

“National Unity” Crusade After Paris Massacres

France: Down With “War on Terror” Repression!

In the wake of the horrific murders committed by jihadists in Paris, U.S. secretary of state John Kerry visited France to make a show of embracing French president François Hollande. Signaling how the French ruling class intends to capitalize on the recent shootings, the Socialist Party (SP) head of state likened them to the 11 September 2001 attacks, which in the U.S. led to a vast expansion in the state’s repressive arsenal and a qualitative diminution in democratic

rights. In that spirit, the war criminals in Washington will host a February 18 global “security summit” with the French and other bloodstained imperialist powers. Kerry and fellow White House officials have already taken part in high-level talks with their European counterparts to pave the way for a renewed “war on terror” crackdown.

Kicking its machinery of repression into high gear, the Hollande government arrested scores for statements and pro-

tests it deemed as apologizing for terrorism while pouring troops and more cops onto the streets. With the war drums beating louder and faster, Paris dispatched an aircraft carrier group to launch bombing raids over Iraq, escalating its involvement in the U.S.-led war against ISIS.

Moves to ramp up the “anti-terror” crusade in Europe are further fuel for a rising tide of racist hysteria directed against dark-skinned people and immigrants. Far-right parties spewing anti-

immigrant vitriol have been climbing in opinion polls in France, Britain, Austria and the Netherlands. In Germany, the racist national-chauvinists of Pegida have held weekly rallies in Dresden of up to 25,000 people.

Contrary to imperialist propaganda, Islam holds no monopoly on fundamentalist terrorism. In the U.S., the countless bombings, arson attacks and assaults against abortion clinics, including the

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Senate Report Whitewashes White House CIA Torture, Inc.

On December 9, the Senate Intelligence Committee released its summary report on the CIA’s post-9/11 detention and torture program. Most of those whose lives were destroyed under this program were picked up in Afghanistan and Iraq following the U.S. invasions—for the “crime” of being in those countries. The heavily censored summary (less than one-tenth the length of the classified full report) sheds a little more light on the crimes of U.S. imperialism by detailing the sadistic brutality of the CIA torturers. Yet this report, which mostly documents what was already known, is the mere tip of the iceberg in the “war on terror.”

The list of 119 detainees in the report does not touch on the many tens of thousands detained and tortured by the U.S. military in Abu Ghraib and beyond, its local proxies in Afghanistan and Iraq, or the governments that received prisoners as part of the CIA’s “extraordinary rendition” operations. The report is also a complete cover-up for the White House, portraying the program as a rogue operation with President George W. Bush kept in the dark. In fact, both Bush and his vice president Dick Cheney have affirmed their knowledge of the program.

A section of the U.S. capitalist ruling class is worried that earlier exposures of the CIA’s widespread use of torture have done damage to the pretense that it is a champion of “human rights.” President Barack Obama declared torture to be “contrary to our values” and Democrat Dianne Feinstein, the Senate committee’s chair, chimed in that it was “a stain on our values and our history.” By fessing up to the existence of the (supposedly defunct) CIA program and tossing the public some tidbits, the Senate report is an attempt to close the book on the issue.

The Senate committee’s main criti-



Department of Defense

Rendition flight of U.S. “war on terror” captives.

cism of the CIA program is that torture “was not an effective means of acquiring intelligence.” Anyone subjected to the CIA’s depraved tortures would tell their tormenters whatever they wanted to hear, true or not. Such barbarism primarily serves as a means to establish domination and instill terror more widely. As one CIA officer said, torture like “rectal hydration” established the interrogator’s “total control over the detainee.”

Those dragged off to the CIA “black site” prisons were shackled in stress positions for extended periods, sometimes with broken limbs, and subjected to sleep deprivation and mock executions. One detainee, after weeks of waterboarding, was placed in a coffin-sized box for 266 hours. Another, Gul Rahman, was beaten, shackled to the wall of his cell and stripped of most of his clothing. The next day, he was dead from hypothermia. The report admits that 26 people did not even meet the CIA’s own standards for being detained, including two who were wrongly held “based solely on informa-

tion fabricated by a CIA detainee” who had been tortured. The torturers realized that another man wasn’t the person they thought he was, but not before subjecting him to ice baths and 66 hours of standing without sleep.

