and broaden the act of fraternization that was carried out by the artillerymen of Grande-Combe when faced with the miners of Alès.”

And the CP understood that the unspeakable crimes of imperialism were not aberrations but were “inseparable from the regime of capitalist and colonialist exploitation” (*L’Humanité*, 22 January 1929).

French Reformists and Central Africa

Today, in contrast, all the CP can do is give critical support to the intervention and propose to the French imperialists an alternate policy to stabilize the political situation and create a more favorable climate for local capitalism (which to a large extent is in French hands, just as in the past), writing on its Web site:

“Paris must disengage militarily and seek a political solution favoring the reconstruction of the country and its sovereignty. France must promote a genuine multilateral action in order to address the real causes that have led to the destabilization of the country, to put an end to regional tensions and to fight against poverty in this country, which is extremely rich in natural resources.”

According to Baromètre Metronews of December 2013, 64 percent of the French population opposed the military intervention in the Central African Republic. It is, therefore, not very surprising that almost all the various left groups in France say they are “against the French intervention.”

But none of them really explains the link between imperialist marauding overseas and the oppression of workers at home. And above all these groups are completely incapable of offering a real revolutionary perspective—i.e., socialist revolution—to the masses, whether in Africa or in France. In fact, Hollande, the chief of French imperialism, was put in power with the open or backhanded support of all these groups.

In the 1970s and 1980s, a French military adventure in Africa would have brought out thousands of people into the streets to protest against French depredations. The reformists of the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA, formerly the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire), Lutte Ouvrière and others have completely made their peace with their own imperialism, a peace sealed by their avowed or covert support to capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union and East Europe in 1989-92. These days, when the government sends its killers to Abidjan (Ivory Coast) in 2004 and 2010, to Gao (Mali) in 2013 and to Bangui, these reformists are no longer moved to immediately take to the streets, even for the sake of appearances.

The NPA has published a number of articles about the Central African Republic. Olivier Besancenot and his NPA comrades expressed their discomfort with the French intervention, while implying that, at bottom, what concerns them is its *inadequacy*:

“The official objective of the French intervention is to secure Bangui and the main routes for humanitarian access. They will ignore the rest of the country where three quarters of the population lives, and the Seleka militiamen will probably leave the capital and will be able to wreak havoc in the country’s cities and villages with total impunity.”

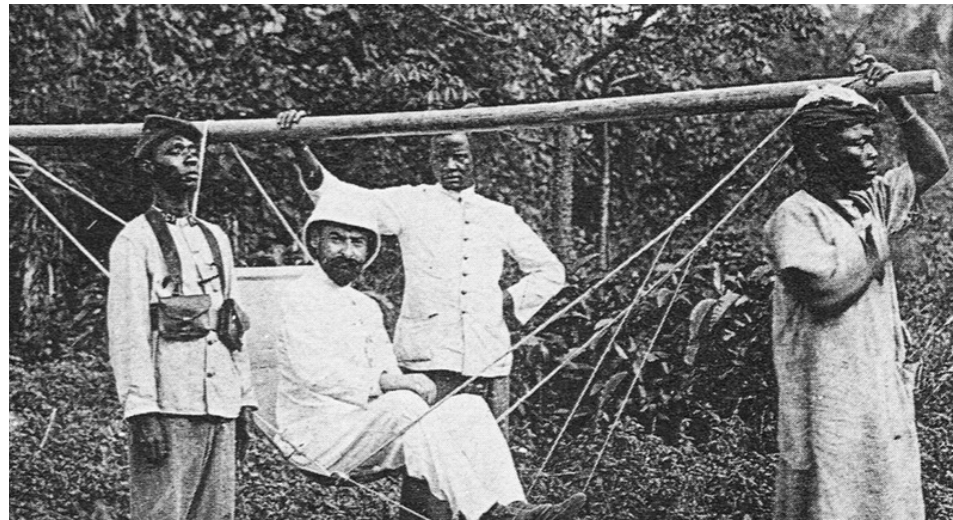
—“Central Africa: Nefarious French Continuity,” *Hebdo L’Anticapitaliste* No. 221, 12 December 2013

For International Socialist Revolution!

The struggles that are drowning Africa in blood, whether they are interethnic or interreligious or take other forms, are rooted in extreme poverty and the competition for very scarce natural resources. According to recent UN figures, the Central African Republic has one doctor for every 10,000 people! On average, 159 of every 1,000 children born will not reach their fifth birthday. Only one child in eight of secondary school age has access to a school.

The legacy of more than 100 years of French imperialist oppression in Central Africa is particularly damning. The backwardness is such that today in that country there are hardly any proletarian forces with the social power to be able to offer a way out for the oppressed masses. But such forces do exist in Africa, to begin with in South Africa but also in Egypt and elsewhere. The only perspective is to forge cadres today for the future workers party that must be authentically communist, revolutionary and internationalist. As we said in our article about Mali last year (“Imperialist Troops Out of Mali Now!”, *Le Bolchévik* No. 203, March 2013 [reprinted from WV No. 1016, 25 January 2013]):

“There will be no end to the interethnic bloodshed and abject poverty of the region within the framework of capitalism. Just as the October Revolution in Russia in 1917 opened up the perspective of revolutionary change in the backward regions of Central Asia, the emancipation of the masses in the Sahel and other parts of Africa whose development has been so dreadfully retarded must be linked to the international struggle of the working class for socialist revolution. Proletarian revolution in South Africa, Egypt or other countries in Africa that have experienced significant industrial development would propel social transformation reaching into the most backward areas of the continent. Such a perspective must include the fight for socialist revolution in France and other imperialist centers, where Malian and other immigrant workers can provide a living link to the struggles of the dispossessed in Africa. What is necessary is the forging of Trotskyist vanguard parties committed to the fight for new October Revolutions.” ■



no credit

French colonial official in Ivory Coast.

were distributed among a small number of private companies in the form of concessions, each one covering thousands or tens of thousands of square kilometers. These companies, as well as the French colonial administration, used forced labor. All the healthy individuals of a village were rounded up and forced to tap rubber trees or build roads and bridges; the others were held hostage. The companies paid for what was harvested not to the villagers who were forced to work but to the supervising official, who used the revenue to pay the village’s taxes to the state.

Only because the administration enlisted the help of the traditional local chiefs to serve as the companies’ auxiliaries was it possible to organize forced labor on a large scale. In his *Histoire de la Centrafrique (Volume 1, 1879-1959)*, Yarisse Zoctizoum cites the testimony of a priest at the time:

“The purchasers (the companies) started to widely distribute production bonuses—liquor, meat, various merchandise, even horses...to the village chiefs and guards... and soon nighttime forced labor, violence, and other abuses followed. Auxiliaries acting as cops hunted down the numerous villagers who tried to escape forced labor, and one could see long lines of prisoners, with ropes around their necks, naked and pitiful.... Starved and sick, they dropped like flies.”

Between 1911 and 1929, the population of French Equatorial Africa (Chad, Ubangi

the atomized and illiterate peasants of Central Africa nevertheless raised their heads. They heroically resisted the colonial power in what became known as the Kongo-Wara rebellion (“kongo-wara” means hoe handle in the Baya language), which took place between 1928 and 1931.

This war was started by Karnou, who belonged to a warrior family in the village of Bayanga-Bounia in the Baya region. Karnou undertook to mobilize the peasants to throw the French out. He called for resistance from all the nearby villages and beyond: “Refuse to pay taxes to the administrators, refuse to work for the Whites or to buy from them or sell them anything whatsoever” (Zoctizoum, *ibid.*). The uprising began in June 1928. The guards sent by the administration to force the peasants to work were either executed or recruited to the insurrection along with their weapons. Police stations, government buildings and residences were burned down. Europeans were denied access to the roads from Bouar to Cameroon and from Bangui to Carnot, as well as those extending toward the Congo and Chad.

Despite Karnou’s death in December 1928, the uprising continued and extended into other regions, including Cameroon, Chad and Gabon. Finally, after receiving reinforcements from other areas of French Equatorial Africa and even from

El Salvador...

