

U.S. Imperialists Open Diplomatic Relations

Defend the Gains of the Cuban Revolution!



Reuters

Health care and education are free to all Cubans, despite decades-long U.S. embargo. Havana school (above), 2012, and hospital (right), 2007.



Corbis

For over half a century, the U.S. imperialists have worked relentlessly to overthrow the Cuban Revolution and restore the rule of capital on the island: from the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to repeated attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro, from terrorist provocations by the CIA and Cuban exile *gusanos* to acts of sabotage. Now the Obama White House has announced that it wants to “chart a new course” with Cuba by restoring diplomatic relations, that is, pursue what it considers a more effective means to achieve the same strategic goal. It was after the Castro government expropriated the capitalist class on the island in 1960, bringing enormous gains for the Cuban masses, that Washington cut off relations with Havana.

What is proposed is relatively modest: relaxing various travel restrictions, authorizing some commercial sales and exports and facilitating banking transactions between the two countries. The crippling U.S. embargo, an act of economic warfare that has been strangling the Cuban workers and peasants for decades, is loosened but not dismantled. Obama claims that without approval from Congress he cannot overturn the Torricelli and Helms-Burton acts. These acts tightened the embargo following the 1991-92 collapse of the Soviet Union, which put an end to crucial economic and military aid for Cuba. Signed under the Democrat Clinton, they were intended to “wreak havoc on the island.” *Down with the embargo!*

From the standpoint of revolutionary Marxists, Cuba has the right to enter into diplomatic and economic relations with any capitalist country it chooses, not least as a means to attempt to overcome the very real problem of its economic stagnation.

Increased commercial and financial ties to U.S. corporations would not amount to the creeping restoration of capitalism. However, they bring the very real danger of strengthening the internal forces for capitalist counterrevolution on the island.

Meanwhile, the presence of the U.S. naval base and detention-torture center

against Cuba by infiltrating and monitoring counterrevolutionary exile groups in Florida, should be celebrated. In exchange, Cuban president Raúl Castro gave up two American spies: former Cuban intelligence officer Rolando Sarraff Trujillo—who facilitated the frame-up arrest of the Cuban Five—and USAID contractor Alan

which capitalism has been overthrown. Yet it has been bureaucratically deformed from its inception, i.e., political power is monopolized by a parasitic ruling bureaucracy. The material basis for this bureaucracy is the administration of the collectivized economy under conditions of scarcity.

The elimination of production for profit, together with the establishment of centralized planning and the state monopoly of foreign trade and investment, allowed Cuba to provide jobs, housing and education for everyone. To this day, Cuba has one of the highest literacy rates in the world and a lower infant mortality rate than the U.S. or the European Union. Its renowned

health care system, with more doctors per capita than anywhere else, provides free medical care of higher quality than even many advanced countries. Cuban doctors have saved lives worldwide and are regularly dispatched to help the victims of disasters, including the Ebola crisis in Africa. It is a testament to the superiority

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For Workers Political Revolution in Cuba!

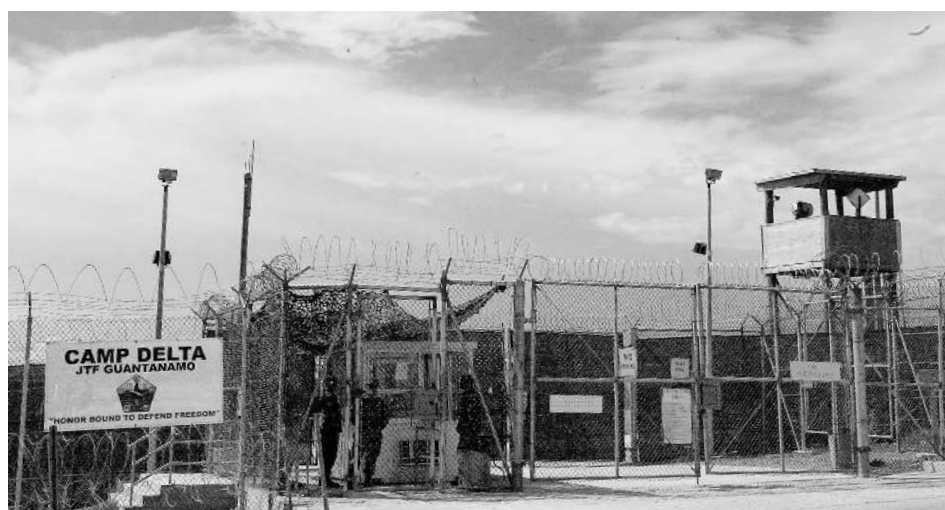
at Guantánamo Bay—where around 130 prisoners of the U.S. “war on terror” are held—is a reminder that Cuba is still in the imperialists’ military crosshairs. Despite the release of dozens of prisoners last year, Obama is not about to shut down this dungeon, much less return Guantánamo to Cuba. *U.S. out of Guantánamo Bay now!*

The thaw in relations between the two countries came after over a year of negotiations, hosted by the Canadian government and pushed by the Vatican. Like prior CEOs of U.S. imperialism, Obama has openly revanchist goals for Cuba. Under Obama’s watch, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—notorious for working alongside the CIA since the early 1960s—has hatched several counterrevolutionary schemes to sow pro-imperialist dissent on the island. One recent plot involved infiltrating Cuba’s underground hip-hop groups in an attempt to spark a youth movement against the regime.

As part of the recent agreement, Obama released the three members of the Cuban Five who remained in custody after their conviction in 2001 on bogus charges of espionage and murder conspiracy. Freedom for the Cuban Five, men who heroically attempted to prevent terrorist acts

Gross, who was dispatched to smuggle spy-grade computer and satellite communications gear into Cuba.

The International Communist League has always fought for the unconditional military defense of Cuba against the threat of capitalist counterrevolution and imperialist attack. This flows from our understanding that Cuba is a workers state in



Franco/NY Times

Camp Delta at the U.S. Naval Station, Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, notorious for torture of “enemy combatants.” U.S. military base is dagger aimed at deformed workers state.



“The Strikebreakers Go on Strike... Police Militancy vs. Labor”

The article excerpted below explains the reactionary and anti-labor nature of the 1971 New York City patrolmen's strike and of the police themselves. The article is reprinted from *Workers' Action* (No. 8, April-May 1971), precursor of *Workers Vanguard*.

* * *

On the night shift of January 14, New York City patrolmen left their beats to begin a six-day work stoppage, the first such action by the police in the history of the city. The action, unauthorized by the leadership of the PBA [Patrolmen's Benevolent Association], was precipitated by a court ruling effectively barring payment of \$2700 in retroactive pay claimed by the PBA as part of a parity arrangement based on a 3 to 3.5 pay ratio of patrolmen to police officers. During the course of the action Police Commissioner Murphy backed up by Mayor Lindsay threatened to call in National Guard to maintain “law and order.” Following their return to work, a subsequent ruling in favor of the PBA claim resulted in a total \$3300 payment in retroactive salaries, bringing the base pay of the cops up to a whopping \$12,150 per year.

The police action has resurrected some serious questions for trade union militants and, significantly, has smoked out some extremely dangerous attitudes within the trade union movement and even among a couple of ostensibly left organizations, regarding the relationship of labor militants to the police action and police in general. What was the real nature of the New York police action? What are “militant policemen”? Are police a part of the working class? How do we define class divisions in society? What are the main features of a capitalist state? Should labor have supported the police action? Is [the PBA] a “union”? The answers to these questions have assumed critical importance because of the recent intensification of struggles by public employees at all levels. In this situation an incorrect understanding of the police and their social role can have immediate disastrous consequences for the trade union movement. It also calls seriously into question the credibility of any political organization claiming to support workers' struggles that could be so wrong on such a basic question, one going to the very heart of the life and death struggle between Labor and Capital.[...]

STRIKE WAVE INTENSIFIES

It has been a long time in this country since we have seen large scale clashes



Boenzi/NY Times



WV Photo

Top: NYC cop strike, January 1971. Bottom: NYPD officers attempt to break up hospital workers' demonstration against budget cuts, July 1975.

between organized labor and capital such as the strike wave that has been building force over the last four years. During the 1950's, following the strike waves after World War II, whole layers of rank and file leaders and militants were purged from the unions along with the “reds,” in the name of patriotism and anti-communism and as a result there was a sharp break in the continuity of tradition and class consciousness in the working class movement. Under these conditions, and during long periods with very little strike activity the real social role of the police sometimes becomes obscured. Add to this, temporary antagonisms between various strata of the population—white vs. black, workers vs. students, one ethnic group against another or any combination of these—and you have a fairly

widespread (and often racist) attitude among many workers that the police are their “friends.” A couple of violent strikes tends to sort this out, but in the meantime many workers are content to see the cops get the other “real troublemakers.” For instance, the unity between patriotic New York construction workers and the police against “long-haired” anti-war students witnessed last spring will come to an end when the same construction workers go on strike to protect their wages from [U.S. president Richard] Nixon's attack and their “friends” the police come along to beat their heads and break their strike.[...]

The police work stoppage was fundamentally an *anti-labor* action. It was a *political* strike by a police force that has become dangerously conscious of its social role as the armed defenders of the social system of big business and the “law and order” that protects and maintains the power and privilege of this ruling class. It reflects the general motion of the working class only in a *negative* sense, for the motion of the police is the symmetrical, polar opposite of that in the working class and in fact more resembles the recent re-emergence of fascist organizations attacking striking workers in France and Italy, or vigilante bands of police terrorists in Guatemala and other Latin American countries that have been assassinating labor leaders and members of revolutionary workers groups. The New York police are sick and tired of “having one arm tied behind their back” in dealing with militant blacks and Puerto Ricans, anti-war activists, trade union militants, and [Mayor John] Lindsay himself, whom they regard as some kind of “communist.” In short, they and their “employers” are

anticipating and preparing for a *counter attack* against organized labor.[...]

THE PBA'S PAST

The New York cops began to organize in 1963 when the PBA went over from being a paper organization to the “bargaining agent” for all city cops with parallel organizations among transit cops and others. The PBA is not a union—it is basically a right-wing paramilitary political organization with a number of reported overlaps in the John Birch Society and Minutemen-type organizations, with an annual income of \$10 million a year from dues and pension contributions. In the last years of the Wagner administration the cops were given an “open season” on blacks and Puerto Ricans. The phony “Blood Brothers” panic, the 1964 Harlem police riots, the series of “accidental” killings by the cops in 1964-65 (paralleling the current rash of “suicides” in City jails) were all a part of this. During this period the cops acquired a new consciousness as the City's armed enforcers of racism—and they liked it! When Lindsay became mayor in 1966 and broke up the old police hierarchy, known as the “Irish mafia,” that controlled the Police Department and later attempted to set up a token Civilian Review Board to play “soft cop” the police organized politically, joining forces with the Conservative Party, the John Birch Society and an assortment of racist and right-wing groups and *defeated* that timid proposal. Was that picket line of 10,000 armed, off-duty police around City Hall chanting “Lindsay is a commie” and “No Civilian Review Board” a “militant action” also? The same John J. Cassese that was a key figure in organizing the New York PBA (until he left under the cloud of an alleged embezzling scandal in 1969) is now attempting to form a *national* organization of police called the Brotherhood of Police Officers (BPO), a move we regard as extremely dangerous, posing the spectre of a centrally directed political organization. Is that a “union” that these champions of police “militancy” would have the trade unions support when it tries a national strike to protest the refusal of the AFL-CIO to charter it? (The BPO's first attempt at such a charter was recently scuttled by [AFSCME union head] Jerry Wurf who regarded it simply as an attempted “raid” on AFSCME's cop members.)

EVEN GEORGE MEANY...

Are cops then workers and a part of the labor movement? Even [AFL-CIO president] George Meany said “no” to that some years back when the New York PBA first applied for AFL-CIO recognition. Since then he's moved so far right he sees eye to eye with the cops on most questions. But he has a lot of company these days, and some pretty strange bed-fellows at that. Well, how *do* we figure out who are workers and who aren't? In a class society like ours the main social divisions are based upon the difference in the relationship of persons to the process of production. The way in which people enter into economic relations with each other for the purpose of production decide the social relations between them, that is, decides which *class* each person belongs to and the ensuing class relations. This division gives us one class, the capitalists, composed of those who own all the means of production and exchange—factories, *continued on page 10*

WORKERS VANGUARD

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Dimwit Film Fans the Flames

U.S. Provocations Target North Korea

Juvenile, witless, downright dumb, *The Interview* might be dismissed as just another piece of Hollywood trash destined to forever clog up cable channels. What cannot be dismissed is the U.S. rulers' sinister use of the movie to further demonize and threaten North Korea, the target of imperialist war, relentless military pressure and starvation economic sanctions.