No doubt there are many, especially young activists, who see a ray of hope that the CIA will be reined in as a result of these latest revelations, to which we can only say: “Ain’t going to happen.” The U.S. has tortured, is torturing and will continue to torture so long as it exists as a capitalist country. Under capitalism, society is ruled by the bourgeoisie, a tiny stratum that owns the means of production (factories, mines, banks, etc.) and lives off the profits extracted from the working class. That capitalist ruling class relies on the organized violence of its state apparatus to maintain its position atop the exploited and oppressed masses.

Under imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, mass murder, torture and humiliation necessarily accompany the exploitation of labor and the ceaseless

struggle of competing advanced powers to dominate the world. The brutalization and dehumanization of “lesser peoples,” *untersmenschen* to the Nazis, is a mainstay of imperialist subjugation—reinforcing the view of the capitalist masters that they are meant to rule over the poor, dirty masses. Former secretary of state John Foster Dulles expressed this mindset: “There are two kinds of people in the world. There are those who are Christians and support free enterprise, and there are others.”

In response to the recent report, Cheney pronounced, “I’d do it again in a minute,” while denying that the practices outlined in it constituted torture on the grounds that the victims were not Americans. In reality, the U.S. rulers have wielded torture against not only dark-skinned people around the world, but also leftists and minorities at home, particularly black people. When not presiding over torture themselves, the self-proclaimed leaders of the free world have shared their techniques with

their blood-soaked client regimes, especially in Latin America.

State Repression and Bourgeois Democracy

The capitalist politicians behind the Senate committee report are trying to refurbish the image of U.S. imperialism in order to better prosecute the “war on terror,” which both the Democrats and Republicans have fully backed from the first. That so-called war has served as a pretext for imperialist depredations abroad and a wholesale assault on civil liberties at home. The release of the report was held up for two years as the committee, the CIA and the White House sought to balance releasing enough information to be credible against not revealing anything too damaging. After all, Commander-in-Chief Obama, just like any U.S. president, needs the likes of the CIA to do imperialism’s dirty work.

The facade that is bourgeois democracy, not least the lie that the government

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Honor Rosa Luxemburg!

“Today the bourgeoisie and the social-traitors are jubilating in Berlin—they have succeeded in murdering Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Ebert and Scheidemann, who for four years led the workers to the slaughter for the sake of depredation, have now assumed the role of butchers of the proletarian leaders. The example of the German revolution proves that ‘democracy’ is only a camouflage for bourgeois robbery and the most savage violence.

“Death to the butchers!”

—“Speech at a Protest Rally Following the Murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg,” 19 January 1919

This was Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin’s cry of rage after the assassination of two revered Marxist leaders of the German proletariat. They were murdered by the fascist Freikorps at the behest of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) government of Friedrich Ebert and Philipp Scheidemann as it moved to crush the unfolding workers revolution in that country. German Social Democracy had proved its rottenness on 4 August 1914, when SPD deputies in parliament voted to fund the German military in World War I. Against the social-traitors Ebert & Co., Liebknecht and Luxemburg fought for revolutionary proletarian internationalism. In the tradition of the early Communist International, every January we honor the memory of these revolutionary fighters, the “Three Ls”—Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Lenin himself, who died on 21 January 1924.

The appreciation of Luxemburg reprinted below comes from the undated pamphlet *Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg* published by the Young Workers (Communist) League of America sometime between 1924 and 1928. The pamphlet’s author, Max Shachtman, was expelled in 1928 from the U.S. Communist Party for supporting the Left Opposition led internationally by Leon Trotsky. The Trotskyists fought down the line against the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet workers state and the Communist International. Although Shachtman would break from Trotskyism during World War II and eventually become an open supporter of U.S. imperialism, he was for a time a revolutionary leader and talented proponent of Marxism.

The excerpt below erroneously states that Berlin police chief Emil Eichhorn was removed from office a year after the founding of the German Communist Party. In fact, it was only a few days later, as the article on the facing page lays out in greater detail.