(continued from page 3)

and workers were held in check by the longest continuous military dictatorship in Latin America.

In 1980, rising social discontent exploded over the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was seen as an advocate for the poor and oppressed. Opposition groups—including labor unions, peasant associations, social-democratic parties and the Salvadoran Communist Party—united to form the FMLN, which adopted the name of the leader of the 1932 uprising, Agustín Farabundo Martí, for its banner. The FMLN espoused an eclectic mix of Stalinism and petty-bourgeois nationalism. Its main left groups had bases in mass organizations of workers, peasants and the urban poor and links to rural laborers and teachers. For example, the United People’s Action Front controlled the country’s largest union federation, which represented electrical workers, among others.

Soon after it was founded, the FMLN launched a military campaign against government forces, which Washington had helped train and equip for decades. When Reagan entered the White House, he picked up where his Democratic predecessor had left off and began sending rifles, grenade launchers and helicopters, as well as dispatching “advisers” to the country. Despite this U.S. aid to the ruling junta, the guerrillas were able to take control of significant parts of the country by the middle of 1981 and fight the war to a draw by the end of the decade. The stalemate was brought home by a November 1989 FMLN offensive, in which rebels managed to dig in and hold on to sections of San Salvador for days, despite heavy aerial bombing, only to withdraw—without organizing a mass insurrection that could have overwhelmed the army.

This failure was not primarily a matter of battlefield miscalculation: the FMLN’s aim was a “negotiated settlement,” not a military victory, to make it possible to form a government with a “democratic” section of the ruling class, i.e., a *capitalist* government. Such popular fronts—class-collaborationist coalitions in which one or more workers parties join with bourgeois forces to rule on behalf of the capitalists—have time and again paved the way for the triumph of reaction, such as the 1973 Pinochet coup in Chile. The presence of politicians from tiny bourgeois parties in the FMLN’s political wing, the Revolutionary Democratic Front, was a pledge in advance to the oligarchs and U.S. imperialists that guerrilla leaders would not attempt to transcend the boundaries of the capitalist system. Its corollary was not undertaking an all-out mobilization of the exploited and oppressed masses to win the war.

The struggle for a rebel victory in the raging civil war was thus the cutting edge of the fight for proletarian opposition to the popular front. At that time, El Salvador had the largest working class in Central America, concentrated in San Salvador, where industry had rapidly expanded in the 1960s and ’70s. A military victory of the guerrillas would have served as a catalyst for heightened working-class struggle. As we wrote at the time, “A workers revolution in El Salvador is impossible without military victory of the leftist insurgents.... Military victory of the left would open a period of dual power, posing the need for and direct possibility of a revolution that would sweep away the entire capitalist state” (“Smash the Junta, Workers to Power!” WV No. 283, 19 June 1981). Moreover, socialist revolution in El Salvador could have ignited working-class struggle throughout Latin America and in the very belly of the U.S. imperialist beast. The element necessary to lead such a struggle was a workers party committed to a revolutionary internationalist program. This is no less true today.

“Defense of Cuba, USSR Begins in El Salvador!”

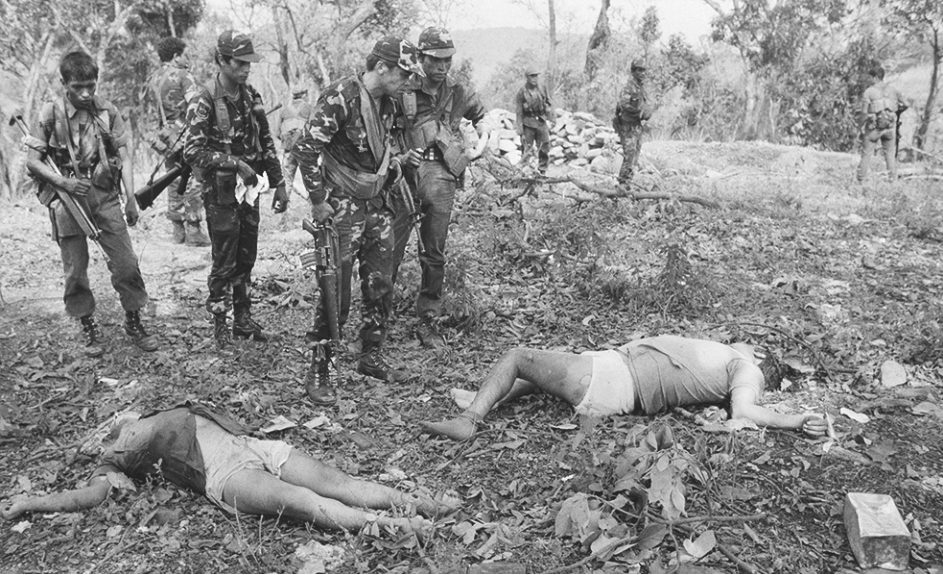
In the years leading up to the “peace” accords, FMLN leaders increasingly dumped their anti-capitalist rhetoric in the

hopes of winning a seat at the table with Washington. The September 1990 FMLN “Proclamation to the Nation” calling for a “democratic revolution” did not even make the usual obligatory nods to “socialism” in the by and by. This process of cleansing the FMLN of the Marxist stigma was given greater impetus by the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, which removed from the international stage the main counterweight to the imperialists. The USSR had issued from the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the first successful proletarian revolution in history. Despite its degeneration at the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy beginning in 1923-24, the Soviet workers state remained the chief target of the imperialist powers, centrally the U.S.

From the start of the civil war, the U.S. rulers had declared that their support for the military junta and ARENA butchers was necessary for “containing communism” in Latin America. ARENA’s anthem to this day includes the bloodcurdling cry: “El Salvador will be the tomb where the Reds meet their end.” As we stated in “El Salvador: There Is No Peace” (WV No. 542, 10 January 1992), written a few days after the accords were signed:

“The demise of the guerrilla war in El Salvador, like the 1990 election defeat of the leftist Sandinistas by contra-linked forces next door in Nicaragua, directly reflects the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in East Europe and the Soviet Union. For the fighting in the isthmus was no isolated ‘regional conflict’ but a hotspot of U.S. imperialism’s anti-Soviet Cold War. The origin of the Salvadoran conflict was when the Reagan administration soon after taking office in 1981 vowed to ‘draw the line’ against ‘Communist subversion’ in Central America.”

In so doing, Washington was reasserting its imperialist claim to its own backyard as well as taking aim at the USSR



Death squad terror in El Salvador: U.S.-backed soldiers in Cabañas survey their victims, 1983.

and the Cuban deformed workers state, where capitalism was overturned following the seizure of power by Castro’s forces in 1959. Reagan presented the FMLN (along with the Sandinistas and leftist guerrilla forces in Guatemala) as Soviet proxies in order to prepare and mobilize the U.S. population for an actual war with the Soviet bloc. Yet the Soviet leadership treacherously abstained from providing military or financial support to the FMLN during the war, as it feared a victory of the Salvadoran working masses might well inspire a proletarian challenge to its own parasitic rule. Ditto the Stalinist regime in Havana, with Castro advising the leftist insurgents in Central America to *not* follow the “Cuban road”—that is, overthrow capitalist rule in sheer self-defense. After capitalist restoration in the USSR, the U.S. imperialists no longer needed to demonize the FMLN as a surrogate for the Soviet “Evil Empire,” removing a prime motivation for the civil war.

In the 1980s, reformist left groups in the U.S. like the Socialist Workers Party and Workers World Party (WWP), not to mention the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), politically supported the FMLN’s sellout program for a negotiated settlement. Today, the Party for Socialism and Liberation, a split from the WWP, still politically sup-



Trade unionists and families of political prisoners march through San Salvador in defiance of army threats, September 1984.

ports the bourgeois FMLN, as expressed in its “Solidarity Statement to the FMLN” (30 January) lauding Sánchez Cerén and his running mate as “exemplary leaders in the struggle for the victory of the Salvadoran people.”