Everyone knows the plot of the movie, which was produced by Japanese-owned Sony: a CIA plan to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, last seen onscreen with his head exploding. Less widely known is Washington's role in goosing the film along. A rough cut was vetted by State Department personnel; one of the film's consultants was Bruce Bennett, a senior analyst at the RAND Corporation, a military think tank, who is known for his view that the way to bring down the Pyongyang regime is to assassinate its leadership.

In June, Pyongyang vigorously protested the planned film, as would any government whose leader was shown being blown away. But for U.S. imperialism, North Korea is not just any country. As with China, Cuba, Vietnam and Laos today, it is one of those parts of the planet where social revolution overturned capitalist property relations and won liberation from imperialist bondage—an outcome that the capitalist powers are intent on reversing by any means necessary.

The Obama administration seized on a November cyberattack against Sony to accuse the Kim regime of trying to prevent *The Interview* from being seen, concocting a phony “free speech” issue when Sony initially decided to pull the film from distribution. The White House leveled its charge despite the fact that the group that took responsibility for hacking Sony, Guardians of Peace, made no mention of the film when it e-mailed company executives on November 21 demanding monetary compensation. Only after Western media began linking the cyberattack to the film did the hackers denounce it as a “movie of terrorism.” Particularly embarrassing to Sony executives was the hackers' release of e-mails containing racially loaded comments about Obama, insults of various movie stars and other dirt.

On December 19, Obama pronounced North Korea guilty for the cyberattack just hours after the FBI publicly presented its case against Pyongyang, which has denied any involvement. Numerous Internet security experts have expressed skepticism about the FBI's purported evidence, calling it extremely improbable. But this is of little concern to the crazed rulers of U.S. imperialism, who have long cast the North Korean bureaucratically deformed workers state as an international outlaw and pariah. The North Korean government answered Obama's charges by offering to conduct a joint investigation with the U.S., stating that it could prove its innocence “without resorting to torture, as what the C.I.A. does.” The White House dismissed the offer outright.

Following up his accusation, Obama directed the military's Cyber Command, led by the head of the NSA, to develop “a range of offensive options” to go after North Korea. Three days after his public accusation, North Korea's woefully tenuous Internet connections went down, as they did again a day or so later. The White House has also threatened to put the country back on the list of those supposedly sponsoring terrorism—a recipe for more imperialist skullduggery. Adding to the squeeze on a society already suffering from what may well be the world's heaviest economic sanctions, the Obama administration on January 2 announced

further sanctions against high-ranking individuals and government agencies in North Korea.

As Trotskyists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of North Korea and all the remaining deformed workers states against imperialism and internal counterrevolution. The overturn of capitalist rule in North Korea, carried out with the military backing of the Soviet Army following Japan's defeat in World War II, was a historic victory for the Korean masses and for the workers of the world. Our military defense of North Korea is



National Archives

Seoul, 1950. U.S. imperialists slaughtered some three million people in Korean War, reduced peninsula to rubble.

a defense of the expropriation of capitalism, a necessary part of our program for international proletarian revolution. It does not entail the least political support for the ruling Stalinist bureaucracy, a deeply nationalist, weirdly nepotistic and brutally repressive regime.

The bourgeois media has made much of the North Korean government's vile racist slur against Obama over *The Interview* affair. Calling the black president a “monkey” was a glaring demonstration of the Pyongyang Stalinists' perversely retrograde worldview. Committed to “socialism” only in its half of the Korean Peninsula, the Kim regime disdains the class struggles of the international proletariat and calls for “peaceful reunification” of Korea, a setup for reunification on a capitalist basis. It is the task of the North Korean workers to oust the bureaucratic regime and create a government of workers and peasants councils committed to proletarian internationalism and a program for the revolutionary reunification of Korea: for proletarian political revolution in the North and socialist revolution in the South.

The opening scene of *The Interview* features a North Korean girl singing at an official event, a ballistic missile test-launch supposedly demonstrating the country's ability to nuke the western U.S. She sings about wanting “the United States to explode in a ball of fiery hell” and for Americans to “be forced to starve and beg, and be ravaged by disease.... May they drown in their own blood and feces.” There is great, unintended irony in this scene, which describes to a tee the death, destruction and threat of nuclear annihilation meted out by U.S. imperialism during the 1950-53 Korean War. Under the aegis of its tool, the United Nations, the U.S. military invaded the Korean Peninsula in the summer of 1950, after North Korean armed forces entered the South and unleashed a powerful social revolution that came within a hair's breadth of liberating the area from the imperialists and their puppets.

American professor Bruce Cumings recounts in *The Korean War: A History* (Modern Library, 2010):

“We carpet-bombed the North for three years with next to no concern for civilian casualties.... The air assaults ranged from the widespread and continual use of firebombing to threats to use nuclear and chemical weapons, finally to the destruction of huge North Korean dams in the last stages of the war.”

Cumings notes that “oceans” of napalm were dropped on Korea, with even more devastating effect than in Vietnam, which was less urbanized than Korea. In

due mainly to the Soviet Union's possession of these weapons. Today, possessing nuclear weapons and adequate delivery systems is necessary to the defense of North Korea as well as China, providing a crucial deterrent factor against imperialist attack.

The 1953 armistice hardened the division between the North Korean deformed workers state and the capitalist South. To this day, the U.S. keeps nearly 30,000 troops in South Korea. We demand: All U.S. troops and bases out of South Korea! Drop all sanctions against North Korea!

In the two decades after the Korean War, North Korea's collectivized economy, aided by the Soviet Union, brought modern industry, infrastructure and relative prosperity. However, the counter-revolutionary destruction of the USSR in 1991-92 cut off the North from its main economic partners while the imperialists maintained their embargo. Despite Chinese trade and aid since that time, North Korea has been plagued by widespread malnutrition, lack of access to resources and industrial decay.

Constantly menaced by the U.S. and its South Korean underlings, North Korea faces a further threat from the ramped-up U.S.-Japan military alliance, which principally targets China. For their part, the Beijing Stalinists have undermined the defense of both the Chinese and North Korean workers states by accommodating imperialist demands on Pyongyang to give up its nuclear deterrent, voting repeatedly in the UN for sanctions against North Korea. The UN is now increasing the pressure by debating whether North Korea's leaders should be tried for “human rights” violations. The CIA torture exposed in the U.S. Senate's highly expurgated report will surely not be cause for a punitive UN sanction.

We'll say one thing for *The Interview*. In its own pitiful way, this offering from Tinseltown, on track to be a giant money-maker for Sony, gives a measure of the utter decay of culture and education in the citadel of world imperialism. In calling on the working class in the U.S., Japan and internationally to oppose imperialist machinations against North Korea, we are driven by the need to build the multiracial workers party that can lead the struggle to smash capitalist imperialism from within, through socialist revolution. ■

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Delphine Fawandu

Barack Obama’s decision to open diplomatic relations with Havana has New Jersey governor Chris Christie howling for the head of Assata Shakur (formerly known as Joanne Chesimard). The victim of a racist frame-up for the 1973 death of a New Jersey state trooper, Shakur escaped prison and fled to Cuba, where she has lived for 30 years since Fidel Castro granted her political asylum. The former Black Panther Party member wrote in a 1998 open letter: “I am a 20th century escaped slave. Because of gov-

— U.S. Black Militant in Exile in Cuba — Hands Off Assata Shakur!

ernment persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism and violence that dominate the US government’s policy towards people of color.”

Christie, who has his own presidential aspirations, sent a letter to the White House demanding Shakur’s extradition to the U.S. so that she might rot away in one of New Jersey’s dungeons. Cuba, though, has no intention of returning her, with its head of North American affairs stating in an interview: “Every nation has the sovereign and legitimate rights to grant political asylum to people it considers to have been persecuted.” In response, the New Jersey governor ranted that the Cubans are “thugs” and Shakur’s asylum is “unacceptable.”

The crusade to bring Shakur to “justice” casts a sharp light on how the U.S. bourgeoisie’s decades-long vendetta against black militants of the 1960s and ’70s intersects its unflagging determination to overthrow the Cuban Revolution. Dozens of radical black activists and Puerto Rican nationalists have been welcomed with open arms by the Cuban deformed workers state, infuriating the U.S. imperialists. A case in point was Robert F. Williams, who as head of the NAACP branch in Monroe, North Carolina, was hounded by

the FBI for advocating armed self-defense against race-terror.

In their drive to restore capitalism to the island, the U.S. rulers have trained and later granted asylum to a host of counterrevolutionary scum, foremost among them Luis Posada Carriles, who had a hand in everything from the Bay of Pigs invasion to the dirty war by CIA-backed “contras” against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Wanted in Cuba for engineering the 1976 bombing of a Cubana airliner that killed 73 people as well as for a 1997 hotel bombing in that country, Posada freely roams the streets of Miami today with his reactionary *gusano* cohorts.

Christie is far from alone in pursuing the racist political witchhunt of Shakur. In fact, two years ago the administration of the first black president declared 65-year-old Shakur one of the world’s most wanted “terrorists” and doubled the bounty on her to \$2 million. In the article “FBI’s Racist ‘Anti-Terror’ Vendetta Against Assata Shakur” (WV No. 1024, 17 May 2013), we explained that these steps had “a dual purpose: to settle the score against those who fought for black freedom over 40 years ago and to warn that radical activity would be treated as ‘domestic terrorism.’”

Shakur’s case shows what American

justice is all about. In May 1973, Shakur and two other former Black Panthers, Zayd Malik Shakur and Sundiata Acoli—then members of the Black Liberation Army—were stopped by two troopers on the New Jersey Turnpike, supposedly for a “faulty taillight.” One of the troopers shot and killed Zayd Shakur, while the other trooper was shot in the cross-fire with a bullet from a police revolver. Assata was shot twice, once in the back while her hands were up in the air. Gunpowder residue testing proved she had not fired a gun, but she was locked up in a maximum-security prison after an all-white jury convicted her on charges of killing the trooper—and her companion.

For the American rulers who want her dead or behind bars, Shakur’s real crime is her continued defiance of this racist capitalist system. The FBI’s J. Edgar Hoover vowed in 1968: “The Negro youth and moderate[s] must be made to understand that if they succumb to revolutionary teachings, they will be dead revolutionaries.” We Marxists, who fight for black liberation through workers socialist revolution, vigorously defended the Panthers and others against the capitalist state’s murderous repression, despite our programmatic differences with black nationalism. ***Hands off Assata Shakur!*** ■

Cuba...

(continued from page 1)

of a collectivized economy that a tiny, relatively impoverished island has survived this long under crippling sanctions and military provocations by the U.S. behemoth just 90 miles from its shore.

In his December 20 speech to the Cuban National Assembly announcing the U.S.-Cuba rapprochement, Raúl Castro warned against resorting to “shock therapies” or speeding up privatization to revive that country’s stagnant economy, which he said would equate to “laying down the flags of socialism.” But socialism is a classless, egalitarian society of material abundance on an international scale. An isolated workers state is subject to enormous pressures from the surrounding capitalist world, pressures that undermine and will eventually destroy it. Cuba’s fate and its advance towards socialism are bound up with the struggle for proletarian power throughout Latin America and the rest of the world, especially in the U.S.

The politics of the Castroite bureaucracy in Havana have from the beginning proved an obstacle to this perspective. The Cuban regime, following in the footsteps of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the former Soviet Union, is wedded to the nationalist dogma of building “socialism in one country.” This has meant *opposing* the possibilities for revolution outside the island. In the early 1970s, Fidel Castro embraced Chile’s popular-front government headed by Salvador Allende, whose purpose was to head off the threat of workers revolution and politically disarm the militant proletariat, paving the way for Pinochet’s bloody military coup. A decade later, after the petty-bourgeois Nicaraguan Sandinistas had overthrown the oppressive Somoza dictatorship, shattering the capitalist state, Fidel admonished them not to follow the Cuban road by expropriating the bourgeoisie. The Castroites have always promoted bourgeois-nationalist regimes, including their glorification of the late Venezuelan populist strongman Hugo Chávez as a supposed revolutionary.