August 4, 1914. The world was astounded by the social democratic vote on war credits. But Rosa wasted not a moment. Declaring the social democracy a whited sepulchre, a foul corpse, she grouped around herself the cream of the

From *Lenin, Liebknecht, Luxemburg* by Max Shachtman



Dietz Verlag

Revolutionary Marxist leader Rosa Luxemburg denounces German imperialism at 1907 rally.

revolutionary wing of the old party. With her came Karl Liebknecht, Leo Jogiches, Franz Mehring, Wilhelm Pieck, Clara Zetkin, [Ernst] Meyer and others. A small band they were, but immediately they proceeded to their task. Illegal literature was spread at every opportunity. Flaming appeals against the imperialist war were the order of the day. Rosa Luxemburg, who had written her famous open letter to [French social democrat] Jean Jaures six years before, arguing against his declaration that the alliance between France, England and Russia was a step towards peace, was being confronted by the truth of her own prophetic words.

The workers were beginning to come out of the stupor resulting from the first shock at the socialist betrayal. Within six months the small handful of revolutionists had grown to greater proportions despite its illegality and the hindrances in its way. In February of the year following the declaration of war, representatives from many cities gathered to found the group of “The International.” To combine legal with illegal work they proposed to issue a magazine with the name of their group at its head and with Red Rosa as its editor. This brilliant organ was declared illegal after the publication of the first number.

And now the sentence against Rosa for her Frankfurt speech [in 1914 against the imperialist war] was confirmed and she was once more imprisoned for a year. Surrounded by stone and iron she continued to

carry on her agitation as though she were free. With the cooperation of the faithful Leo Tyszka [Jogiches], her oldest friend and co-worker, she issued numbers of *Die Internationale*, which stands today as the official theoretical organ of the party she founded, the German Communist Party, a monument to her work. From prison, also, she wrote her famous pamphlet, “The Crisis in the German Social Democracy,” which became known far and wide as the Junius brochure, since she was unable to sign her own name to it and was therefore obliged to use the pseudonym Junius.

“Shamed, dishonored, wading in blood and dripping with filth, thus capitalist society stands. Not as we usually see it, playing the roles of peace and righteousness, of order, of philosophy, of ethics—as a roaring beast, as an orgy of anarchy, as a pestilential breath, devastating culture and humanity—so it appears in all its hideous nakedness. And in the midst of this orgy a world tragedy has occurred: the capitulation of the social democracy.... It forgot all its principles, its pledges, the decision of international congresses, just at the moment when they should have found their application.”

Bitterly did she scourge the social democratic traitors; scornfully she lashed to tatters their false arguments of national defense; and skilfully she exposed the imperialist roots of the war. Yet here also she relied too greatly upon the spontaneous action of the masses. Unlike Lenin she did not raise the inspiring slogan: Turn the imperialist war into a civil war of the proletariat against its oppressors! And Lenin, while greeting joyously this noble revolutionary voice crying in the sterile desert of shameless betrayal, did not fail to criticize this omission in his own book, “Against the Stream,” which he collected together with other articles written by Zinoviev.

Against the stream! “It is never easy to swim against the current, and when the stream rushes on with the rapidity and the power of a Niagara it does not become easier!” said the older Liebknecht [Karl’s father Wilhelm]. And yet Rosa swam bravely with her comrades against the streams of blood which were being shed in the imperialist slaughter. Released from prison just before Liebknecht’s arrest [for speaking against the war in 1916] at the famous May Day demonstration, she was soon rearrested to be released only by the first revolution in Germany [in November 1918]. Again there flowed from prison a

constant stream of propaganda from her fertile pen. From her prison cell were written the famous Spartacus Letters. There also she replied to the critics of her “Accumulation of Capital” which had been published before the war, in which she attempted to set forth a Marxist theory of imperialist political economy. From that cell, too, came the letters to the wife of Karl Liebknecht which portrayed the sensitive and lovable soul of this uncompromising rebel, her love for life and struggle. There also her pamphlet on the Russian revolution, unfortunately composed on the basis of misinformation, the errors of which she later partially corrected, and which was triumphantly published by the renegade Paul Levi [after his departure from the Communist Party] who attempted to use it to justify his own cowardice and to attack the first working class republic.

“This madness will not stop, and this bloody nightmare of hell will not cease until the workers of Germany, of France, of Russia and of England will wake up out of their drunken sleep; will clasp each other’s hands in brotherhood and will drown the bestial chorus of war agitators and the hoarse cry of capitalist hyenas with the mighty cry of labor, ‘Proletarians of all countries, unite!’”