In contrast, the Spartacist League/U.S., while giving the FMLN no political support, demanded during the civil war: “Military victory to the leftist insurgents!” We opposed the negotiated settlement pushed by guerrilla leaders and the reformists, calling to “Smash junta terror in El Salvador—For workers revolution!” And to underscore our unconditional military defense of the Soviet and Cuban workers states against imperialism, we insisted, “Defense of Cuba and USSR begins in El Salvador!” The SL and its

seeds and low-cost credit to small family farmers. Over 17,000 land titles were transferred to peasants. The FMLN also created some new jobs while providing temporary financial assistance for the unemployed and creating pensions for the poor. Nonetheless, such measures invariably fell far short of what is needed in an impoverished country beholden to U.S. imperialism.

Meanwhile, the deep roots of organized crime in the country gave the FMLN government the pretext to further strengthen the repressive apparatus of the Salvadoran capitalist state. Even as the “iron fist” policing introduced by ARENA was continued, Funes expanded the military by 57 percent in his first two and a half years in office, deploying three battalions to patrol urban areas alongside the police. He even made a former military officer head of domestic security until the courts overturned this appointment as unconstitutional. The 2010 “Gang Prohibition Act” unleashed the police to conduct mass arrests of suspected gang members, with tattoos considered sufficient “evidence” of criminal activity. In a country in which some 40 percent of the population is under 18 years old, Sánchez Cerén in 2012 hatched a scheme as Minister of Education that allowed cops to pose as coaches and patrol “gang-infested” schools in order to spy on youths!

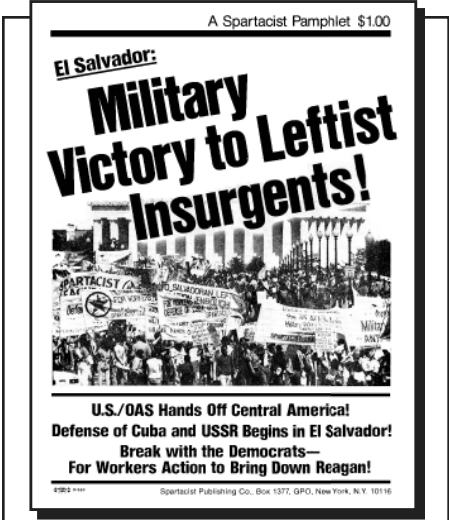
Such measures earned Funes the praise of U.S. Commander-in-Chief Obama, whose administration has poured money into the Salvadoran military. By assisting the U.S. in prosecuting the “war on gangs” and the “war on drugs” in Latin America, the first FMLN government served as a regional cop for Yankee imperialism, signing on to the FBI’s MS-13 National Gang Task Force. Originally formed in 2004 and continued under the FMLN administration, this task force exchanges intelligence among U.S. and Central American law enforcement agencies. The Funes/Sánchez Cerén government also supported the Transnational Anti-Gang Unit and its associated Central American Fingerprint Exploitation initiative, which supply biometric records from

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FMLN Allies with U.S. Imperialists

When its years-long effort to achieve a negotiated settlement came to fruition in 1992, the FMLN was recognized as a political party, enabling it to run in local and national elections. The former guerrillas were made to turn in their weapons, and some joined the new National Civilian Police together with their death squad enemies. The FMLN also backed a modified version of the ARENA government’s Public Private Partnership Law, which has met with labor opposition, including a 2002-03 strike by doctors and health care workers that defeated an attempt to privatize some public health services.

After taking the presidency in 2009, the FMLN under Funes and Sánchez Cerén doubled government spending on health care and provided free school meals, uniforms, shoes and supplies. The Family Agriculture Plan distributed free fertilizer,



Ukraine...

(continued from page 1)

behind the fascist-infested February coup is now screaming that the popular vote in Donetsk and Luhansk was “illegal.” We defend the democratic right of the population in these areas to conduct the referendum and act on the vote for self-rule, up to and including independence or unification with Russia if they so desire. The leaders of the two self-declared People’s Republics now are pressing to join Russia. But the situation remains fluid.

It should be noted that voting took place only where insurgents had seized effective control and could militarily defend the ballot. Thus, it is not clear whether the sentiment for self-rule exists to the same degree elsewhere in the region. Eastern Ukraine is marked by a high degree of interpenetration and assimilation of Russians and Ukrainians. Many people have both Russian and Ukrainian heritage, while some identify themselves as “Soviet” and others as “people of the Donbass” (Donets basin).

In contrast to eastern Ukraine, the people of Crimea, which was long part of Russia, are ethnically Russian in their majority. As revolutionary Marxists, we supported Russia’s military intervention there, which allowed the population in Crimea to exercise its democratic right of self-determination, voting overwhelmingly to reunite with Russia. This position did not and does not entail the least political support to Vladimir Putin’s capitalist regime, which brutally oppresses Muslim and other minorities as well as gays and enforces miserable conditions on working people. As we wrote in “U.S./EU Imperialist Frenzy as Crimea Rejoins Russia” (WV No. 1042, 21 March): “In advocating the right of self-determination—whether for Russians in Crimea or for the Chechen people, who are victims of Great Russian chauvinism—our aim is to get the national question off the agenda in order to foster unity of the proletariat across national lines.”

Today, the interest of the working class—in Ukraine, Russia and internationally—



AFP

Fascist Right Sector thugs outside Ukrainian parliament, March 28.

lies in defense of the population in eastern Ukraine and Odessa against military repression and fascist terror. *Ukrainian troops out! Imperialist hands off!* As anger at the Banderovtsy grows ever hotter, we repeat our statement in “Ukraine Coup: Spearheaded by Fascists, Backed by U.S./EU Imperialists—Crimea Is Russian” (WV No. 1041, 7 March), written at the height of the reactionary Maidan mobilizations:

“It would have been in the interest of the international proletariat for the working class in Ukraine to mobilize to sweep the fascists off the streets of Kiev. Today, it would certainly be in the interest of the proletariat for multiethnic, non-sectarian workers militias to be formed to crush the fascists and repel any and all expressions of communal violence.”

Endowment for Repression

Fascist and official government terror: here is the true face of the Ukrainian “democracy” championed by Washington and its media mouthpieces. Assisting the imperialists’ propaganda barrage are reformist left organizations like the International Socialist Organization, which hailed the Maidan mobilizations as “action from below” even while admitting the fascists’ prominence.

Washington’s bloody hands are all over

the repression in Ukraine, just as they were behind the coup that unseated Viktor Yanukovich, the exiled former head of the bourgeois Party of Regions. Yanukovich’s offense had been to accept an aid package from Moscow rather than implement austerity demanded by the International Monetary Fund as part of the deal for Ukraine to join the EU. Throwing money and publicity behind the Maidan protests, Washington determined the contours of the new government. When Assistant Secretary of State Victoria Nuland infamously blurted out, “Fuck the EU,” this was at the end of a phone call to the American ambassador in which she laid out exactly who should lead the coup regime. In another moment of candor, Nuland admitted that the U.S. has spent a tidy \$5 billion over the past two decades to secure a regime to its liking in Ukraine, funneled through such agencies as the CIA-linked National Endowment for Democracy.

The first two attempts to mount military attacks in eastern Ukraine directly followed visits to Kiev by CIA chief John Brennan and, one week later, Vice President Joe Biden. Both those offensives quickly ground to a halt. Troops refused to fight, turning over guns and vehicles to insurgents. But with local police forces melting away, the regime was able to put together a special police unit from Kiev as well as some military forces willing to fire on civilians.

This is being done, according to German sources, with the assistance of “dozens of specialists from the US Central Intelligence Agency and Federal Bureau of Investigation,” who are “helping Kiev end the rebellion in the east of Ukraine and set up a functioning security structure” (Agence France-Presse, 4 May). These agents are also pursuing corruption charges against various Ukrainian capitalists tied to Russia, complementing punitive imperialist sanctions against oligarchs in Russia associated with Putin. Yesterday, the right-wing German newspaper *Bild am Sonntag* reported that some 400 American mercenaries from Academi (formerly



RT News

Lviv, 1943: Celebration of Ukrainian “Galician SS,” which fought alongside Nazis in World War II.

El Salvador...

(continued from page 7)

Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras for FBI databases.