Thus, defense of the Cuban revolution is directly linked to the Trotskyist call for *proletarian political revolution* to oust the Castro bureaucracy and to place the working class in power, establishing a regime based on workers democracy and revolu-



Reuters

The Cuban Five celebrate their freedom at concert in Havana, December 20.

tionary internationalism. This requires the forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party to mobilize the Cuban working masses in struggle.

Imperialist Depredations and “Market Reforms”

The relaxing of restrictions on Cuba predictably provoked ire from the snake pit of anti-Communist Cuban exiles and their creatures, like Florida senator Marco Rubio. But it is being celebrated by a large sector of the bourgeoisie, including the bosses’ Chamber of Commerce, and capitalist media mouthpieces. In recent months, the *New York Times* has repeatedly called for lifting the embargo. Viewing belligerent U.S. policy as counterproductive and outdated, an opinion piece in *Forbes* (16 January 2013) noted: “A perpetual embargo on a developing nation that is moving towards reform makes little sense, especially when America’s allies are openly hostile to the embargo. It keeps a broader discussion about smart reform in Cuba from gaining life, and it makes no economic sense.”

The Obama administration proclaims its desire for “a democratic, prosperous and stable” Cuba, by which it means returning Cuba to its neocolonial status through the restoration of capitalism, bringing profitable investment for the U.S. rulers based on low-wage labor,

and installing a docile political regime. European and Canadian capitalists have been able to move into the Cuban market through joint ventures and aim to flood the country with cheap imports. Several Fortune 500 corporations, including Caterpillar, Colgate-Palmolive and Pepsico, fear ceding the market to competitors.

The stakes are high: ultimately either the only socialized economy in Latin America will prevail through the extension of the revolution internationally, or capitalist counterrevolution will convert Cuba back to the U.S. bourgeoisie’s playground. In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), revolutionary Marxist leader Leon Trotsky described the situation confronting the Soviet degenerated workers state, that is, its encirclement by more technologically and industrially advanced capitalist economies. Trotsky wrote: “The question, Who shall prevail—not only as a military, but still more as an economic question—confronts the Soviet Union on a world scale. Military intervention is a danger. The intervention of cheap commodities in the baggage trains of capitalist armies would be incomparably more dangerous.” Such an observation is relevant to the perils Cuba faces today.

For 30 years, Cuba benefited from heavy Soviet subsidies. In the last decade, it has heavily relied on capitalist Venezuela as its main trading partner, which

has supplied Cuba with cheap oil. But this situation is precarious, with Venezuela itself suffering a grave crisis amid the collapse of world oil prices, racked by inflation and recently hit with additional vindictive U.S. sanctions.

Cuba has never fully recovered from the severe crisis that followed the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union. Since the early ’90s, dubbed the “Special Period,” the Cuban bureaucracy has opened the country to imperialist economic penetration, turning over sectors of the collectivized economy to small-scale private enterprise through “market reforms.” This and other policies, like encouraging self-employment in the service sector and granting wider autonomy for state-owned companies, have increased inequality on the island. Cuban blacks, who saw tremendous gains from the revolution, have been hit particularly hard, as they are less likely to have access to hard currency, either through remittances from abroad or by filling jobs in the tourist sector.

Cuba today has substantial imperialist investment and is angling for more. Thirty miles from Havana in the deep-water Port of Mariel, the Cuban government is allowing the construction of a special “free trade” economic zone, intended to accommodate the world’s largest cargo

Marxist Bulletin 8

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ships. Brazil has already poured nearly a billion dollars into the project. With the prospect of renewed trade with the U.S. now posed, we repeat our warning that such a development “underlines the importance of [Cuba’s] state monopoly of foreign trade—i.e., strict government control of imports and exports” (“Cuba: Economic Crisis and ‘Market Reforms,’” WV No. 986, 16 September 2011).

The Cuban regime has reestablished ties with and promoted the reactionary Catholic church on the island, a potential breeding ground for capitalist counterrevolution. Pope Francis was applauded by both Obama and Castro for his role in the agreement. This Jesuit pope has offered the Vatican a bit of a face-lift by proposing to make the church more inclusive (while still staunchly opposing abortion and the ordination of women) and preaching against the “tyranny” of capitalism, but has no less sinister intentions than his predecessors.

The Vatican is notorious for propping up Latin American military dictatorships and for promoting capitalist restoration under the guise of supposed free elections and “democratic” reforms. Cuban Cardinal Jaime Ortega—confined to a detention camp in the early years of the revolution when the domination of the Catholic church was broken—is an outspoken promoter of such “reforms” on the island, as is Pope Francis. In 1998, Fidel enthusiastically welcomed Pope John Paul II, and in 2012 Pope Benedict XVI. Throughout the country, photos and monuments commemorate the meet-

Havana: Raúl Castro with Pope Benedict, March 2012. Committed to “peaceful coexistence” with the imperialist world, Cuban bureaucracy cultivates friendly relations with reactionary Catholic church.



Reuters

rule, we wrote in the Spartacist League’s 1966 *Declaration of Principles* adopted at our Founding Conference:

“Movements of this sort can under certain conditions, i.e., the extreme disorganization of the capitalist class in the colonial country and the absence of the working class contending in its own right for social power, smash capitalist property relations; however, they cannot bring the working class to *political* power. Rather, they create bureaucratic anti-working-class regimes which suppress any further development of these revolutions towards socialism.”

—“Basic Documents of the Spartacist League,” *Marxist Bulletin* No. 9

This revolution would not have survived without the Soviet Union providing a mil-

whose interests can only be preserved by repression.”

In fact, the bureaucratic caste headed by the Castros has always excluded the working class from political power, using repression and the ideology of nationalism to keep the Cuban workers and peasants atomized and politically passive. The Castro regime imprisons not only dissidents who actively collaborate with U.S. imperialism, but metes out repression to pro-socialist opponents, including militants like the Trotskyists in the 1960s. This illustrates the inherently contradictory nature of the Stalinist bureaucratic caste, which balances between the imperialist bourgeoisie on the one hand and the working class on the other.

Mackler bends over backward to lionize the “Castro team” as the great gatekeepers of socialism. He praises the bureaucracy’s market reforms—which he describes as “within the context of maintaining its socialist ideals, aimed at improving the efficiency of the Cuban economy”—and absurdly crows that such reforms were “presented for discussion, debate and modification” to “millions of Cubans” before being implemented.

Market-oriented measures are an attempt to respond to economic stagnation within the framework of Stalinist bureaucratic control of the economy. As we wrote in the article “For Central Planning Through Soviet Democracy” (WV No. 454, 3 June 1988):

“Economic planning...can be effective only when the workers, technical intelligentsia and managers identify themselves with the government which issues the plans....

“Within the framework of Stalinism, there is thus an inherent tendency to replace centralized planning and management with market mechanisms. Since managers and workers cannot be subject to the discipline of soviet democracy (workers councils), increasingly the bureaucracy sees subjecting the economic actors to the discipline of market competition as the only answer to economic inefficiency.”

Workers councils are not simply other “forms” of proletarian rule, but essential for the rational operation of a planned, socialized economy.

Mackler also claims that Cuba’s “humanitarian efforts” abroad testify to its “ongoing revolutionary and socialist

orientation.” Many of Cuba’s international interventions have indeed been heroic, most notably when the country dispatched thousands of troops to Africa in the 1970s to defend Angola’s newly won independence from Portugal against reactionary local forces backed by U.S. imperialism and apartheid South Africa. But the objective of the Cuban Stalinists was never to assist in the overthrow of capitalism in Africa; their intervention was an expression of their political support to the bourgeois Angolan nationalists alongside whom they fought. Even under the gun of the U.S., Fidel Castro’s appetite was always for “détente” via a “progressive” wing of American imperialism—i.e., the Democratic Party.

While fake Trotskyists like SA lavish praise on the Cuban Stalinist bureaucrats, they join in the imperialists’ anti-Communist crusades for “democracy” elsewhere. SA allied with the worst enemies of the Cuban Revolution by championing capitalist-restorationist forces mobilized against the Soviet degenerated workers state in the 1980s, including Pope John Paul II’s favorite “union,” counter-revolutionary Polish Solidarność.

Other pseudo-socialists oppose the Castro regime from the standpoint of virulent anti-Communist hostility to the Cuban workers state itself. Such is the case with the International Socialist Organization (ISO) in the U.S., estranged cousins of Tony Cliff’s international tendency. The Cliffites are known for having written off Cuba, together with China and the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, as “state capitalist regimes” that “have nothing to do with socialism.”

Writing in the journal *Jacobin* (December 22), Samuel Farber, a regular contributor to the ISO’s press, hailed the resumption of relations with the U.S. as a “major gain for the Cuban people.” According to Farber, who must take his cues from the U.S. State Department, that agreement “can improve the standard of living of Cubans and help to liberalize, although not necessarily democratize, the conditions of their political oppression and economic exploitation.” For Farber, Cuba is just another state based on capitalist “exploitation,” but differing from the U.S. in its lack of “democracy.”

Revolutionaries in the U.S. have a special duty to defend Cuba against capitalist restoration and rapacious American imperialism. This cannot be reduced to the question of preserving the unique culture of Cuba or of simply blocking the incursions of imperialist monopolies on the island. The future of the Cuban masses—tied to the liberation of the hundreds of millions of toilers across Latin America and linked to the struggle to emancipate the exploited and oppressed in the U.S. belly of the beast—is a class question. We fight to forge a revolutionary workers party in the U.S. as a section of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International. Such a party would imbue in the multiracial American working class the understanding that defense of the Cuban Revolution is an integral part of its own fight against the U.S. capitalist rulers and for world socialist revolution. ■



Reuters

Miami: Counterrevolutionary gusanos denounce the opening of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba, December 17.

ing between Castro and John Paul, the patron of counterrevolution who worked tirelessly to restore capitalism in the East European deformed workers states, especially his native Poland.

Defending Cuba at the Crossroads

The guerrilla forces that marched into Havana under Fidel Castro’s leadership in 1959 were a politically heterogeneous petty-bourgeois formation. Their victory brought not only the downfall of the hated Batista regime but also shattered the old bourgeois state apparatus. The new government implemented a series of liberal reforms. But the land redistribution and measures taken against Batista’s former police torturers scared Castro’s own bourgeois supporters, who began to flee to Miami. These moves also alarmed Washington, which undertook punitive action, compelling Castro to sign a trade agreement with the Soviet Union. The refusal by imperialist-owned refineries to process Soviet crude oil provoked Cuba into nationalizing U.S.-owned properties, followed by the nationalization of all banks and businesses in October 1960, which liquidated the Cuban bourgeoisie as a class. Today, corporations including United Fruit, Standard Oil and Texaco are salivating over the prospect of extorting compensation for the nationalizations half a century ago.

The best that could come of the Cuban Revolution in the absence of the working class taking power under the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party was the creation of a deformed workers state. Explaining how a peasant-based guerrilla movement was able to overturn capitalist

itary counterweight to imperialism and an economic lifeline for the Cuban economy. Today, with no equivalent lifeline, the historical opening that allowed petty-bourgeois forces to create a deformed workers state has closed.

The fight to defend and extend the Cuban Revolution has been a hallmark of our tendency from its inception as the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), a minority inside the U.S. Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The SWP majority equated the Castro regime with the revolutionary Bolshevik government of Lenin and Trotsky. In so doing, the SWP majority leaders explicitly rejected both the necessity of a Leninist-Trotskyist party to provide revolutionary leadership and the centrality of the proletariat in the fight for socialist revolution.

Having despaired of that perspective, the SWP enthused uncritically over the Castro bureaucracy. In January 1961, the SWP adopted Joseph Hansen’s “Theses on the Cuban Revolution,” which declared that Cuba had “entered the transitional phase of a workers state, although one lacking as yet the forms of democratic proletarian rule.”

More than half a century later, our Trotskyist analysis and program has stood the test of time. Yesterday’s cheerleaders for the Cuban bureaucracy have gotten older but not the least bit wiser. In a 23 December article posted on counterpunch.org, Jeff Mackler, chief honcho for Socialist Action (SA), an offshoot of the reformist SWP, channels Hansen’s ghost, writing: “While Cuba still [!] lacks formal and vitally necessary institutions of workers democracy...the present Cuban leadership has not developed into a hardened caste

New York City: Spartacists at demonstration in defense of the Cuban Five, June 2008.