Thus had she ended her Junius brochure. And when the German revolution followed the successful uprising in Russia she was freed, together with Liebknecht, again to take up her incessant struggle for the workers’ cause. With new hopes the two Spartacans renewed their labors to build up a Communist Party in Germany. Battle-scarred, undaunted, they proceeded to unite the revolutionary forces of Germany: the Spartakusbund and the revolutionary groups of Hamburg and Bremen which were led by Paul Frölich, [Johann] Knief, and Karl Radek. At the end of the year of 1918 the first congress of the Communist Party of Germany was completed. The party was as yet weak; it was dominated by leftist elements. Despite the opposition of Rosa and Karl, the congress voted to oppose participation in elections or parliaments of any kind, as well as for the boycotting of the trade unions and appeals to the workers to leave them. Rosa argued, with little avail. Yet, in the program she wrote and which was adopted by the congress, the aims of the young Communist movement are clearly stated:

“The proletarian revolution is the death-bed of slavery and oppression. For this reason all capitalists, Junkers [landed

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WORKERS VANGUARD

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A Correction to Our *Militant Labour* Pamphlet The Police and the 1918-19 German Revolution

With the military defeat of Kaiser Wilhelm II's forces in November 1918, which ended World War I, the German capitalist order was deeply shaken. A revolutionary wave swept the country, triggered by a mutiny of sailors in Kiel, who sent emissaries around Germany rousing the working masses and calling on them to set up workers councils. The German proletariat drew inspiration from the example of the Russian October Revolution a year earlier, in which the working class, led by Lenin's Bolshevik party, took power, sweeping away the tsarist autocracy and the capitalist class.

The Kaiser's forced abdication, which was engineered by Prince Max of Baden to head off revolution, resulted in the reins of the government being entrusted to the Social Democratic Party (SPD), whose leaders had proved themselves outright class traitors through their ardent support of the German side in the imperialist war. With the outbreak of the November Revolution, society was precariously balanced between the nascent workers councils and the capitalist government headed by the Social Democrats. This situation of dual power posed sharply the issue of which class would rule: the workers or the bourgeoisie.

The SPD was given invaluable aid in its counterrevolutionary efforts by the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), which joined the SPD government the day after it took over. Dominated by centrists like Karl Kautsky who longed to reunite with the mother party, the USPD was the main political obstacle to proletarian revolution. In the absence of an authoritative communist party, it had the allegiance of

tens of thousands of militant workers.

For courageously opposing the war, Spartacist leaders Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Leo Jogiches and Franz Mehring spent substantial time in the Kaiser's prisons. Although fiercely combating the SPD's wartime orgy of social patriotism, they lingered inside the Social Democracy. The Spartacists exited the SPD in 1917, only when they along with the centrists were pushed out. And even then the Spartacists embedded themselves in the USPD, not leaving to form the Communist Party (KPD) until the very end of December 1918.

Despite the great authority of Liebknecht and Luxemburg as revolutionary leaders, the KPD was unknown to the working masses when street fighting broke out a few days after its founding.



Armed workers and soldiers occupy Berlin newspaper district in January 1919. Willy Römer

The party had a total of at most a few thousand members, who were centered in Berlin with small, virtually autonomous groups scattered across the country. A revolutionary leadership is forged, tested and honed through intervention in struggle. Lacking such experience, the young KPD was faced with the daunting task of cohering an organization while simultaneously navigating a revolutionary situation. (For historical background and documents, see John Riddell, ed., *The German Revolution and the Debate on Soviet Power* [Anchor Foundation, 1986].)

The January Events

After the SPD took the helm of the government, Emil Eichhorn, a member of the left wing of the USPD, became the Berlin chief of police, acting on the false

view that this arm of the bourgeois state could be transformed into a revolutionary instrument. On 4 January 1919, the Prussian Ministry of the Interior dismissed Eichhorn in a deliberate provocation. A January 5 edition of the KPD paper, *Die Rote Fahne*, called for a protest for the following day against Eichhorn's sacking. The statement was also signed by the USPD and the Revolutionary Shop Stewards (RSS), a group of radical trade unionists based in the factories that was politically associated with the USPD.

The response was overwhelming. Hundreds of thousands of angry workers, many armed, flooded the center of Berlin, burning for action. But no one took command. That evening, representatives of the USPD, RSS and KPD, intoxicated by the outpouring and counting on support from some troop regiments and sailors, issued a proclamation. It announced that the SPD government of Friedrich Ebert and Philipp Scheidemann was deposed and that power was provisionally in the hands of a "Revolutionary Committee" (RC) consisting of representatives of all three groups, among them Liebknecht.