In 2005, ARENA semi-secretly established the San Salvador branch of the U.S.-sponsored International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA), whose graduates usually join the Salvadoran National Police and go on to combat “drug trafficking” and “international terrorism.” CISPES reports that the ILEA functions like the notorious School of the Americas, which trained Latin American death squad leaders in the 1980s. The FMLN has maintained cooperation with the ILEA. In the same vein, the FMLN government’s Minister of Foreign Affairs in March 2013 signed an agreement with the U.S. ambassador to establish a joint anti-drug task force.

We Marxists are opposed to the so-called war on drugs, which is a cover for social control and the mass incarceration of black people and Latinos in the U.S.

and for imperialist military intervention abroad. While drug addiction, like alcoholism, can have dangerous physical consequences, it is a personal and medical matter, not one for the police. We call for the decriminalization of drugs and for free drug treatment services. We also oppose the “war on gangs”—whether in the U.S., El Salvador or elsewhere—because it criminalizes poor and working-class youth and is accompanied by more laws that increase the capitalist state’s repressive powers, which will ultimately be used against workers and the poor.

For Workers Revolutions Throughout the Americas!

Sánchez Cerén talks of doing more to help the poor while advancing a bourgeois program of tax reforms, greater foreign investment, outreach to the Salvadoran private sector and defense of private property. No matter whether the FMLN or ARENA is in power, the capitalist government will not and cannot fundamentally improve the lot of the working and impoverished

masses. As in other economically backward and dependent countries, El Salvador’s bourgeois rulers are chained to the imperialists by thousands of economic, political, social and military strings. As Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution teaches, the tasks of social liberation—from satisfying peasants’ land hunger and alleviating rural poverty to shaking off the rapacious oligarchy and their imperialist masters—fall to the working class at the head of the oppressed masses. This lesson was given stunning confirmation in the Bolshevik-led 1917 October Revolution in Russia.

A working-class socialist revolution in El Salvador would immediately confront a host of capitalist foes among its Central American neighbors, as well as elsewhere in Latin America, and above all the U.S. imperialist behemoth. This points to the inextricable link between proletarian revolution in El Salvador and elsewhere on the continent. As we stated in “For Workers Revolution in El Salvador!” (WV No. 271, 2 January 1981), written in the

Blackwater) are taking part in military operations against protesters in southeastern Ukraine.

Following Kiev’s first failed attempt to quell the uprisings, Washington claimed that Moscow broke a truce agreement by failing to rein in the protesters, who are depicted by the Western press as mere tools of Putin, himself portrayed as the reincarnation of Hitler. This is just one part of a massive blitz of lies issued by the U.S. government to cover its machinations in Ukraine. Even the standard depiction of protesters as “pro-Russian” is a misnomer: interviews of people in eastern Ukraine reveal a wide range of opinion on the region’s future status.

Since the imperialists and their media mouthpieces have no evidence to back their assertions that the rebels are “terrorists” in thrall to Moscow, they are doing what is customary in such situations: they make it up. A flyer supposedly issued by insurgents declaring that Jews would have to register with local authorities quickly proved to be a fake. Then came photos published in the *New York Times* that purportedly showed armed men in Russia—i.e., agents of Moscow—who were later seen fighting with the insurgents in eastern Ukraine. The photos were soon revealed to have been taken in Ukraine, proving nothing.

Meanwhile, the *Times* continues to provide cover for Svoboda and Right Sector by minimizing their role in the terror and disappearing the fact that they are fascists. A May 6 *Times* article blandly describes the “Kiev-1” police unit dispatched from the capital to Odessa following the massacre as “drawn from the street activists who helped topple Ukraine’s government in February.” To be clear: these are “activists” of the type who paraded through Maidan with torches and clubs, portraits of Bandera and neo-Nazi insignia—i.e., Ukraine’s very own brownshirts. Families in Odessa and eastern Ukraine in particular know the score all too well, based on ineradicable memories of the Nazis and their Ukrainian henchmen who carried out unspeakable genocidal crimes during WWII.

The disinformation about Ukraine comes from the same “newspaper of record” that retailed the U.S. rulers’ lies about Saddam Hussein’s (non-existent) “weapons of mass destruction,” the pretext for the Iraq occupation. Such deception is second nature for the bourgeois press, whose fundamental role is to mold public opinion on behalf of the capitalist ruling class, although it can be truthful on secondary or smaller matters to enhance its credibility.

Demonizing Russia

Imperialist propaganda reached fever pitch over Russia’s “invasion” of Crimea. No such thing took place. With its mostly Russian population, Crimea is home to Russia’s Black Sea Fleet and already had thousands of Russian troops. Putin’s move was essentially defensive, aiming to protect the fleet in the face of a hostile, Western-backed government in Kiev.

As the rebellions erupted in east-

midst of the Salvadoran civil war:

“The Central American statelets, which emerged from colonial rule as a single federal state, have never been viable as independent economic or political units.... “In the face of likely imperialist intervention, and merely to defeat their ‘own’ bourgeoisie, forces seeking proletarian revolution anywhere in Central America will face defeat if they limit themselves by artificial national frontiers.”

Today, some two million Salvadorans live in *El Norte*, concentrated in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., New York City and other metropolitan areas. In the U.S., the Salvadoran population has been drawn into the organized labor movement, where it has played an active role in unions representing janitors and hotel and restaurant workers. These workers can be a human bridge to the Salvadoran proletariat back home. The task posed is the forging of revolutionary workers parties from Latin America to the U.S. to link the struggles of working people and direct them toward shattering the framework of capitalism in the Americas and beyond. ■

ern Ukraine, the Obama administration screamed about the presence of 40,000 Russian troops along the border in Russia—this from a government that keeps tens of thousands of troops and cops on the Mexican border to stop the victims of imperialist subjugation from entering the U.S. Painting the Russian military exercises along the border as the harbinger of an invasion of Ukraine, the U.S. stepped up its military provocations in the region. The USS *Donald Cook*, a guided missile destroyer, entered the Black Sea last month. It was later joined by a Navy frigate that took part in exercises with Romania, one of NATO’s newer member states. Two French military ships also entered the Black Sea last month. Meanwhile, some 600 U.S. paratroopers were dispatched to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—former components of the Soviet Union—and to Poland. Early this month, NATO’s annual “Spring Storm” exercise in Estonia began, involving a record-breaking 6,000 troops.

The demonization of the Putin regime is in the service of Washington’s long-standing drive to curtail capitalist Russia’s strength as a regional power and potential rival. With the counterrevolution in 1991-92 that destroyed the Soviet degenerated workers state, U.S. imperialism achieved unchallenged world supremacy. Early in 1992, a government document called the Defense Planning Guidance declared: “Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival, either on the territory of the former Soviet Union or elsewhere.” Warning of the risks of a nationalist backlash in Russia or efforts to reincorporate Ukraine and other parts of the former USSR into Russia, the document stated that the U.S. must “protect a new order...for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.”

Two years later, former national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote in *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1994): “It cannot be stressed strongly enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire.” Containing Russia and drawing Ukraine to the West has been the policy of Republican and Democratic administrations alike. Under Bill Clinton, NATO expanded to include Poland and other East European states, with the Baltic states joining early in the George W. Bush presidency. Under Bush, the U.S. also lavished financial and diplomatic support on the so-called “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004, one of many such efforts aimed at installing pliant regimes in the territories of the former USSR. And now Washington has a quisling regime in place in Kiev.

The U.S. has also established bases across Central Asia and elsewhere on Russia’s periphery. This military extension is aimed at encircling not only capitalist Russia but also China, a bureaucratically deformed workers state. Putin, for his part, has repeatedly tried to accommodate the U.S. imperialists, for example by allowing the American military to traverse Russian territory into and out of Afghanistan. His reward has been one kick in the teeth after another.