WV Photo

After the Fall of the Berlin Wall

The ICL's Fight for a

Red Soviet Germany

On the night of 3 January 1990, a quarter-million East Germans, mainly factory workers, heard two Trotskyists from the International Communist League speak at a rally in Treptow Park in East Berlin. Many more listened on the radio across the German Democratic Republic (DDR), as our speakers laid out a program for the rule of workers and soldiers councils across all of Germany. Initiated by the ICL and joined by the ruling Stalinist party, the united-front mobilization against the fascist desecration of the Soviet war memorial at Treptow demonstrated that proletarian resistance could be organized to stop the mounting imperialist drive for capitalist annexation of the East German bureaucratically deformed workers state by West Germany. This resistance had the potential to spark social revolution in the West as well.

Coming after months of social upheaval marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall, struggles that signaled an incipient workers political revolution against the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracy in the DDR, Treptow terrified the German imperialists in Bonn. They responded by intensifying and accelerating their campaign to swallow the East German deformed workers state whole. Shaken by the events of January 3, the abdicating Stalinist regimes in Berlin and Moscow rushed in turn to pull the plug on the DDR.

Overwhelmed by the capitalist onslaught and betrayed by their Stalinist leadership, the working class acceded, and by summer the DDR ceased to exist. This cruel defeat opened the door to counterrevolution in the Soviet Union, where the working class was atomized and demoralized by decades of Stalinist misrule. Within two years, the homeland of the 1917 October Revolution had also fallen.

The social fabric of the former Soviet Union and of the deformed workers states that had been in its orbit was torn asunder and capitalism restored, bringing unprecedented agony: unemployment and poverty, the collapse of health care and other basic infrastructure, fratricidal nationalist war.



East Germany, 3 January 1990: Spartakist speaker addresses ICL-initiated, 250,000-strong united-front demonstration in Treptow Park against fascist desecration of Soviet war memorial. Inset: Spartakists' protest call.

With the removal of its Soviet nemesis, triumphant U.S. imperialism achieved unchallenged military supremacy, freeing its hands to pursue one predatory war after another. Capitalists around the world have successfully turned the screws on the working class in their respective countries, with reunited Germany taking the lead in extracting its pound of flesh from workers East and West and dictating austerity to the rest of Europe.

But the world of today was not a foregone conclusion in January 1990. Then, as now, it was desperately necessary to fight. Alone among all tendencies calling themselves Marxist, the ICL did fight, with all our might, against capitalist counterrevolution in the DDR, the rest of East Europe and the Soviet Union. The ruling Stalinist bureaucracies themselves, from Gorbachev on down, accepted the supposed superiority and inevitability of the capitalist system. Most of the left in West Germany and elsewhere threw their

lot in with the forces of “democratic” counterrevolution in abetting the imperialist campaign for capitalist restoration.

The following article, translated and adapted from *Spartakist* No. 205 (October 2014), newspaper of our German comrades, illustrates how in 1989-90 three such groups sowed deadly illusions and paralyzing confusion in the working class. Examining this history is important. In China and the other remaining deformed workers states, the question will again be starkly posed: either the working class will take control of its own fate, opening the road to socialism, or it will fall prey to capitalist enslavement and imperialist subjugation. Crucial to victory for the combative workers will be the timely forging of a Leninist-Trotskyist party, that is, one animated by the Bolshevik program of revolutionary proletarian internationalism.

* * *

Almost a quarter century after capitalist restoration, the German bourgeoisie is still demonizing the DDR in the media whenever the opportunity arises. Incorporating the DDR into the West was for decades the goal of the capitalist ruling class and central to West German doctrine. The DDR, albeit bureaucratically deformed, was a workers state in which the capitalists had been expropriated as a class. The proletarian class basis of the DDR was an enormous advance, which explains why in 1989-90 so many people initially mobilized in its defense, rejecting capitalism and seeking a socialist society.

With the catastrophic effects of counterrevolution on the working class now obvious, ostensibly leftist organizations today falsely claim that they defended the gains of the DDR when its fate was at stake. This article will debunk such myths and lies, showing what some groups actually did in 1989-90, namely the League of Socialist Workers (BSA—today the Party for Social Equality, or PSG); the Communist Platform within the ruling East Ger-

man SED-PDS (KPF—today part of the Left Party); and the now-extinct United Left.

In the summer of 1989, the DDR found itself in deep crisis. International events intensified the problem. In China, the student protests in Tiananmen Square had brought about the first stirrings of a proletarian political revolution that were then brutally suppressed by the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy in early June. In Warsaw, counterrevolutionary Solidarność—the only “trade union” ever embraced by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan—had seized government power from the Polish Stalinist bureaucracy. Fake leftists like the BSA cheered this company union for the CIA, the banks and the Vatican.

Early in September, Hungary opened its Austrian border to citizens of the DDR, leading to a wave of emigration. Many people pinned their hopes on Mikhail Gorbachev, the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the policy of *perestroika* market reforms and political liberalization (*glasnost*) he had proclaimed in 1985. DDR head of state Erich Honecker's rejection of Gorbachev's *perestroika* and *glasnost* contributed to the rise of an opposition to the DDR government. The Soviet Union had ceased subsidizing the sale of oil and other raw materials sold to the East European bureaucratically deformed workers states and now demanded world market prices payable in convertible currencies. The economic situation in the DDR grew considerably worse.

Early October witnessed the first demonstrations in the south of the DDR, which steadily increased in size. On October 18, Honecker was overthrown after he had supported using the armed forces against the demonstrators, a course rejected by Gorbachev and the Soviet Red Army command in the DDR. Furthermore, the *Betriebskampfgruppen*—factory militias that saw themselves as defenders of the workers state on the plant level—were unwilling to be deployed against their class brothers. The great mass of the East German workers, students and soldiers wanted to save the

On ICL's Fight Against Capitalist Counterrevolution

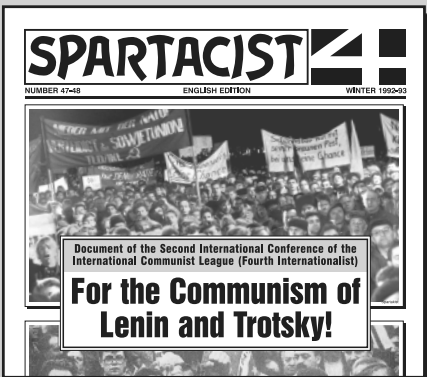


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DDR from collapse. On 4 November 1989, five days before the fall of the Berlin Wall, there was a demonstration of over one million in East Berlin. Alongside purely democratic slogans and those for the right to travel abroad and opposing the SED (Socialist Unity Party), one could see explicitly pro-socialist banners and calls like “For Communist Ideals—No Privileges” and “Form Soviets.”

Spartacists Intervene

The Trotskyist League of Germany (TLD), a predecessor of the Spartakist Workers Party of Germany (SpAD), German section of the ICL, intervened in this nascent political revolution, seeking to provide the East German working class with revolutionary leadership. We mobilized all available forces for this intervention, the largest ever carried out by the ICL. In this period, over a third of our international membership was on the ground in the DDR. In two weeks, we distributed 200,000 copies of our November 15 leaflet “Workers Soviets to Power!” (reprinted in WV No. 490, 24 November 1989). We increased the frequency of our bimonthly newspaper *Spartakist* to biweekly and then to weekly.

On December 7, we brought out the first issue of *Arprekorr* (Workers Press Correspondence), which appeared virtually every day. *Arprekorr* served as the collective organizer of the vanguard of the working class. It was the instrument for constructing the party necessary to lead a proletarian political revolution. In various cities, youth and workers formed groups to distribute *Arprekorr*, and we organized them into Spartacist Groups. Our propaganda was literally grabbed up. We appealed to workers in the East and West to unconditionally defend the DDR militarily against capitalist counterrevolution and to fight for revolutionary reunification of Germany. This meant sweeping away the Stalinist bureaucracy in the East through a political revolution and carrying out a social revolution in the West, i.e., one that would overthrow the rule of the bourgeoisie.

The establishment of workers and soldiers councils in the DDR and the ouster of the bureaucracy could have inspired the proletariat of the Soviet Union and East European workers states to follow their lead and the working class in West Germany to fight for a socialist revolution. The deepening capitalist barbarism we have today could have been averted.

We based ourselves on Leon Trotsky’s analysis of the ruling Soviet bureaucracy as constituting not a class, but a fragile caste possessing no independent economic function that had politically expropriated the working class. Trotsky arrived at this understanding through his struggle, as principal leader of the Left Opposition, against the bureaucracy headed by Stalin, which consolidated as a caste after usurping political power in 1923-24. In 1935, Trotsky wrote: “The year 1924—that was the beginning of the Soviet Thermidor.” This development was by no means inevitable. Recall that after World War I the conquest of state power by the working class was within grasp in many countries.

The Soviet Union itself emerged out of the successful 1917 proletarian revolution led by the Bolsheviks. To the revolutionary workers in the fledgling Soviet Union, one thing was clear: Workers in other countries, above all in Germany, had to follow their example. In Germany, there were revolutionary situations in 1918-19 and in 1923, but the German Communist Party’s break with the social-democratic program was incomplete. The lessons of the first successful workers revolution, in Russia, were only partially assimilated, and the German revolution failed.

The ascendant bureaucracy in the Soviet Union rested on the resulting widespread demoralization of the Soviet masses, who were exhausted and hollowed out by the 1918-20 civil war. The extreme scarcity of goods in these initial years led to the establishment of a layer of administrators determining who was to give and who was to receive—and in the process ensuring that they did not lose out themselves.



Spartakist photos

East Berlin, November 1989: Demonstrators raise pro-socialist demands in early days of incipient proletarian political revolution. Banner above quotes Lenin, banner below reads “For Communist Ideals—No Privileges.”



They welcomed and supported Stalin’s seizing control of the Communist Party and replacing the Leninist program of world revolution with the nationalist lie of “socialism in one country.”

At the cost of immeasurable sacrifice, the Soviet Union defeated the German Nazi regime in World War II. But the Soviet bureaucracy, with the support of the East German Stalinists, then did everything it could to prevent the unfolding of workers revolution in Germany, out of fear of unleashing a political revolution against its own rule. In East Germany, the expropriation of the capitalists by the occupying Soviet Red Army was a defensive measure against the imperialists, imposed from above. The subsequent collectivization of the means of production and introduction of a planned economy in the DDR were tremendous gains. However, the bureaucracy installed in the DDR, just like that in the Soviet Union, tacked back and forth between fear of the workers—in whose interests they defended, in a distorted way, the conquests of the workers state—and world imperialism, which their appeals to “peaceful coexistence” were designed to conciliate.

We rightly proceeded from the assumption that the Stalinist bureaucracy from top to bottom would split apart if the workers were to rise up in a political revolution. Such occurred in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, when large parts of the bureaucracy passed over to the side of the working class. Pál Maléter, a colonel in the Hungarian army, went over to the revolution, leading armed forces that were initially able to ward off an assault directed by Moscow against that political revolution.

Our perspective was that even leading members of the SED and the state apparatus, e.g., officers in the National People’s Army (NVA), could be won to Trotskyism and the side of the workers in defense of the DDR, which did happen in small measure in 1989-90. Unlike a capitalist ruling class that, in the event of a revolution, necessarily unites around a program of counterrevolution, a Stalinist bureaucracy simply is not “counter-revolutionary through and through” as claimed by the BSA/PSG. Instead, in the event of a workers political revolution

it will fragment, with pieces of it to be found on the opposing sides.

Trotsky’s 1936 book *The Revolution Betrayed*—many copies of which we sold in 1989-90, particularly on 8-9 and 16-17 December 1989, the two weekends of the SED’s Extraordinary Party Congress—lays out a vision of political revolution:

“Let us assume first that the Soviet bureaucracy is overthrown by a revolutionary party having all the attributes of the old Bolshevism, enriched moreover by the world experience of the recent period. Such a party would begin with the restoration of democracy in the trade unions and the Soviets. It would be able to, and would have to, restore freedom of Soviet parties. Together with the masses, and at their head, it would carry out a ruthless purgation of the state apparatus. It would abolish ranks and decorations, all kinds of privileges, and would limit inequality in the payment of labor to the life necessities of the economy and the state apparatus. It would give the youth free opportunity to think independently, learn, criticize and grow. It would introduce profound changes in the distribution of the national income in correspondence with the interests and will of the worker and peasant masses. But so

far as concerns property relations, the new power would not have to resort to revolutionary measures. It would retain and further develop the experiment of planned economy. After the political revolution—that is, the deposing of the bureaucracy—the proletariat would have to introduce in the economy a series of very important reforms, but not another social revolution.”