The next morning, the workers again stormed into the streets, expecting to be led into battle. But again there was no leadership. The anticipated troops did not materialize to bolster their ranks. The masses embarked on spontaneous street fighting and armed occupations, including of the offices of *Vorwärts*, newspaper of the despised SPD.

In reality, the USPD—which had only quit the government after the SPD launched a bloody assault on the leftist sailors of the People's Naval Division on December 24—had no intention of overthrowing the regime of its recent collaborators. Pathetically, the majority of the RC voted to negotiate with the same SPD government they had announced they were overthrowing two days earlier! The KPD rightly denounced this move, finally announcing its withdrawal from the RC on January 10.

But the government had been given precious time to organize a counteroffensive. SPD leader Gustav Noske was appointed

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Letter

On the BT's National Chauvinism

We reprint below a contribution from a sympathizer of the Spartacist League. As regards last year's Scottish referendum, the ICL defended the democratic right of the Scots to decide their national fate, but did not advocate a "yes" or a "no" vote on independence.

9 December 2014

Dear *Workers Vanguard*,

The "Bolshevik" Tendency has produced a pitiful attempt of a polemic against the ICL/SL position on the Scottish referendum which overwhelmingly focuses on "demonstrating" that the SL has a "Scottish exceptionalist" line, purportedly because founding Spartacist James Robertson is of Scottish descent.

Their "evidence" is hilariously absurd and shows the BT is incapable of recognizing contradictions, often relayed in the Spartacist press via humor. Robertson himself commented once that he'd been raised in the left socialist and Jew-

ish traditions of the Shachtman organization where one's main political/polemical thrust was often associated with humor as a way of stressing contradictions.

Robertson once remarked, "A scoundrel can have a sense of humor; but the lack of one may lead to methodological problems—an understanding of contradiction is as necessary to a sense of humor as it is to dialectics." This proved prescient because he was writing in response to the resignation of a rightist, social-democratic member from the SL/B. This ex-member raised in his resignation his opposition to the SL's line on a Scottish Workers Republic as part of the USSR. Robertson responded:

"Last and not necessarily least. 'Scottish Workers Republic as part of the USSR!': conceived as a heuristic lever to pry apart the Scots Nats and infuriate English reformists (and as the expression of a not very likely revolutionary variant), it hit real pay dirt. Don's hatred for the idea is almost as extreme as that expressed in print by the all-purpose

sundry English workerist left sell-out artist bully boy, Alan Thornett. Q.E.D."

That this line prompted a similar bleat of outrage from the BT only further condemns them. What else really needs be said about a group whose various national units have always, *always* come out against the exercising of self-determination by oppressed nationalities in countries where they have sections? Their British group opposes Scottish independence and soft-peddles the issue of British troops out of Northern Ireland in the presence of reformists like the Socialist Party. Their Canadian group prides itself for opposing Quebec's independence. Their German group opposed and ridiculed the struggle for Kurdish independence in a country where Kurdish nationalists are victimized and jailed by the German imperialists. Their polemic against the ICL's support for Kurdish independence was originally titled "With Love from Absurdistan!" Their U.S. group has never dealt with Puerto Rican self-determination—the only time it is even *mentioned* by them is in the context of arguments with the SL about the national question in *other* locations.

When it comes to the struggle against racial oppression, they are worse than Debsian. Their U.S. group displayed a policy of open scorn to SL-led mobilizations in defense of blacks against fascist terror in the 1980s (the Daniel Patrick Moynihans of the left) and their New Zealand group barely ever mentions the Maori.

Where they *have* chosen to make a big stand on the issue of national rights and self-determination today is the Chinese deformed workers state, located right in

the crosshairs of U.S. imperialism. The BT calls for a "revolutionary government in China" that "would signal its willingness to coexist with Tibet's traditional ruling caste and Xinjiang's mullahs as long as they retain popular support."

Before that the BT loudly proclaimed the right of Albanian-populated Kosovo to self-determination and called for military support to the Kosovo Liberation Army in March 1999... after NATO began its war on Serbia in the name of "poor little Kosovo" with the KLA being blatantly militarily and politically subordinated to NATO imperialism. The BT only backed off this position a month later, claiming that the relationship between NATO and the KLA changed with the KLA becoming "decisively" subordinated to imperialism. The BT claimed, "This relationship is a product of the crushing military setbacks suffered by the KLA on the one hand, and the failure of Nato's air strikes to deliver a quick and painless victory on the other." So if only the imperialists had been more effective in destroying Serbia, the KLA wouldn't have had to subordinate itself to the imperialists!