Yet Russia is no pushover. While its economy is distorted by its heavy reliance on oil and gas exports, the country maintains a large military force and a nuclear



Miners rally against Kiev regime outside occupied government building in Donetsk, May 7.

arsenal second only to that of the U.S., as well as significant technical expertise. Furthermore, the U.S. cannot necessarily count on the support of its allies for the anti-Russia campaign. While Germany’s Angela Merkel has joined Obama in denouncing Putin over Ukraine, even as she bristles at continuing U.S. surveillance programs targeting herself, many German capitalist enterprises that are dependent on trade with Russia object to economic sanctions levied against tycoons associated with Putin. Today, France announced it is moving ahead with the sale of two helicopter assault ships to Russia, defying U.S. pressure to punish Moscow.

At home, Washington’s efforts to whip up public sentiment against Russia over Ukraine have fallen flat. War-weary after the seemingly endless neocolonial occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, working people are preoccupied with ongoing assaults on their wages, medical and retirement benefits and other necessities of life. The aim of Marxists in the belly of the imperialist beast is to win militants to the task of building a workers party that will steadfastly oppose its “own” imperialist rulers and intervene into coming class battles with a program to overthrow the rotting and murderous capitalist order through socialist revolution.

Destruction of Soviet Ukraine

Referring to eastern Ukraine and Odessa as “New Russia,” Putin recently complained that these areas “were not part of Ukraine in tsarist times” but were “transferred in 1920. Why? God knows.” No, the answer can be found here on earth. It was under the Bolshevik regime issuing out of the 1917 October Revolution that Ukraine achieved even the semblance of national unification and the right to separate statehood. The proletariat in Ukraine, particularly in the East, was predominantly Russian, a heritage of the industries that sprang up there under the old tsarist regime. But the peasantry, which formed the vast majority of the population, was Ukrainian. Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin stressed the need of the Soviet workers state to grant the Ukrainians and other nations that had been oppressed in the tsarist “prison house of peoples” the right to self-determination—i.e., the right to separate.

Based in western Ukraine, which had been part of the Habsburg empire, reactionary Ukrainian nationalism allied first with German imperialism under the Kaiser and then with Pilsudski’s right-wing regime in Poland, and later still with Nazi Germany. Following the defeat of imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary armies in the Russian Civil War, a Ukrainian state based on the eastern half of the country was formed as part of a federation of workers states, becoming in 1922 a founding member of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Western Ukraine, which remained under the rule of capitalist Poland, was integrated into the Soviet Union following the Red Army’s smashing of Nazi Germany.

The early Bolshevik regime assiduously defended the rights of oppressed nationalities and peoples. However, with the triumph and consolidation of the Stalinist

bureaucracy beginning in 1923-24, Great Russian chauvinism once again began to flourish, resulting in abuses of sometimes historic proportions, as in the mass expulsion of Crimean Tatars, Chechens and others from their homelands toward the end of WWII. Retrograde nationalism was nurtured by the Stalinist dogma of “socialism in one country”—a flat rejection of the Marxist program of world socialist revolution that animated the Bolsheviks of 1917. Nevertheless, the policies of the bureaucracy had a contradictory impact. Full employment, education, medical care for all and other social gains undercut nationalist hatreds. Integrated into a socialized economy with central planning, Ukraine underwent substantial industrialization and development.

The restoration of capitalist rule destroyed these gains, throwing the working people of the former Soviet republics into social chaos, nationalist bloodletting and economic disaster. Industrial employment in Ukraine fell by 50 percent between 1991 and 2001 while wages in remaining jobs plummeted. Yet even under conditions of economic depression, eastern Ukraine produces a disproportionate share of the country’s wealth. For example, the Donetsk region, a coal mining center, accounts for only 10 percent of the population of Ukraine but some 20 percent of its gross domestic product.

The breakup of the USSR revealed considerable interpenetration and assimilation of peoples as well as interdependent economic enterprises that had been geared to a bureaucratically centralized planned economy. This is the situation underlying eastern Ukraine’s continuing ties to the Russian economy. The Putin regime’s strategic interest in eastern Ukraine is highlighted by the region’s role in producing military goods for Russia, from helicopter engines and hydraulic systems

for fighter jets to air-to-air missiles. The sharp fall in jobs, state benefits and living standards after the counter-revolution has rekindled among many workers nostalgic memories of the Soviet Union, when working people had a decent life. An *Al Jazeera* article (30 April) titled “Eastern Ukrainian Miners Yearn for Russia, Bygone Soviet Era” describes one such worker, who identifies himself as Russian. Currently unemployed, he had risked his life toiling in one of the many illegal mines that sprang up after the collapse of the collectivized economy. While favoring Donetsk becoming part of Russia, the worker said, “I don’t want it to be like Russia. I want it to be like the past, the USSR,” where “I was getting payment even for my learning.”

Elements of class consciousness can be seen in workers’ identification with the USSR as well as in their hatred for both pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian oligarchs, several of whom are in top national and regional governmental posts. However, the working class has not emerged as an independent political factor, and no group to our knowledge exists in Ukraine that is moving toward a program of overthrowing capitalist rule through workers revolution.

Soviet nostalgia is often colored by the nationalism that was fostered by the Kremlin Stalinist bureaucracy and is currently expressed in virulently reactionary form by various “Communist” remnants of the old regime. What must be understood is that the enormous gains produced by the Soviet Union’s planned economy were betrayed by the privileged Stalinist bureaucracy, which sold out opportunities for workers revolution outside the USSR in the illusory quest for “peaceful coexistence” with imperialism. Faced with unrelenting imperialist economic and military pressure, Stalinist misrule led ultimately to the collapse of the Soviet, East European and East German workers states and their reversion to capitalist anarchy.

To the best of our ability and limited resources, the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) fought to defend the degenerated and deformed workers states against the capitalist class enemy and for proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist regimes. In this, we were following the course set by Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the October Revolution and the principal continuator of the Bolshevik program. Today, the future under capitalism is bleak for the working masses of Ukraine, Russia and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, as it is in the rest of the capitalist world. What is needed is the forging of Leninist-Trotskyist parties that will wage a fierce struggle against all manifestations of national, ethnic and religious bigotry and great-power chauvinism as part of patient propaganda aimed at winning the proletariat to the fight for new October Revolutions worldwide. ■

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South Africa...

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the strikers’ demands for R12,500 a month are “excessive” and “unreasonable,” the COSATU statement declared that there are “no prospects of achieving the demands.”

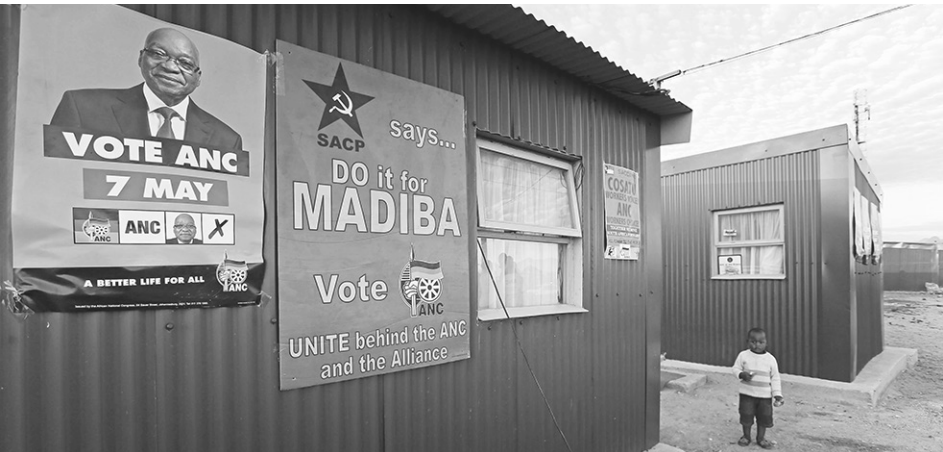
The CEOs of the big platinum companies are paid an average of over R20 million a year, and their labor lieutenants like NUM general secretary Frans Baleni rake in an estimated R105,000 per month. Yet these bloodsuckers demand that workers who risk their lives daily, descending deep underneath the earth’s surface to drill for precious minerals, settle for starvation wages. It is not uncommon for the wages of one worker to support ten or more members of his extended family who are trapped in unemployment. A significant number of workers rely on soup kitchens in the townships because their wages are not enough to feed their families, and most are forced to take on a crippling debt burden.