Fake Trotskyists: The League of Socialist Workers

In the winter of 1989-90, we published *Spartakist* (German edition) No. 14, with the title “Trotskyism: What It Isn’t—and What It Is!” It explained the aims of various groups that falsely invoked Trotsky in order to assist workers and leftists in the DDR in separating the wheat from the chaff. We characterized the BSA and the “International Committee of the Fourth International”—run by Gerry Healy until 1985 and today by David North—as “political bandits,” a term coined by Lenin to describe those who embrace wildly incongruent political positions that happen to fit in with their self-serving opportunist appetites of the moment. Today, this outfit is known for its “World Socialist Web Site.”

In 1979, they praised the Ba’athist dictator Saddam Hussein in Iraq as a leader in the struggle against “counterrevolutionary Stalinism,” hailing him for having put to death 21 members of the Iraqi Communist Party. In this period, the Healyites pocketed tens of thousands of dollars from the Ba’athist regime. Starting in the mid 1970s and extending to the early ’80s, they also received lavish bribes from other Arab regimes, amounting to some £1 million (roughly \$2 million). At that time, North was leading the American section of Healy’s corrupt and violent International Committee.

The BSA intervened propagandistically in the events of 1989-90 and was sometimes confused with us, since it claimed to stand in continuity with Trotsky and the Fourth International, supported workers councils *on paper* and called for the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy. However, its intervention was aimed entirely at fighting Stalinism and the Stalinist bureaucracy as supposedly “counterrevolutionary through and through.” Likewise, in its propaganda it regularly equated Stalinism with capitalism, which is fundamentally false.

The *economic* basis of the rule of capital is the exploitation of the working class by the bourgeoisie, which holds the means of production as its own. The bourgeoisie is a class that has to be overthrown through socialist revolution. In the course of this *social* revolution, the bourgeois state is destroyed. That state (above all the police, army, courts and prisons) serves and protects capitalist private property, including by repressing the working class and allowing the imperialists to invade foreign countries to conquer new markets. This apparatus

continued on page 8



AP

Hungary, 1956: Soviet tank surrounded by insurgents in Budapest during workers political revolution, which Moscow managed to suppress.

Germany...

(continued from page 7)

also makes it possible for the capitalists to bequeath their property.

In contrast, Stalinism means the *political* rule of a parasitic bureaucracy (a fragile, contradictory caste) that cannot assert any claim to own the means of production, which belong not to it but to society. No bureaucrat in the DDR was able to pass on to his descendants the factory he administered. In the DDR, production was organized for society and not in the interest of individual profit. To be sure, the bureaucracy did, in its corrupt and irrational fashion, control this production. There were no workers councils that might have planned the economy in a way that would help extend the socialist revolution. What was necessary in the DDR was a *political* revolution to democratize society and establish the political rule of the working class.

To return to Trotsky: “But so far as concerns property relations, the new power would not have to resort to revolutionary measures,” i.e., there would exist no capitalist class that had to be expropriated, which in the case of the DDR had already occurred after 1945. The armed forces of the DDR, as part of the state apparatus, on the one hand protected socialized property but on the other reported to the Stalinist bureaucracy, which as a parasitic caste sitting atop the workers state was in fundamental contradiction to its economic foundations. It was necessary to “purge the state apparatus ruthlessly” and “introduce in the economy a series of very important reforms, but not another social revolution.”

The BSA’s position transmitted into the working class the false consciousness that the bureaucrats comprised a ruling class with a state of *its own* that must be destroyed alongside the bureaucracy itself. In contrast, we emphasized that the DDR workers state belonged to the international proletariat. We warned of the threat of capitalist counterrevolution and explained how it had to be combatted. Responding to a letter from an apprentice passionately opposing the slogan “Germany, United Fatherland” (that is, capitalist reunification), the BSA wrote: “This is why the BSA does not defend a ‘two-state system,’ i.e., neither the West German state nor the DDR state but rather calls for the workers of East and West Germany to unite in overthrowing these apparatuses of oppression.” Here it’s out in the open: The BSA was not simply against defending the DDR but for its overthrow as an “apparatus of oppression.”

Whereas pro-socialist workers in the DDR wished to ward off the capitalist threat, the BSA totally downplayed that threat, thereby aiding and abetting counterrevolution. Doing so was an expression of its loyalty to the counterrevolutionary West German Social Democratic Party (SPD), which it had supported in elections for years. In the 1970s and ’80s, the BSA preached to the West German working class that the SPD, if only it ruled by itself, could be forced to pursue “socialist policies.” So much for the overthrow of capitalism! Immediately after capitalist reunification—in which the SPD functioned as the spearhead of German imperialism—the BSA again in 1990 called for the election of the SPD.

The Treptow Turning Point and the BSA Witchhunt

On 28 December 1989, fascists vandalized the Soviet War Memorial in Berlin-Treptow. The monument honors the Red Army soldiers who gave their lives fighting to liberate Berlin from the fascists in WWII. From mid December on, the Nazis were raising their heads in Monday demonstrations in the south of the DDR, where West German chancellor Helmut Kohl was celebrated with the waving of West German flags. We reacted at once, calling for a united-front demonstration in Treptow on January 3 to stop the Nazis.

The joint call of the TLD and the Spartacist Groups made clear:

“Resurgent fascism is still an extremist fringe phenomenon. It would again threaten all mankind as soon as the first crises in a reunified *Grossdeutschland* [Greater Germany] appear. Today, however, the SPD/SDP [the Social Democracy in West and East Germany] is the chief instrument to bring about such a Greater Germany. Throttling the hydra-headed fascist monster now is to blunt this Social Democratic penetration.”

—“Revolution vs. Counterrevolution in Germany, 1989-90,” WV No. 730 (25 February 2000)

We advanced vital demands that pointed the way to political revolution and opposed the sellout of the DDR.

On January 3, the pro-Soviet, anti-fascist and pro-socialist demonstration brought out 250,000 people, confirming that we had forced the SED into a united front. The mobilization was an expression of the power of our program, which embodied the socialist strivings of the working masses. Just before the demo, Lothar Bisky, a leader of the SED-PDS

the fascist provocation on the SED. The tabloid *Bild* set the tone when it called Treptow “the SED’s Nazi trick.”

There was a powwow of the so-called Round Table—a counterrevolutionary assemblage of all DDR opposition groups, including the United Left, along with the SED-PDS and the SPD/SDP. The SPD fulminated against the Stalinist SED-PDS for having been on the same platform with Trotskyists who were calling the SPD/SDP “the Trojan horse of counterrevolution.” A few days later, Gysi declared that calling the Treptow demonstration had been a mistake. Soon afterwards, Gorbachev and the East German Stalinists organized the sellout of the DDR to the capitalists. Following a meeting with Gorbachev in Moscow in late January, Hans Modrow of the SED-PDS, now the head of the DDR government, openly came out for “Germany, United Fatherland.”

In an inflammatory article titled “The Trotskyist League of Germany (TLD)—Provocateurs in the Service of Stalinism!” (19 January 1990), the BSA ranted



Spartakist
14 January 1990: Spartakist banner at mass East Berlin demonstration reads: “For a Red Soviet Germany in a Socialist Europe!” First issue of daily *Spartakist/Arprekorr* (7 December 1989) demanded: “No Sellout of the DDR! Workers and Soldiers Councils, Now!”

(the SED rebranded as the Party of Democratic Socialism), expressed it in this way: “You have the workers.” But we had yet to cohere them around our program. Nonetheless, the potential for the explosive growth of a Trotskyist party was genuine. In many cases, the SED-PDS leaders knew this better than we did.

The participants in the demo—in large part factory workers—heard two counterposed political programs: that of the Stalinists, represented by Gregor Gysi, and that of the revolutionary Trotskyists, represented by a TLD speaker and a speaker from the Spartacist Groups. It was the first time since Trotsky’s expulsion from the USSR and the smashing of the Left Opposition in the late 1920s that Trotskyists were able to speak to a mass audience in a deformed workers state.

We summed up this experience in 1992 in the main document of our Second International Conference:

“But as Treptow later showed, from the beginning we were in a political struggle with the abdicating Stalinist regime over the future of the DDR. While we were calling for a government of workers councils, the Stalinists were consciously acting to prevent a workers insurrection by demobilizing all army units that had formed soldiers councils as a result of our early propaganda. Although shaped by the disproportion of forces, there was in fact a contest between the ICL program of political revolution and the Stalinist program of capitulation and counterrevolution.”

—“For the Communism of Lenin and Trotsky!” *Spartakist* (English-language edition) No. 47/48, Winter 1992-1993

The Treptow mobilization was the turning point. Up until then, the imperialists had most likely felt they had the DDR in their pockets. But now they went wild because that was obviously not the case. Out of thin air, they conjured up a campaign of lies that Goebbels would have envied. The West German media grotesquely sought to pin the blame for

against us over the Treptow united-front mobilization: “Today their campaign ‘against the fascist danger in the DDR’ serves to save and restabilize the Stalinist state apparatus, army, secret service, justice, etc., because capitalist restoration can be brought about only with the assistance of a bloody anti-working-class dictatorship.” Their counterrevolutionary hatred of the DDR workers state could not be more obvious. There were but two alternatives: defending the DDR deformed workers state while going forward to revolutionary reunification or... being thrown back to capitalism, which the SPD was promoting in the name of “freedom and democracy.”

While we were exposing the SPD as the main instrument for a capitalist Greater Germany, the BSA was obscuring the class character of capitalist counterrevolution. In stating that it could only take place with “the assistance of a bloody anti-working-class dictatorship,”

they meant not the dictatorship of the West German capitalists but the “Stalinist state apparatus”! So what course remains? The social-democratic program for a democratic capitalist Germany—the reunified Fourth Reich.

The DDR was an instance of the *dictatorship of the proletariat*—that is, a state belonging to the workers—but with an anti-working-class *government* in power. Treptow provided the chance to motivate the Trotskyist program to the workers and the SED left, soldiers of the NVA, members of the People’s Police and of the Soviet Army. In this open situation, when the working class was just *beginning* to fight for political power in its state, the BSA so distorted things that the workers state was turned into an instrument for capitalist restoration. This utterly exposes the BSA’s anti-communism.

As for the Stalinist bureaucracy, it acceded to the German bourgeoisie’s war of revenge on the DDR and sold out the workers state. We fought against this sellout! In contrast, the BSA, due to its Stalinophobia, went so far as to make light of the fascist danger. Right down to the elections for the Volkskammer (the DDR national assembly) in March 1990, the BSA barely mentioned the rise of German nationalism and the threat posed by the fascists. Instead, it denounced the anti-fascist mobilization in Treptow as a ploy by the fragmenting Stalinists and joined in the chorus of bourgeois forces that were portraying Treptow as a “Nazi trick of the SED.”

When the Northite PSG today characterizes “the destruction of social gains and the reintroduction of capitalist exploitation in the DDR, East Europe and the Soviet Union” as the “most reactionary development of recent decades,” everyone should be aware that the Northites themselves bear some responsibility. Their BSA forebears stood with the SPD on the front lines, paving the way for the destruction of the DDR.

Similarly, the PSG opposes workers struggles led by trade unions on the grounds that trade unions “defend capitalism and sabotage any genuine struggle,” which is merely a justification for strikebreaking. Trade unions must be defended as organizations of the working class, even when they have a reformist, chauvinist leadership, just as the workers states must be defended against capitalism and imperialism, including when a Stalinist bureaucracy has politically expropriated the workers. Writing off the trade unions is part of the PSG’s anti-communist tradition of not taking the side of the working class and the workers states—all its empty phrases notwithstanding.

The United Left

The United Left (VL) was the left wing of the “Initiative for Peace and Human Rights,” an organization in the petty-bourgeois anti-Communist citizens’ rights movement, which in 1989 was operating under the protection of the Lutheran church in East Germany. That movement had its roots in the DDR peace movement of the early ’80s, a counter-



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part of the nationalist peace movement in West Germany. Many so-called leftists, including the Communist Platform, shared the peace movement’s objective of disarmament within a nationalist framework, expressed in the slogan “Germany Must Not Become a Battlefield.” At bottom, this call was directed at the disarmament of the DDR and the Soviet Union, which would leave the workers states defenseless against imperialism.