I will hazard a guess that when the BT finally gets around to writing about the imperialists' war against the Islamic State, they will discover the need to support the Kurdish struggle against ISIS, despite the Kurdish forces operating under the direction, and in the assistance, of U.S. imperialism. I suppose once the imperialists give their blessing the BT will eagerly offer their support for "Absurdistan."

That's really about all that needs to be said about the BT's position on the National Question.

Comradely greetings,
Jonah

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Luxemburg...

(continued from page 2)

nobility], members of the petty middle class, officers, and all those who live on exploitation and class hegemony, will rise against it to a man in a struggle for life and death. It is madness to believe that the capitalist class will, with good will, subordinate itself to the verdict of a socialist majority in parliament; and that it will voluntarily renounce its proprietary rights and its privileges of exploitation. Every ruling class has, to the very end, fought for its privileges with the most stubborn energy. The class of capitalist imperialists exceeds all its predecessors in undisguised cynicism, brutality, and meanness.... Against the threatening danger of the counter-revolution must come the arming of the workers and the disarming of the hitherto ruling class. The fight for socialism is the most gigantic civil war in history, and the proletarian revolution must prepare the necessary defense for this war. It must learn to use it, to fight and to conquer. This defence of the compact masses of the workers, this arming of them with the full political power for the accomplishment of the revolution, is what is known as the dictatorship of the proletariat. This, and only this, is the true democracy.”

The young party was soon to receive its baptism in blood. The social democrats were placed at the head of the so-called revolutionary government to head off the real revolution which would place power actually into the hands of the working class. Traitorous, they quaked at the idea of a proletarian revolution. Growing up by their side, like the Soviets alongside of the decaying Russian Constituent Assembly, were the Workmen’s Councils and

July 1920, Petrograd: Lenin addresses crowd during dedication of monument to Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and heroes of Paris Commune.

socialists, the Communists seized the building of the social democratic Vorwärts [newspaper] and issued a manifesto deposing the national government. Barricades were thrown up overnight. Workers armed themselves and prepared to give battle. Red Rosa did not hesitate. Marx, before her, had disapproved of the action of the revolutionaries of Paris in proclaiming the Commune [in 1870]; but as soon



V.K. Bulla



Süddeutscher Verlag

Karl Liebknecht (second from left) while serving in German army, was later imprisoned for opposing imperialist World War I.

the Communist Party. The social democrats did not hesitate to choose between revolution and suppression of revolutionary forces. A year after the founding of the Communist Party, the Workmen’s Councils were maliciously provoked by the social democratic government which removed the popular police president of Berlin, Emil Eichhorn, a member of the Independent Socialist Party. Rosa knew that the situation was not yet developed for an uprising. She realized that the masses had not yet been rallied to the support of the Communist Party; that they had not, in the words of the program she had written, gained “the consent of the clear, unanimous will of the majority of the proletarian masses of Germany and... conscious agreement with the aims and methods of the Spartakusbund.” But less clear heads prevailed and instantly the battle was on.

Together with a group of independent

as the revolt was on he placed himself in line with the rebels—uncompromisingly; and after their terrible defeat he wrote the most brilliant declaration in its defense that the world has yet seen. And Rosa, in the same dilemma of being obliged to take a position in favor of an action which had been taken against her best judgment, showed the same revolutionary spirit as Karl Marx.

Unhesitatingly, the young party threw itself into the battle. With historic heroism they fought the troops of the social democrat [Gustav] Noske. With sabers and machine guns their proletarian lives were cut down to the ground. Rosa led in the battles. Liebknecht was everywhere, in the front ranks, among the youth who defended buildings that were being held by the Spartacans, in the barricades, indefatigably working among the inexperienced troops, giving encouragement and good cheer to all.

A general strike is declared; the factories stand gaunt and silent. The Berliner Tageblatt [newspaper] is taken over by the Berlin youth; the paper rolls are used for barricades, the books of the concern to bolster up the windows; a Red Cross station is established and guards are placed. On a number of churches, machine guns are lashed to command the streets. In front of the Vorwärts building a huge bonfire of the social democratic leaflets which have insulted the working class. The Böttzow brewery is held by the armed workers.