The NUM leaders notoriously violence-baited the Lonmin strikers in the days leading to the 2012 Marikana massacre, precipitating a mass exodus of miners from that union to AMCU. Likewise, in the current strike they have accused AMCU members of violence and intimidation, calling on the police to arrest strikers and the bourgeois courts to deny them bail. The NUM’s North West provincial chapter has demanded that the mining bosses provide security for the scabs and has threatened to organize an anti-strike march to area mining offices (*Daily Maverick*, 25 March).

Despite currently leading a hard strike, the perspective of the leaders of AMCU (which is not part of COSATU or the Tripartite Alliance) does not transcend militant trade-union reformism. For instance, they do not seek to link the struggles of the miners to other sectors of the working class and oppressed.

Last November, when AMCU and the employers were in wage negotiations, NUM-organized mineworkers at Northam Platinum in Limpopo province went out on strike for better wages. The AMCU leaders refused to support the strike at Northam, the fourth-largest platinum producer, and allowed it to be isolated, thereby undermining the position of workers in other mines. Now, mine bosses are using the 9 percent wage increase that Northam mineworkers won in their 75-day strike as a benchmark to settle the current AMCU strike.

Recently, the leaders of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), including General Secretary Irvin Jim, have adopted a left posture in response to the anger among their base at the anti-working-class policies of the ANC and COSATU. At a Special National Congress last December, NUMSA voted to withhold support for the ANC in the May 7 general election and to push COSATU to leave the Tripartite Alliance. This same congress also raised much-needed financial gifts for the families of the slain Marikana workers, a decent act of solidarity that shows the resonance



Election posters in Cape Town township. SACP invokes memory of late ANC leader Nelson Mandela, known as Madiba, to bolster support for ANC-led capitalist government.

that the Marikana massacre had throughout the working class. But the NUMSA leadership has done nothing to mobilize its membership in industrial action in solidarity with the AMCU strike.

As Spartacist/South Africa explained in a leaflet distributed at the NUMSA congress, “the NUMSA leadership maintains its loyalty to Mandela’s ANC, particularly the bourgeois-populist Freedom Charter adopted in 1955. The NUMSA tops also swear by the ‘two-stage revolution’ doctrine of the SACP, long a formula for allying with a supposedly progressive wing of the bourgeoisie” (see “Metal Workers Union Drops Electoral Support to ANC,” WV No. 1039, February 7). The treacherous role of the NUMSA leaders was clearly demonstrated in the early weeks of the current AMCU strike. After calling a strike at the Amplats smelting plant in February, the NUMSA bureaucrats settled for incremental wage increases of between 7.5 and 8.5 percent in March—as the AMCU strike was raging. The bosses made a big deal about their “delight” at NUMSA’s wage settlement, as against the AMCU workers’ “unrealistic” wage demands.

Neo-Apartheid Capitalist Rule

What really enrages the COSATU leaders is that the AMCU mineworkers are waging a bitter class struggle against the continued superexploitation of black labor in the mines—the basis of neo-apartheid South Africa’s economy. The massive inequality in South African society, including the stagnation of real wages and the continued existence of the so-called “apartheid wage gap” 20 years after the end of legal apartheid, is a stark indictment of the failures of two decades of ANC/SACP/COSATU rule. The tops of COSATU-affiliated unions have repeatedly betrayed workers struggles, strangling strikes and keeping the unions’ power crippled by tying them to the ANC-led nationalist popular front, in which the reformist workers leaders take responsibility for running South African capitalism in coalition with the bourgeois ANC. The Marikana massacre underlined in blood what this treachery means for the working class.

The ANC and its COSATU allies were particularly keen to stifle struggle in recent months because of fears that rising discontent would result in a dramatic fall in support to the ANC in the recent general elections. While there is widespread anger that the Tripartite Alliance has failed to deliver on the promises of “liberation,” no party running in the elections represented even in a partial way the class interests of the black proletariat. The ANC maintained its dominant position, receiving 62 percent of the vote, a slight drop since 2009.

Former ANC Youth League honcho Julius Malema’s Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) won support especially in North West province, which is the center of the mining region. While seeking to profit from the legitimate anger of black workers through populist demagoguery, the EFF is a bourgeois formation both in terms of its program and social composition. It is fundamentally hostile to the workers movement. The same applies to Bantu Holomisa’s United Democratic Movement, which also looked upon Marikana workers as potential voting cattle.

The Workers and Socialist Party (WASP), which was launched in the wake

of the 2012 miners strikes by the reformist Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), South African section of the Committee for a Workers’ International, approached the EFF to form an electoral coalition. In response, Malema demanded WASP dissolve its organization into the EFF. WASP refused but then ran former anti-apartheid trade-union leader Moses Mayekiso—today Gauteng provincial legislator of the Congress of the People (COPE), a 2008 rightward split from the ANC—as their presidential candidate. WASP’s pursuit of coalitions with bourgeois parties and politicians is the principal reason Spartacist/South Africa opposed giving them critical support in this year’s elections.

The Strikebreaking Role of WASP

WASP also played a truly scandalous, strikebreaking role on the eve of the cur-



Gauteng Province, February 6: Cops fired stun grenades, rubber bullets at thousands of township protesters demanding basic services.

rent AMCU strike. On 20 January, just before the start of the strike, WASP convened a press conference in Johannesburg featuring some dissident AMCU shop stewards who threatened to quit the union and sue AMCU leader Joseph Mathunjwa for defamation! WASP spokesperson Mamelwe Sebei made his own contribution to the media’s violence-baiting of AMCU, arguing that since the ANC wants things to turn violent, Mathunjwa “is playing right into their hands” (*Mail & Guardian* online, 22 January). Predictably, WASP’s press conference—held the same day the Chamber of Mines issued a threat to interdict the strike—was promptly seized upon by the bourgeois media and other enemies of the AMCU workers as a welcome tool to sow confusion and demoralization among the mineworkers. The day after their press conference, WASP felt compelled to issue a statement titled “Support the Mineworkers’ Strikes!” in an effort to cover their behinds.

Not even the vicious murder of the Marikana workers in front of their faces could dissuade the DSM/WASP reformists from their longstanding reactionary view that “police officers are also workers,” along with prison guards and security guards. While denouncing police brutality, the WASP manifesto for the recent elections states that “WASP supports decent wages and conditions—including not having to risk your life on the job—for rank-and-file police officers.” The lessons drawn by many of the Marikana mineworkers, who spoke bitterly about how the cops are now

“dogs” to them, are far beyond the fake-socialist DSM/WASP. *Cops, prison guards and security guards out of the unions!*

Consistent with their touching faith in the bourgeois state, WASP has supported NUMSA taking COSATU to the bourgeois courts to reinstate Zwelinzima Vavi as COSATU general secretary and hailed the court ruling reinstating Vavi as “a victory” for COSATU members (4 April). Soon after this “victory,” Vavi used his regained office to campaign for Jacob Zuma and the rest of the bourgeois ANC/Tripartite Alliance ministers responsible for the Marikana massacre!

We Trotskyists of Spartacist/South Africa oppose taking working-class organizations and leftists to bourgeois courts as a matter of principle. By dragging COSATU into court, the NUMSA leaders helped establish a precedent for direct bourgeois intervention into the affairs of the union. *For the independence of the proletariat from all bourgeois parties and the state! Labor must clean its own house!*

For a Black-Centered Workers Government!

The mining industry, a partnership of the Randlords with U.S. and British imperialists, is the backbone of the South African economy, accounting for more than half of its exports. Through “black empowerment” deals, the bourgeois-nationalist ANC has created a layer of black front men who act as a buffer between the overwhelmingly black African proletariat and the white bourgeoisie. Despite cosmetic changes in the corporate boardrooms, South Africa remains a seething pit of racist rule where blacks are kept at the bottom.

A Spartacist Pamphlet\$1

Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 23

South Africa: Marikana Massacre

The True Face of Neo-Apartheid Capitalism

Measure of 34 striking platinum miners by police in Marikana on 16 August 2012 (inset) did not break the workers' fighting spirit. More than 3,000 miners returned to protest in Marikana on September 5.