VL raised the demand for “disarmament and demilitarization of both German states” and was for the withdrawal of the DDR from the Warsaw Pact and of West Germany from NATO. This position amounted to a call for two neutral German states, ignoring the fact that a class line ran between East and West. The wish for neutral states reflects deep-seated illusions in “pure democracy” and a peaceful capitalism, neither of which is possible.

VL was formally founded on 2 October 1989 in Berlin as a “grassroots democratic movement.” Although it was officially dissolved in 2013, former leading members like Bernd Gehrke tour the country every so often to spread the fairy tale that VL had opposed the introduction of capitalism into East Germany. Its leadership stemmed centrally from the “Group of Democratic Socialists” centered around Herbert Misslitz, and arose out of the oppositional group Voices of Dissent in 1988. In the ’80s, Voices of Dissent was part of the DDR peace movement and had ties to Ernest Mandel, then the leading light of the Pabloite United Secretariat (USec).

Pabloism is a post-WWII revisionist current in the Trotskyist movement. This revisionism destroyed Trotsky’s Fourth International (then under the leadership of the impressionistic Michel Pablo) as the nucleus of a disciplined world party of socialist revolution. With a number of bureaucratically deformed workers states having just come into being under Stalinist leadership, the Pabloites projected a “new world reality” of “centuries of deformed workers states,” totally dismissing the role of a revolutionary Trotskyist party. In *Trotskyism: What It Isn’t and What It Is!*, we warned:

“Now Mandel, who in the 1953 uprising of workers in East Germany [the DDR’s first incipient workers political revolution] saw a wing of the bureaucracy as a solution, trumpets the ‘upsurge of the mass movement rocking the GDR.’ He talks of the need for a ‘politically capable vanguard’ to ‘open the way for the victory and consolidation of the political revolution.’ Don’t buy it. Mandel and his followers have heralded everything from university students in the West to the mullahs in Iran to [Solidarność leader] Lech Walesa as the ‘vanguard.’”

VL strove for a “political merging of left organizations and individuals of diverse views and currents that are jointly...working for the socialist renewal of the DDR.” This “unity of the left” conception struck a political chord with many workers and leftists who wanted to counter the capitalist offensive. But what was actually needed were united *actions* against capitalism and rising nationalism/fascism, actions like our united-front demonstration of 3 January 1990, in which various organizations march under their own banners (i.e., put forward their programs) while jointly combatting a common enemy. “Unity of the left,” that is, an ongoing alliance, is nothing but a rotten political bloc that sweeps differences under the rug in the search for a common denominator, reducing politics to the lowest level. Any revolutionaries in such a bloc would find themselves subordinated to the opportunists.

VL had a contradictory program that could only confuse workers and leftists seeking an answer to the question of how to defend the DDR. In its appeal “For a United Left in the DDR,” VL on the one hand advocated social ownership “of the means of production as the dominant foundation with the best prospects for the future,” and on the other hand backed “free development of cooperatives and private property deriving from one’s own labor.” When push came to



Dresden, December 1989: Counterrevolutionary rally outside meeting of West German chancellor Helmut Kohl and DDR premier Hans Modrow. Banner reads: “With Kohl Toward Unity of Germany.”

shove, VL resolved its own contradictions by hailing bourgeois democracy, poorly concealing its betrayal with the pious wish that “political suppression by a bureaucracy not be replaced by capitalist exploitation.”

On 3 November 1989, VL, other groups in the citizens’ rights movement and the counterrevolutionary SDP put out a joint statement “For a Democratic Restructuring of State and Society.” It called for reform of the constitution and free elections with secret ballots as well as freedom of assembly, association and the press. Here the Social Democracy was aiming to win the masses to its program for a “social market economy,” i.e., capitalism, and VL assisted it in doing so.

In this context, the “free elections” demand was a call to support bourgeois democracy against the workers state, that is, a call for counterrevolution, which is why we opposed it. We are for workers democracy linked to defense of the workers state. Today, counterrevolutionary forces are uniting behind the call for “free elections” in deformed workers states such as Cuba and China. Only this year, German Chancellor Angela Merkel talked up “free elections” in Beijing to smooth a path for German imperialism, which wants to call the shots in a Chinese market reconquered for capitalism.

VL panicked and dropped its initial support to the Treptow demonstration, explaining the reversal: “The trigger was the fear that ‘former SED cadres’ would again attain positions of power” (“Statement of the Opposition to Wahlbündnis 90 [Electoral Alliance ’90],” 3 January 1990). On the very same day as Treptow, they cobbled together a counter-revolutionary electoral alliance, with the citizens’ rights movement and the SDP, from which they resigned on January 7. VL’s leader, Thomas Klein, told us on January 21 that for his organization the main enemy was not the SPD but DDR State Security (the Stasi) and the SED apparatus—one could always resist the politics of the SPD after the elections if it became the government and attacked the workers. This was an unambiguous statement in favor of the West German capitalist system, in which workers voted every four years to decide which bourgeois government would oppress and exploit them.

In the wake of the Treptow mobilization, the rattled bourgeoisie launched an anti-Communist campaign against the Stasi. Beating the same drum, VL instantly called for the dissolution of the Stasi. On January 15, an anti-Communist mob stormed the central Stasi headquarters in Berlin. On March 29, VL participated in a witchhunt demonstration staged by New Forum (part of the citizens’ rights movement). Held at Berlin’s Alexanderplatz, this rally called for investigating all members of the Volkskammer to establish whether they had collaborated with the Ministry for State Security. We vehemently condemned this rightist campaign against the Stasi as a battering ram directed against the very existence of the DDR.

We warned against holding show trials à la Stalin that could only promote bloodthirstiness and encourage counter-revolutionary massacres. *Before* the anti-Communist witchhunt was in full swing, we had proposed how the working class might deal with the bloated Stasi apparatus in ways favorable to the defense of the DDR. After all, the Stasi did not just go after the class enemy but also spied on the DDR populace, with the aim of intimidating and atomizing the working class. For example, we suggested taking agents out of the Stasi and putting them to work in the DDR’s collectivized factories and farms. Workers tribunals linked to authoritative workers councils should deal with individual secret police who had grossly abused their office. Many actions taken against the Stasi leadership prior to Treptow had a pro-socialist character. Thus, the Felix Dzerzhinsky Guard Regiment (military arm of the Ministry for State Security) prevented the Stasi



Anti-Communist mob storms central headquarters of East German secret police (Stasi) in Berlin, 15 January 1990.

from shredding its files and also set up a soldiers council.

We called for workers militias under the leadership of workers and soldiers councils, first of all to stop the fascist danger in its tracks. Former Stasi members who wished to defend the workers state would have found a place in them. The attacks incited by the bourgeoisie and its lackeys, such as the storming of Stasi headquarters, served exclusively to whip up an atmosphere for bloody reprisal and to intimidate pro-DDR workers and leftists, opening the road to counterrevolution. The bourgeoisie hated the Stasi because it, in fact, sometimes acted in defense of the workers state. From the standpoint of the working class, defending the DDR was no misdeed—but undermining and selling it out as the SED-PDS Stalinists did was truly a crime!

The Founding of the Communist Platform

Many of the Communist Platform (KPF) leaders stemmed from the so-called socialist intelligentsia and, like Eberhard Czichon, were supporters of Gorbachev

and Bukharin, the latter the leader of the Right Opposition in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s. The founders of the KPF reflected the appetite of broad layers within the SED to build a genuinely communist party. SED members who saw themselves as communists were repelled by the social-democratization of their party as expressed in some of the calls for an Extraordinary Party Congress. For example, eleven SED local organizations in Berlin came out for a “socialist people’s party.”

In response, a 1 December 1989 “Call by the Group for Initiating a ‘Communist Party of the DDR’ (KP-DDR)” stated:

“It is with concern that we note that it is not just the Stalinist apparatuses that are secretly positioning themselves for a counterattack but also other forces that are increasingly gaining influence within the SED. This is manifested in demands for a ‘socialist people’s party,’ in the formulation ‘take into greater consideration the character of the SED as unity party’ and similar formulations.”

Additionally, the KP-DDR initiative argued for a “revolutionary vanguard.” One part of that group, however, envisioned a new party solely as an “ongoing counterbalance” to the SED, i.e., doing nothing save pressuring it from the left.

In this tumultuous situation, with everything in flux, we argued consistently for the need for a Leninist egalitarian party and kept to our course of splitting the SED. Our call for an egalitarian party made clear that we were against bureaucratic privileges and that our aim was not one of reforming the old SED but of building a genuine communist party of the working class. Between the two weekends of the SED Extraordinary Party Congress held in East Berlin, at which we sold more literature than there were participants, we received the following 10 December 1989 letter from a worker:

“I was very happy to learn of you. I’m an SEDer. But this was probably never truly my party and even less so now, where this ‘position paper’ was adopted that abandons everything and lumps us

together with the Social Democrats and I don’t know who else. Yes, this country needs a new, strong KP [Communist Party]—I’d like to get into contact with you regarding this.”

Countless subjective communists were frustrated by the results of the Congress, which set the SED firmly on a social-democratic course. Given this mood, as well as general sentiment for a new Communist Party and the fact that a group of SED leaders had already announced their intention to split, our intervention and activity in the DDR must have seemed quite threatening to the new SED-PDS leadership around Hans Modrow and Gregor Gysi. Gysi convinced the future founders of the KPF to set up their Communist Platform inside the SED-PDS (later renamed the PDS) and not to split that party.

Heinz Marohn, one of the founders of the KPF, described this decision forthrightly at a 1995 PDS conference:

“We saw in the SED/PDS a political movement that, in the form of a party, embraced various, in the form of a party, embraced various, in the form of a party, embraced various currents and we strongly opposed all efforts to dissolve

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Union Acts to Defend Victimized Bus Driver

NYC

Bus drivers and other members of New York City’s Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 were outraged when a union brother was arrested after a tragic accident in Brooklyn on December 23. For at least an hour on December 24, buses out of four or more Brooklyn depots—Jackie Gleason, Flatbush, Ulmer Park and East New York—did not roll, as drivers engaged in a work-to-rule action protesting the arrest. Local 100 president John Samuelson condemned the arrest as “an attack against all New York City Transit Workers.”

The bus operated by 57-year-old Regi-

nald Prescott had struck and killed a man in the crosswalk at a dangerous intersection in Brooklyn during the evening rush hour. A seven-and-a-half-year veteran with a safe record behind the wheel, Prescott was making a difficult left turn under poor conditions when the pedestrian, a 78-year-old man, was hit. Both the driver and the pedestrian had a green light. The distraught driver was taken to a nearby hospital and treated for trauma. Prescott was arrested and cuffed at the hospital, in front of his wife, on the misdemeanor charge of “failing to yield.”

Victimized by a city law that was revised under Democratic mayor Bill de Blasio’s “Vision Zero” traffic initiative to criminalize such accidents, Prescott was

promptly suspended by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) without pay. The TWU bureaucracy undermines the defense of the union membership by its support to capitalist politicians, including by channeling votes to the Working Families Party, a shill for the Democrats that supported de Blasio for mayor in the 2013 elections.

In a transit system chock full of hazardous work, driving a bus in traffic-clogged NYC with its millions of pedestrians is especially tough. And it’s not made any easier by MTA management constantly hounding TWU members, badgering them to keep to strict schedules. Before Vision Zero, the MTA was already subjecting traumatized bus drivers involved in fatal

accidents to drug tests and, sometimes, suspensions. The bosses routinely shift blame for accidents caused by unsafe conditions onto transit workers. Put through the MTA wringer after such tragedies, some drivers never go back to the job. Now they get hauled off to jail as well, with the threat of a life-wrecking criminal record hanging over their heads.

One bus driver told *Workers Vanguard* that TWU members at the East New York depot have taken up a collection to help offset Reginald Prescott’s lost wages. When a hearing is convened in the case—February 24, according to the union—Local 100 members and their allies should pack the courtroom. ***Drop the charges against Reginald Prescott! Reinstatement him now!*** ■

Archives...