The government marshalls its forces: social democratic workers who have been poisoned against the revolutionaries. Workers against workers.

Saturday sees the end of the brave battle. The Vorwärts building is surrounded and surrendered. Whoever is caught with arms is forthwith shot. A sixteen year old fighter is called upon to shout “Long live the republic!”; he shouts instead “Long live Liebknecht!”; he is killed. The historic January days are over. They have seen heroic sacrifice and base betrayal.

A short few days pass. Liebknecht and Luxemburg are discovered. They are taken to the Eden Hotel, the headquarters of the troopers. Karl is spirited away and murdered by these “heroes.” As Rosa is leaving the hotel entrance, the trooper Runge is standing at the door. Commander Petri has given the order that she is not to reach the prison alive. The obliging Runge strikes her heavily on the head twice, so heavily that the blows are heard in the lobby of the hotel. Rosa sinks to the ground. She is lifted and thrown into the vehicle, one man on each side of her and Lieutenant Vogel in the rear. As the truck drives off, a soldier springs up from behind and delivers another sharp blow to the unconscious martyr; Lieutenant Vogel levels his revolver and shoots her in the back of the head; the frail, broken body quivers for the last time. They drive between the Landwehr Canal and the Zoological Gardens. No one is in sight. At the exit of the gardens near the canal, a group of soldiers are standing. The auto halts and the corpse is heaved into the canal at the order of Lieutenant Vogel. A few days later the watersoaked body is recovered and interred by the side of Liebknecht. The assassinated Jogiches finds his rest-

ing place by their side a short time later. The social democratic Vorwärts has very humorous writers of jingles. On the eve of the murders they publish a little song:

“Five hundred corpses in a row,
Liebknecht, Rosa, Radek & Co.:
Are they not there also?”

The workers mourn and plan their vengeance. The murderers walk the streets today: they are free men.

* * *

It is said that were Red Rosa living today she would be among the best leaders of the iron regiments of the powerful Communist Party of Germany. Of that there can be little doubt. The attempts of renegades and unscrupulous scoundrels to darken the sacred memory of Rosa Luxemburg by spreading the tale that she opposed the Russian revolution and the Russian Bolsheviks have already been brought to nought. Rosa had many shortcomings. Perhaps only in her last days did she begin to understand that her attitude towards the question of the peasantry was incorrect. In the question of the attitude of revolutionaries towards national independence and the right of self-determination to the point of separation she also held the wrong position. She erred in certain respects in her estimation of the Russian party conflicts, and later in her understanding of the Bolshevik revolution and its tactics. She was wrong in her book “The Accumulation of Capital” and unconsciously, in fighting so vigorously for the principles of Marxism against the opportunist revisionists, herself deviated from those basic economic principles. She had too much confidence in the spontaneous action of the masses irrespective of preparatory organizational work and of the leading role of the party.

And yet she will remain a cherished, beloved memory; yet her spirit will continue to be embodied in the world’s revolutionary movement; yet her name will continue to grow in the hearts of the masses for whom she fought when those who betrayed her will have cheated oblivion only by obloquy.

The Paul Levis who seek to capitalize her errors and forget her glorious history of revolutionary struggle have best been answered by Lenin, who often took issue with Red Rosa, but who appreciated her work as few men do:

“An eagle may descend lower than a chicken, but the chicken can never rise like an eagle. Rosa Luxemburg was mistaken on the question of the independence of Poland, she was mistaken in 1903 in her estimate of the Mensheviks; she was mistaken in her theory of the accumulation of capital; she was mistaken in defending the union of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in 1914 along with Plekhanov, Vandervelde, Kautsky and others; she was mistaken in her prison writings in 1918 (on coming out of prison, however, at the end of 1918, she corrected a large number of these mistakes herself). But notwithstanding all her mistakes she was and remains an eagle; and not only will her memory always be highly esteemed by the Communists of all the world, but her biography and the complete collection of her writings will be useful for the instruction of many generations of Communists in all countries. As for the German social democrats after the 4th of August, 1914,—‘a foul corpse’ is the appellation which Rosa Luxemburg gave them, and with which their name will go down in the history of the international labor movement. But in the backyard of the labor movement, among the manure piles, chickens like Paul Levi, Scheidemann, Kautsky and all that fraternity, will be especially enraptured by the mistakes of the great Communist.”