Break with the Bourgeois Tripartite Alliance! Forge a Leninist Party!

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Execution...

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Attorney General Eric Holder for a Justice Department “analysis” of problems with capital punishment. As meaningless as such an analysis would be—since almost all executions are carried out by the individual states over which the attorney general has no jurisdiction—Holder’s office made it even weaker, indicating that the review will be limited to how executions are carried out.

Holder, who professes to personally oppose the death penalty, has authorized federal prosecutors to seek it in over 30 cases. Recently, the Justice Department announced it will seek the death penalty for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, accused of the bombing that killed three people at last year’s Boston Marathon. Federal government intervention makes it possible to pursue the execution of Tsarnaev, as Massachusetts state law does not allow capital punishment.

As Marxists, we oppose the death penalty on principle—for the guilty as well as the innocent. We do not accord the state the right to determine who lives and who dies. Our opposition to the death penalty extends as well to China and the other bureaucratically deformed workers states, where execution is a prop for the rule of brittle parasitic bureaucracies.

Capital punishment is the supreme declaration of state authority, the ultimate expression of the monopoly of violence in the hands of this country’s racist capitalist rulers. Fighters for labor’s cause have long been targeted for death by the U.S. state, most famously the Haymarket anarchists, labor organizers who fought for the eight-hour day, in 1887; IWW organizer Joe Hill in 1915; and anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927.

Lockett wasn’t the first on death row to be chemically tortured to death this year. In January, Ohio inmate Dennis McGuire took 26 minutes to die, gasping for air. After that, Lockett sued to stay his execution, demanding the state of Oklahoma reveal the source of the drugs it would use to kill him. Shortly before his execution date, the state’s Supreme Court issued a stay. Governor Mary Fallin decreed that she would ignore the court’s ruling and state legislators moved to impeach the justices, backing the court down. Following Lockett’s state-induced heart attack, Fallin called off the execution of Charles Warner, who had been scheduled to die the same night in the nightcap of a grisly doubleheader. Fallin later ordered a 60-day moratorium on executions.

The European Union’s 2011 ban on exporting drugs for lethal injections has forced the U.S. executioners to seek out secret suppliers and turned men like Lockett into human guinea pigs. Litigation in many states over the use of substitute chemicals put a speed bump in front of the death machine. Now, with the courts giving the green light, the executioners are trying to step up the pace.

Exposure of the cases of innocent men and women sentenced to death has stoked



AP, Oklahoma Dept. of Corrections (inset)
Above: Oklahoma’s death chamber. Inset: Clayton Lockett, tortured to death by the state on April 29.

growing antipathy to capital punishment. Last year, juries meted out 80 death sentences, compared to 315 in 1994. Though 32 states have the death penalty, only nine of them carried out executions in 2013. Eighteen states have abolished the death penalty, most recently Maryland in 2013 and Connecticut in 2012. In February, Washington’s governor Jay Inslee announced that he would issue a reprieve in every death penalty case that crossed his desk.

As American as...Lynching

Several hundred years ago, when the bourgeoisie was a revolutionary class, its representatives opposed medieval cruelty. The frame-up and torture of French Protestant Jean Calas in 1762 for murder, and his subsequent execution on the wheel, led Enlightenment *philosophe* Voltaire to write his famous *On Toleration*, a statement against religious persecution and backwardness.

No European country except Belarus applies the death penalty, and most Latin American countries have abolished it. Russia hasn’t carried out an execution since 1996 and formally declared a moratorium in 1999 (a year in which 98 were executed in the United States). The U.S. and Japan stand out among advanced capitalist countries for their use of the death penalty, which they maintain as part of their criminal codes.

The bourgeoisies of other countries have ample means of state repression. The continued use of the death penalty in the U.S. speaks to the particular depravity of this country’s capitalist rulers. Descending ever deeper into naked state brutality, “civilized” representatives of the American bourgeoisie openly debate how to torture and kill. Six years ago, Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia ranted, “Where does this come from that in the execution of a person who has been convicted of killing people we must choose the least painful method possible? Is that somewhere in our Constitution?” (*International Herald Tribune*, 7 January 2008).

Capital punishment is heavily overlaid with religious concepts of retribution. Its endurance is rooted in the origins of American capitalism—which was built on the backs of black slaves. Slaves were killed with impunity for “crimes” ranging from insolence toward whites to rebellion against the slave masters. It took a bloody

Civil War to smash slavery. The subsequent betrayal of Radical Reconstruction by the Northern capitalists resulted in the denial of basic rights to black people in the South, and the compacting of black people as a race-color caste at the bottom of society throughout the U.S. The post-Reconstruction Jim Crow system was maintained by lynch law terror. More than 3,000 black people were lynched between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the dismantling of Jim Crow. More than two-thirds of those legally lynched nationally between 1930 and 1967 were black people. The death chamber is supplemented by killings of ghetto and barrio youth on the street by cops acting as judge, jury and executioner.

The legacy of slavery can be seen in the dungeons of death row. Of the more than 3,000 men and women awaiting execution, over half are black or Latino. California has the largest death row pop-

proceed from the standpoint of punishing the offender. Such a vindictive penal attitude is fundamentally a religious rather than a materialist conception of social relations.”

Indeed, a humane and rational society may find a need to separate certain dangerous individuals—for the protection of others, as well as the offenders themselves. This would be done without stigma or deprivation and with education, medical care, rehabilitation and the goal of reintegration as a productive member of society, which was the approach of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky that led the October 1917 Russian socialist revolution. The determination that the legal apparatus of a workers state would not be based on retribution found its fullest expression in the 1919 party program, which advocated “a fundamental alteration in the character of punishment, introducing conditional sentences on an extensive scale, applying public censure as a means of punishment, replacing imprisonment by compulsory labor with retention of freedom, and prisons by institutions for training, and establishing the principle of comradely courts.” Even under conditions of extreme hardship, the Bolshevik regime insisted that the working conditions in the prisons be covered by the general labor code that provided trade-union pay rates, food rations and other benefits.

Upon taking power, the Bolsheviks eliminated the death penalty from the legal code. This did not mean that the Bolsheviks flinched from the necessary and extraordinary measures of Red Terror required by the Civil War against imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary forces. But it was only after the Stalinist bureaucracy usurped political power from the proletariat that the old “tortures and torments” denounced by the early Soviet government, including the death penalty, were resurrected.

Capitalism is neither humane nor rational, especially in the U.S. where punishment has increasingly become a spectator



WV Photo
Partisan Defense Committee contingent calls for abolition of racist death penalty at Philadelphia rally for political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, April 2008.

ulation, but capital punishment remains a largely Southern institution. Since 1976, over 73 percent of executions have taken place in the states of the former Confederacy—and 45 percent of those in Texas and Virginia. Currently fighting for his life in Texas is Duane Buck, sentenced to death on the basis of the “expert” opinion of a psychologist that because Buck is black he posed a future danger to society!

The mass struggles of the civil rights movement led to a decade with no executions, beginning with a de facto moratorium in 1967. Five years later, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all existing death penalty laws—not as “cruel and unusual punishment” prohibited by the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution, but as “wanton,” “freakish” and “arbitrary.” The Court directed states seeking to reinstate the death penalty to draft new laws, aiming to give a “democratic” veneer to racist legal lynching. In 1976, the first of these laws was approved by the Supreme Court, opening the sluice gates for executions that have since taken over 1,300 lives.

When capital punishment was reintroduced in the U.S. amid anti-crime hysteria, we noted in “Abolish the Death Penalty!” (WV No. 117, 9 July 1976): “The Marxist attitude toward crime and punishment is that we are against it.... Socialists do not

sport thanks to the plethora of reality shows chronicling prison life. The lust to administer pain and punishment was expressed in the mind-bending 2007 Supreme Court decision prohibiting the execution of an insane person until the prisoner is lucid enough to have a “rational understanding” of the punishment he is about to receive. In this calculus, the torture of Lockett was no aberration—it just went on a little too long.