(continued from page 2)

mines, mills, railroads, banks—and a class of workers composed of those who own *only* their mental and physical ability to work, and who must sell that ability to the capitalists by the hour or week in order to live. This includes public employees who sell their labor power to local, state, or federal governments as postal workers, motormen, clerks, sanitation workers, teachers, welfare workers, etc. There are also a variety of middle classes—small merchants and farmers, professional people, etc.—but the main decisive classes in society are workers and capitalists. Despite Wurf’s and the [fake-Trotskyist] Workers League’s protests that the police are workers simply because they are salaried employees, ignoring entirely their very special social function, it is obvious that based on the above criteria, cops, as professional strikebreakers, fall entirely *outside* the social relations of the process of production, regardless of their social

origins, and so are neither workers, nor part of the working class. While most policemen are generally of working class social origins, they are specifically hired and trained to function as class traitors, and bear a greater resemblance to a mercenary army, de-classed socially and economically. This was easier to see in the company towns of the late 19th century where the police were often hired by the coal mine or factory owners. As late as the early 1940’s, old Henry Ford had his own goon squad to keep the workers in line and break up unionizing attempts. The mere fact that these scum were paid for their dirty work obviously didn’t make them “workers,” in any scientific class sense of the word. The same goes for Pinkertons, FBI agents, labor spies, informers, etc.

ROLE OF THE POLICE

The police, then, are special bodies of armed men separated entirely from the rest of the population. These police, and also the Army and National Guard, etc., backed up by a system of prisons,

are the backbone, the very essence, of the capitalist state, whose basic function is to maintain through force or threat of force the rule of that class in order to economically exploit the working class. In every important and decisive conflict, the cops are the instrument of that state apparatus and stand on the side of private property and big business, backed up by pro-capitalist laws, judges, courts, and prisons.

In no sense are these bodies of armed men “neutral” in the class struggle, although great efforts are made to convince people that they are. It isn’t often that one sees the class character of the state power of big business operating in its naked form. Where the government is an outright capitalist dictatorship, which ruthlessly suppresses all trade unions and workers political organizations, wiping out representative government and all democratic rights and institutions, as was the case in Nazi Germany, the class character of the system is easily recognizable and unmistakable. But this causes a great deal of trouble for the capitalists and they

only resort to naked military rule when the working people are no longer fooled by the sugar coating of “law and order” and “peaceful, legal means” and decide to struggle to run their own society in their own name, directly threatening therefore the social rule of big business. Every strike has all the elements of this life and death struggle, with the company having the pickets arrested, hauled into court by the police, charged by the judge with violating some right of private property, and sent off to prison for daring to challenge the rule of the company.

This is why the question of the role of the police, as raised by the New York police action, is of such fundamental importance. It goes to the very heart of the struggle of the working class and does not allow for any mistakes. Labor bureaucrats understand this and constantly strive to obscure the real nature of the system, since it is their job to keep the workers under control. But for us there’s only one conclusion to draw from this issue: the cops are our enemies, and they are dangerous. ■

Germany...

(continued from page 9)

the Party. This brought us respect in the Party. There never would have been a Communist Platform had it not been needed. Back then, in late 1989, a lot of stuff was gotten rid of and only what was necessary and desired was preserved. The Party was on the point of dissolution. This would have brought the DDR to the verge of anarchy. Neither friend nor foe desired this. Thus, all the Party comrades had to close ranks, and many who saw themselves as Communists (without being able to say precisely what constituted Communist policies in this situation) tied themselves to Communist Platform—not organizationally but in terms of their ideals.”

Like all Stalinists, the KPF was first and foremost bent on avoiding “anarchy and chaos,” i.e., mobilizations by the workers. The January 3 Treptow demonstration was the one and only exception, as the SED-PDS, under the pressure of our program, was unable to avoid calling it. The KPF was founded precisely to avert splits from the SED-PDS to the left, that is, in the TLD’s direction, thereby

preventing the construction of a revolutionary party that might have been in a position to lead a political revolution. It was not accidental that the KPF was formed on December 30, only four days before we spoke to the mass base of the SED-PDS, centrally about the forging of a new workers party in the spirit of Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg.

When Modrow returned from the Soviet Union at the end of January, the KPF failed to utter one word of criticism against his program for capitalist reunification, let alone oppose the slogan “Germany, United Fatherland.” Instead, it reinforced the widespread illusion among pro-socialist workers and PDS members that the Modrow government constituted the last barrier against the sellout of the DDR. In addition to agreeing to capitalist reunification, the PDS made clear that it was for a “market economy...with pronounced social and ecological goals,” one that “stimulates and rewards performance.”

Nonetheless, the KPF depicted the PDS as if it had been “a determined leftist force...against the restoration of capitalist relationships in the DDR.” Thus, the KPF obscured the true significance of the capitulation by PDS leaders to the German bourgeoisie and their acceptance of the Kremlin’s betrayal. In no small part, it was thanks to the KPF that capitalism was able to catch the workers unaware in their hour of greatest danger.

Defend Past Gains, Fight for the Future

The elections to the Volkskammer, which had been moved forward to March, were a referendum on capitalist reunification, that is, yes or no to capitalist counterrevolution. We insisted that every organization had to take an unambiguous position before the working class on this life-or-death question. We emphatically said “No!” and ran in the elections, stating: “Where the SpAD is unable to run a

candidate, we call on our supporters to vote for those parties and groups that stand clearly against capitalist reunification.”

But we were the only ones to fight capitalist counterrevolution! On 18 March 1990, approximately 80 percent of voters cast ballots for counterrevolutionary parties, i.e., for open, speedy capitalist reunification. We told the bitter truth: “Fourth Reich Wins DDR Elections.” Counterrevolution had won—a bitter defeat not just for the German but also the international working class.

Everyone who wants to fight capitalism alongside the workers and feels that communism is worth striving for should

study the history of our intervention into the events of the incipient political revolution. Drawing these lessons is vital to victorious class struggle and revolutions, for which leadership by a proletarian vanguard party is essential. For the same reason, workers and leftists must acquaint themselves with the history of betrayal of those who today put on a left face but in reality supported counterrevolution. Given their program and history of not defending past gains, groups like David North’s Party for Social Equality, the KPF in the Left Party and proponents of the former United Left can only pave the way to new defeats. ■

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Drop All Charges Against Anti-Police Brutality Protesters!

NYC

Tens of thousands rallied on December 13 for the “Millions March NYC” against cop killings of black people. In the following days, the NYPD thugs in blue and their supporters in the bourgeois media launched a witchhunt, broadcasting pictures of seven people who allegedly assaulted two cops on the Brooklyn Bridge. A \$25,000 bounty made these individuals targets for any vigilante. Now six of them are facing bogus felony and misdemeanor charges such as resisting arrest, obstructing governmental administration, riot and

assault on a cop. CUNY English professor Eric Linsker is accused of throwing trash cans at the cops, and five other protesters—32BJ SEIU union organizer Robert Murray, Zachary Campbell, Maria Garcia, Cindy Gorn and Jarrod Shanahan—are said to have engaged in a confrontation after police grabbed Linsker.

Grainy videos of the incident on the Brooklyn Bridge show the cops scuffling with a small group of protesters. The actual footage did not deter NYPD Chief of Manhattan Detectives William Aubry from ranting that Murray’s supposed punching of a cop was “right up there with being one of the most violent acts that I’ve seen.” In a statement in defense

of the protesters, the Trayvon Martin Organizing Committee pointedly noted that Aubry and the NYPD have not used the term “violent” “to describe the police murder of Eric Garner, the execution of Ramarley Graham and Akai Gurley, or the countless others harassed and brutalized by the police” (trayvonoc.wordpress.com). It is the cops who are the real perpetrators of violence. From Ferguson to Oakland to New York City, protesters against police terror have been beaten, tear-gassed, shot with rubber bullets and arrested by armies of cops.

The vindictive prosecution of the New York protesters is intended to silence and intimidate those who oppose the police’s rampant repression. It is aimed against

all those ground under the heel of capitalist society—not only black people and minorities, but also the multiracial labor movement, whose struggles have always been met with capitalist state repression. Yet rather than defending the protesters facing prosecution, the 32BJ SEIU tops placed Murray on unpaid leave. This betrayal can only serve to disarm and isolate the union in its own struggles. The workers movement must be won to the need to champion the cause of all the oppressed. We demand: **Drop the charges against the New York protesters, and all those arrested in protests against police brutality across the country! Down with the witchhunt of protesters!** ■

NYC Cop Backlash...

(continued from page 12)

about it. The answer must flow from an understanding of how this class-divided society works. Under capitalism, a tiny elite that owns the factories, mines and banks lives off the sweat and toil of working people. The cops are a core part of the state machinery of repression that ensures the domination of capital over labor. With black oppression rooted in this system of production for profit, cop terror is wielded by America’s rulers to maintain the forcible segregation of the black masses at the bottom of society, despite their lying assertion of equality. Efforts to reform the police cannot alter its fundamentally anti-working-class and racist nature. As our comrades chanted during the December 13 “Millions March NYC”: “Police reform is a hustle, fists in the air for class struggle!”

The crimes of the cops should be met with massive, militant protest based on the social power of labor. The pro-capitalist union bureaucracy, though, pushes the suicidal lie that cops are “fellow workers” and that the PBA & Co. are part of the labor movement. A prime example in NYC is the leadership of the transit union, TWU Local 100, whose president, John Samuelson, issued a statement referring to the two dead cops as “our Union Brothers.” The Local 100 tops welcomed Lynch onto the platform of union rallies in the lead-up to the 2005 transit strike—which defied a state ban on public employee strikes. For leading the workers out, Samuelson’s predecessor, Roger Toussaint, was later arrested and briefly jailed.

For this multiracial union, embracing the racist cops is particularly grotesque. Eric Garner’s mother, sister and niece are all Local 100 members, but the leadership did almost nothing to organize solidarity with them in their grief. When the grand jury decision not to indict the cop who killed Garner was announced, Samuelson offered: “In federal court, in civil suit and in the next life we will bear witness until justice is served.” What is needed is a mobilization of the social power of the unions to fight racist capitalist injustice **in this life!**

The role of the cops as deadly enemies of labor is starkly demonstrated when workers go on strike. It’s the cops who enforce court injunctions, protect scabs, attack picket lines and arrest strikers. In fact, the unions were built in hard, often bloody, struggle against the bosses and their cops, National Guard, company goons, etc. From the Haymarket martyrs of 1887, hanged in Chicago for fighting



Spartacist contingent at December 13 “Millions March NYC” demonstration against racist police killings.

for the eight-hour day, and the Ludlow, Colorado, massacre of striking miners and their families by the Rockefellers’ hired guns in 1914, to the PATCO air traffic controllers fired and dragged away in chains for striking in 1981, labor struggles have always run up against the capitalist state. When there are long periods with little to no class struggle like today, the social role of the cops can become obscured to the working class.

A vivid expression of the anti-working-class nature of the PBA was its denunciation of unions that had co-sponsored a march last August in Staten Island against police brutality, above all the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). The steering committee of the UFT caucus “Movement of Rank and File Educators”—which counts a supporter of the reformist International Socialist Organization, Brian Jones, as a founding member—issued a statement urging “the leaderships of the UFT and PBA, to find ways to work together and unite us.”

Rather than building unity with the shock troops of capitalist rule, there must be a fight for the independence of the labor movement from all agencies of the capitalist state. It speaks volumes that the first thing the NYPD’s Peter Liang reportedly did after shooting the unarmed Akai Gurley in a Brooklyn housing project in November was to text his PBA rep, while Gurley lay dying. Or take the Correction Officers’ Benevolent Association that is defending its members’ sadistic reign of terror against inmates in the Rikers Island jail. What the cop organizations want is more officers and weapons and fewer restrictions in going after workers, blacks, immigrants and leftists—and

to get paid more for doing it.

In the early 1930s, reformist leaders of the German working class politically disarmed the workers by preaching reliance on the police to stop Hitler’s Nazis. Those cops had largely been recruited over the years from among pro-socialist workers. Leon Trotsky—one of the leaders of the 1917 Russian Revolution, which saw the proletariat smash the existing capitalist state apparatus and establish their own state power—sharply warned in *What Next?* (1932): “The worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker.... And above all: every policeman knows that though governments may change, the police remain.”