Prisons in the U.S. are rife with horrors, not least solitary confinement. These dungeons teem with some 2.2 million people—a quarter of the world’s prison population—some 60 percent of whom are black or Latino. This vast, historically ingrained system of racist repression cannot be fundamentally changed through tinkering here and there. Unlike liberals who pose life without parole—i.e., being entombed in prison for life—as an “alternative” to the death penalty, we are equally committed to the abolition of life sentences without parole. Our purpose is to arm the working class with the understanding that the cops, courts and prisons, along with the military, make up the apparatus for the violent repression of the working class and the oppressed in defense of the power and profits of the capitalist rulers. It will take nothing short of proletarian socialist revolution to sweep this state away.■

uniting along class lines. **We demand full citizenship rights for all immigrants!**

The aspirations of the black masses for freedom and equality cannot be fulfilled under capitalism but require workers revolution to overthrow the capitalist state and expropriate the bourgeoisie. As with Lenin, the fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat is what defines us as revolutionaries. We are for a black-centered workers government where those who labor rule, which is the application of Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution to South Africa.

The liberation of the working class requires an internationalist perspective. Our program is for a *socialist federation of Southern Africa* in which the relatively advanced South African economy can be put to use on the basis of rational planning and collectivized ownership of the means of production to raise the living standards of the masses throughout the region. This

must be part of fighting to link up with workers revolutions in the imperialist centers and creating an international planned socialist economy to lift Africa and the rest of the semicolonial world out of poverty and social backwardness.

* * *

The Partisan Defense Committee, the social and legal defense organization associated with the Spartacist League/ U.S., has made a contribution to the AMCU strike fund. We encourage trade unionists and other readers to do likewise. Wire contributions to Standard Bank in the name of the AMCU Association of Mineworkers and Construction Strike Fund, Account Number 332-748-634, Branch Code 052750, Swift Code SBZA ZA JJ. Address: Corner of OR Tambo and Mandela Drive, Saveways Crescent Centre, Witbank, Mpumalanga 1035, South Africa.■

Botched Execution in Oklahoma: Racist Torture Capital Punishment Is State Murder

For 43 minutes of a botched execution, Clayton Lockett writhed in agony before his heart finally gave out. Prison officials had warmed up to the barbaric act by tasing him first thing in the morning on April 29, after Lockett resisted being taken for an X-ray. He was found to have a self-inflicted cut on his arm, but the authorities did not consider the wound serious enough to delay putting an end to his life. At 5:22 p.m., Lockett was restrained on the execution gurney. Struggling to find a suitable vein for the life-ending IVs, the

“doctor” resorted to one in his groin. In order to shield the dozen witnesses to a legal lynching from the obscenity of viewing Lockett’s crotch, officials covered the area with a sheet. At 6:23, the first of three drugs was injected. Over the next 19 minutes, Lockett violently convulsed on the gurney and cried out, “Oh, man!” An officer drew the blinds to hide from view what was taking place. The intravenous line was checked only to reveal that the drugs were not entering the bloodstream but being absorbed into tissue. After nearly

an hour of torture, and ten minutes after the execution was called off, Lockett finally expired.

Condemnation of Lockett’s ordeal was swift and international. A spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said the process could amount to “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment” under international human rights law. The conservative London *Economist* was more blunt, declaring it: “Cruel, Unusual and Reprehensible” (30 April). France’s Foreign Ministry denounced the execution and

called for a moratorium on executions in the U.S.

The Obama administration’s well-oiled hypocrisy machine went into high gear. Reiterating his support to the death penalty, Obama called the gruesome spectacle of Lockett’s execution “deeply disturbing,” adding, “we have seen significant problems—racial bias” and “situations in which there were individuals on death row who later on were discovered to have been innocent.” In what has become a reflex, Obama turned to

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Victory to South African Platinum Miners!

JOHANNESBURG, MAY 13—Some 70,000 members of the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU) have been on strike against the three leading platinum producers in the world—Anglo American Platinum (Amplats), Impala Platinum (Implats) and Lonmin—since January 23. The strike is now the longest in the history of South African mining and has cost the companies almost 16.4 billion rand (\$1.6 billion) in lost revenue. The strikers are demanding a R12,500 (\$1,250) per month entry-level wage, the same wage that strikers at Lonmin were fighting for in August 2012 when 34 of them were gunned down by the cops in Marikana, where hundreds were also arrested.

The 2012 Lonmin strikes won important gains for the workers, including wage increases up to 22 percent and return-to-work bonuses. However, many workers say they never received the wage increase and that amounts equivalent to the bonuses were later deducted from their wages. This scamming by the mine bosses has helped fuel the current strike. Especially after the strikes in 2012 and the killings at Marikana, the platinum miners are widely seen as the most militant sector of the proletariat. A victory in the AMCU strike would be an inspiration for the workers and poor across South Africa and beyond.

In an ominous repeat of the prelude to the Marikana massacre, the companies and the capitalist state are today preparing for massive repression against the strikers. Police reinforcements were sent to the mining area around Rustenburg and army troops were put on standby to help protect strikebreakers and break up the AMCU pickets. In an attempt to provoke a violent confrontation, the mining bosses set a deadline of May 14 for strikers to return to work. Over the head of the union, the companies have appealed directly to the workers—through mass advertising, cell phone messages, traditional tribal leaders and church officials—to abandon the strike. Still, the strike remains solid and most, if not all, of the operations of the three mining giants are shut down.

Bitter Strike in Fourth Month



Reuters

Striking miners at April 29 rally near Lonmin’s Marikana mine, site of police massacre of strikers in August 2012.

AMCU has warned that in the event of retaliatory layoffs the union would stop work at mines across the country.

Responsibility for any state violence against the strikers would lie with the ruling Tripartite Alliance—a nationalist popular front comprised of the bourgeois ANC, the Stalinist-derived South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). *Business Day* reported that Minister of Mineral Resources Susan Shabangu, a former COSATU official, had told the three platinum companies to play hardball with AMCU. Alleging that strikers are “orchestrating violent acts in the mining communities,” the cops have already arrested AMCU members on

trumped-up charges, including attempted murder and assault. Spartacist/South Africa, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), demands: ***Hands off AMCU! Drop all the charges against striking workers!***

The three platinum conglomerates had prepared for a lengthy strike by stockpiling enough platinum to last eight weeks, which they thought would be long enough to starve the workers into submission. The European automakers—major consumers of the metal—have their platinum supplies locked in until next year, according to industry sources. The strikers are waging this fight at a huge personal cost. Hounded by loan sharks, many workers have had their belongings repossessed. Their chil-

dren no longer attend school because they cannot pay for transport and other requirements. Some strikers get small amounts of money from their parents’ meagre pensions to buy food.

A significant number of the strikers are migrants from rural areas. Many have retreated to their impoverished homes in places like the Eastern Cape to wait things out, and some have been forced to sell part of their families’ meager stock of cattle. This points to the continuity of the migrant labor system, from the origins of South African mining during the British colonial period through white-supremacist apartheid up to the present day. As soon as black workers stop producing profits for the white capitalist class because of old age, injury or sickness, they are pushed into rural hellholes where they face slow death.

AMCU is appealing for unions in countries like Brazil and the U.S. to refuse to handle platinum from South Africa. It also has established a strike fund to help their members sustain themselves and has appealed to all those sympathetic to their cause, locally and internationally, to contribute. A crucial ally in any fight against the mine owners is the working class in the U.S. and Britain, where most of these mining companies are headquartered, as well as in Germany and other countries where platinum is used in auto production. Solidarity with AMCU strikers is an elementary and necessary act of self-defense by organized labor. ***An injury to one is an injury to all!***

COSATU Labor Tops’ Treachery

Rather than siding with their class brothers in struggle, the leaders of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) and COSATU have been openly siding with the mine bosses and the government to try to kill the strike, including by instructing their members to scab. The COSATU tops joined the bourgeois media chorus calling for an early end to the strike. A March 25 statement proclaimed: “Platinum strike too long for workers.” Echoing the claims by the mine bosses and capitalist media that

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