Over recent decades, while workers

unions in the U.S. have been decimated, “unions” representing cops, prison guards and security guards have grown tremendously. The presence of large numbers of cops and security guards within unions like the SEIU and AFSCME is especially dangerous. **Cops out of the unions!**

A recent *Daily News* (30 December) opinion piece titled “Labor Must Reject Pat Lynch’s Bitter Bile” by Jonathan Tasini, former president of the National Writers Union who has twice sought the Democratic Party nomination for public office, reflects unease within a section of the union bureaucracy over its association with the PBA. Recoiling from Lynch’s venom, Tasini beseeches city union leaders to speak out against the PBA head because “standing by while a rogue union leader launches vituperative attacks may weaken public support for the mayor.” For Tasini, the overriding priority is to preserve labor’s ties to the Democratic Party, which no less than the Republicans is a political instrument of the class enemy.

What is necessary is to mobilize the social power of labor to fight for its own interests and those of the oppressed, in opposition to the bosses, their political representatives and their state. But the possibility for such a mobilization is undermined by the sellout labor bureaucracy, which shackles the potential power of the unions by feeding workers the lies that cops are their union brothers and sisters and that Democrats are their friends. The way forward is to fight for a class-struggle leadership of the trade unions. As long as the capitalist system remains, so will racist cop terror. To lead it in the struggle to break the capitalist state power and expropriate the bourgeoisie, establishing a workers government, the working class needs its own, revolutionary party. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Amid Protests Against Racist Police Terror

NYC Cop Backlash

Weeks of mass protests that erupted after the policemen who killed Michael Brown and Eric Garner got off have left cops across the country seething. These hired guns of the capitalist rulers are howling over any criticism of how they do their job, which in racist capitalist America does include terrorizing and killing unarmed black people. Leading the pack in New York City are the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (PBA) and its ilk, which have seized on the December 20 killing of two Brooklyn cops to further push their agenda of bonapartism: that is, to stand above the law as judge, jury and executioner. The nationwide mobilization of police for the funerals of the two cops on consecutive weekends was a chilling show of force. Now the Fraternal Order of Police is building a January 17 "End the Madness: Sea of Blue" march in Washington, D.C.

The NYPD has once again gone ballistic at the very suggestion that there should be some checks on its enforcement of racist "law and order" in the city. The cops want an entirely free hand, and it is no accident the PBA and similar groups are spearheading the backlash to the protests. The PBA is not a union in the sense of a workers organization but a political club reflecting the cops' awareness of their social role as the guard dogs of the capitalist order.

As the mayor of New York City, which he manages on behalf of the Wall Street plutocrats and real estate barons, Bill de Blasio is commander-in-chief of the NYPD. So when he expressed a little sympathy for those opposing cop terror, de Blasio's thugs in blue were furious, blaming him for encouraging the protests. The rabid PBA head Patrick Lynch denounced the mayor for supposedly throwing cops "under the bus."

De Blasio also set off the cops when he stated in a TV interview that he had to warn his 17-year-old son Dante, who is biracial, to be careful not to make any sudden moves when dealing with police—common-sense advice for black youth in this vicious capitalist society that is racist to the core. In response, Ed Mullins, head of the Sergeants Benevolent Association, slammed the mayor: "He may want to think about moving out of New York City completely. He just doesn't belong here." Mullins, Lynch and their cohorts insist that de Blasio either tell protesters to stop or get out of the way.

After Ismaaiyl Brinsley, who has been described as mentally unstable, killed the two NYC cops, Lynch went on a tear over the "blood on many hands," citing "the office of the mayor" and those in the streets protesting police brutality. De Blasio called for a pause to the protests and Police Commissioner William Bratton pronounced the killings their "direct spinoff." Over 20 people have since been arrested for allegedly threatening cops, including a 16-year-old who was held in jail for a week over Christmas because he posted "Let's Kill the Cops" on his Face-

book page. Despite the NYPD's sinister ravings and the mayor's admonishments, the protests have not come to a halt. The initial wave of protest was a measure of how fed up a wide swath of society is with daily cop violence.

The two funerals were attended by tens of thousands from across the country, with the *New York Times* (28 December) describing the scene at the first as "nothing but thick rows of police officers as far as anyone could see." Large numbers of cops turned their backs on de Blasio when he spoke at the funerals, as had been done when he visited the hospital where the two cops were taken. Here was a demonstrative show of insubordination and resistance to being put on a leash by civilian authorities when what they really want to do is run wild, wreaking vengeance on protesters and the ghetto and barrio poor with impunity.

Among the bourgeois politicians speak-

ing at the first funeral was U.S. vice president Joe Biden, signaling that the maintenance of "law and order" in NYC, the center of American finance capital, is of vital concern to the highest levels of the capitalist rulers. Reflecting this concern, the bourgeoisie's paper of record, the *New York Times*, issued an editorial titled "Respect for NYPD Squandered in Attacks on Bill de Blasio" (29 December). The next day, after statistics were released showing that the police were engaging in a slowdown (summonses for minor offenses had plunged by over 90 percent compared to the previous week), the *Times* instructed the cops to "do your jobs." The capitalist rulers in the city and beyond are worried that the NYPD has gone too far, doing further damage to the illusion that the police "serve and protect" the population as a whole. In reality, the job of the cops is to maintain the rule of the capitalist exploiters through violent suppression of

the working class, black people and all the oppressed.

In New York City, as elsewhere, the cops have a longstanding appetite for bonapartism. In 1992, when black Democratic mayor David Dinkins moved to replace the cops on the sham Civilian Complaint Review Board with civilians appointed by the mayor, a 10,000-strong cop mob stormed the steps of City Hall. That veritable lynch mob was an example of how in America, where capitalist rule has always had racial oppression at its base, even those black people who have supposedly made it are still branded by the color of their skin. (For more on PBA bonapartism, see article on page 2.)

Today, there are racist undertones to the vitriol aimed by the cops and their supporters at de Blasio, whose wife and children are black. A racist, pro-NYPD throng gathered outside City Hall on December 19, where some disgustingly sported shirts reading "I Can Breathe," a mockery of Eric Garner's last words as cops were choking him to death. Al Sharpton, who in the past wore a wire to spy on black politicians for the FBI and cops, has also been a target, receiving death threats for supposedly being "anti-cop." Sharpton has been prominent around the protests against cop terror, working overtime to direct the outrage into support for the capitalist Democratic Party and reliance on the federal government. He serves to reinforce illusions that the police can be reformed to act in the interests of the oppressed by getting rid of a few "bad apples," never passing up an opportunity to emphasize how much he supports the police.

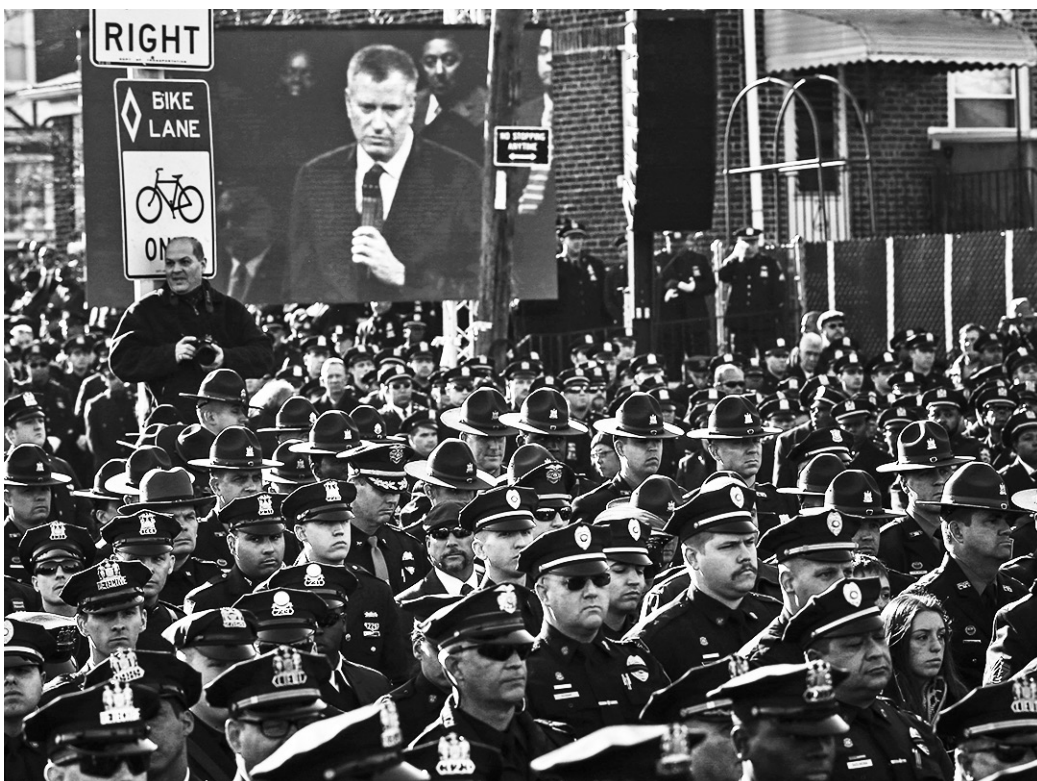
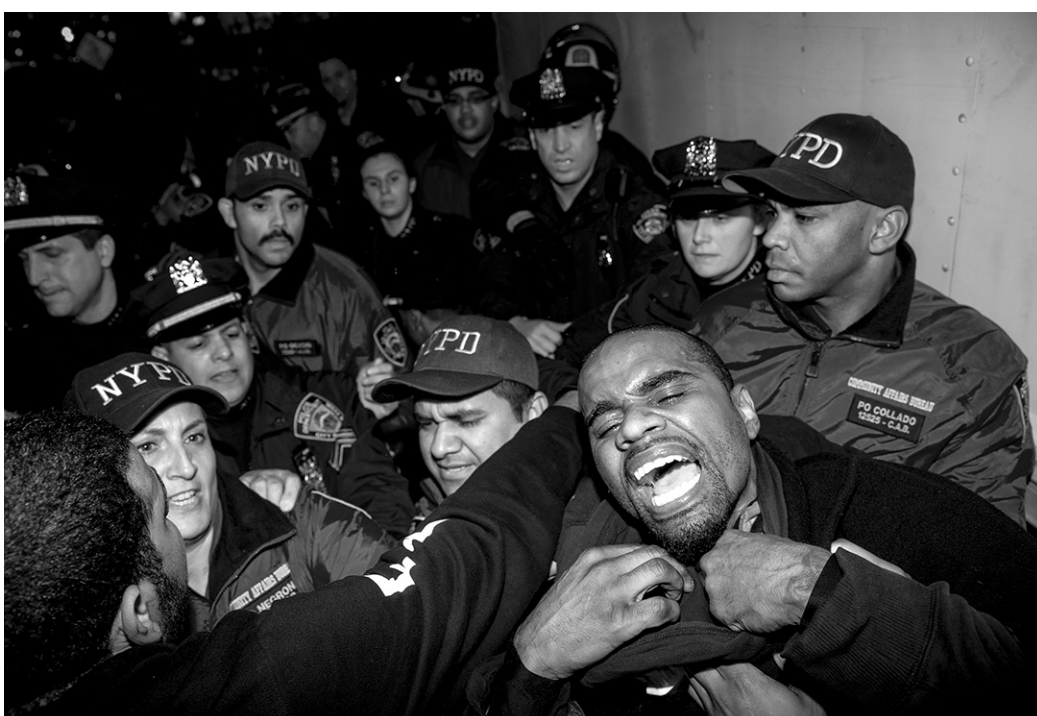
The tensions between the PBA and the mayor boil down to how much democratic window dressing to put on the police. During his 2013 mayoral bid, de Blasio attracted support from many black people and Latinos by running as an opponent of stop-and-frisk. Lynch's hysterical claims that de Blasio "thinks he's running a fucking revolution" couldn't be further from the truth; de Blasio's policies are at bottom a repackaging of racist cop terror.

While stop-and-frisk has been curtailed and a few other largely cosmetic reforms have been introduced, arrests for minor offenses have continued unabated under de Blasio/Bratton's "broken windows" policing strategy. And, of course, it was "broken windows" that brought about the death of Eric Garner, who was targeted for selling loose cigarettes. Bratton introduced "broken windows" policing to NYC during his first stint as police chief in the 1990s. De Blasio's reappointment of Bratton as chief gave a green light to the NYPD to keep up the war on black and Latino youth.

Cops Are Not Workers

The utter contempt that cops have for black lives has come to the fore in the past few months. But the question is what to do

continued on page 11



Top: Cops attack anti-police brutality demonstration in Manhattan, November 25. Bottom: Police turn their backs on video feed of NYC mayor Bill de Blasio speaking at cop funeral, December 27.