Rosa Luxemburg died like the bravest soldier of the revolution at his post. She died after the defeat of a revolution, after “order” had been established. The last words she is known to have written are her best epitaph:

“Order reigns in Berlin! You senseless thugs! Your ‘order’ is built on sand. The Revolution will rise tomorrow, bristling to the heights, and will to your terror sound forth the trumpet call: ‘I was, I am, I am to be!’”

These words are the muted song of the grim regiments of the proletariat who march in the final struggle and for the final victory.■

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Correction...

(continued from page 3)

commander-in-chief in the Berlin area. Declaring that “one of us must be the bloodhound,” Noske helped to prepare the Freikorps, fascistic volunteer battalions recruited by right-wing officers and financed by industrialists. The Freikorps, as well as a few regiments in the disintegrating army that remained loyal to the government, swept through the streets, smashing the insurgent workers and killing many of the best worker militants.

It didn’t end there. A particular target was the KPD leadership. With a state of siege having been declared, Noske posted proclamations slandering the Spartacists as looters—to be shot on sight. *Vorwärts* explicitly fingered Liebknecht and Luxemburg. On January 15, the Freikorps, acting at the behest of the SPD, murdered them. The assassination of Leo Jogiches followed several weeks later. By eliminating the best leaders of the KPD, the SPD delivered a crippling blow to the revolutionary workers movement in Germany. It also dashed immediate hopes, not least in the fragile Soviet workers state, of extending the Russian Revolution internationally.

Correcting Our Error

In the 1994 Spartacist pamphlet *Militant Labour’s Touching Faith in the Capitalist State*, we wrongly stated:

“Eichhorn was not a bourgeois cop, and neither were the core of his forces. In a situation of revolutionary turmoil, Eichhorn and his militia sought to *replace* the existing bourgeois police force and regarded themselves as accountable to the workers councils and the left, not to the capitalist government.”

It may have been the delusion of Eichhorn (and the workers) that he could simply “replace the existing bourgeois police force,” but we do not share this view. It contradicts the entire thrust of our pamphlet, which refutes the falsehood purveyed by reformist socialists then and now (among them successors of the Militant tendency—Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers’ International and Ted Grant’s Workers International League) that cops are “workers in uniform.” The socialist pretenders sometimes cite the Eichhorn affair to emphasize their point.

The reality proves the very opposite. Many of the Kaiser’s police dropped their weapons and fled when Eichhorn took over, but the majority *returned to work* after Eichhorn appealed to them to do so. He did recruit a couple thousand “socialist” cops in late December to a new security guard (the *Sicherheitswehr*) assigned to patrol the streets alongside the old police. But the *Sicherheitswehr* abandoned Eichhorn in the midst of the tumultuous battles over his dismissal, having been bribed with promises of monetary reward and fearing the prospect of a face-off with pro-government army troops (see Hsi-huey Liang, *The Berlin Police Force in the Weimar Republic* [University of California, 1970]).

The history of Eichhorn’s police highlights Leon Trotsky’s assessment in *What Next?* (1932) that “the worker who becomes a policeman in the service of the capitalist state, is a bourgeois cop, not a worker.” Trotsky continued: “Every police-



Social Democratic war minister Gustav Noske reviews counterrevolutionary Freikorps, January 1919.

man knows that though governments may change, the police remain,” which perfectly describes the 1918-19 events in Berlin.

Last December, the ICL’s International Executive Committee voted to correct the error in the pamphlet, noting:

“The Spartacists’ break with the Social Democracy had been partial, notably on the question of the state, as shown by their continued defense of Eichhorn as police president. We would not have called for Eichhorn’s reinstatement. We would have defended the workers in the fleeting uprising in January 1919 against the SPD drive to crush the workers and soldiers councils and disarm the proletariat, while fighting to win the workers to the understanding that the capitalist state is an instrument of bourgeois repression that must be smashed.”

On 4 January 1919, the KPD’s *Die Rote Fahne* wrote: “The police force was trying to be a revolutionary police force, rather than actively or passively serving the counterrevolution,” thus reinforcing in



Emil Eichhorn

the working class the widespread misconception that Eichhorn and his cops could be the guarantors of the revolution. This is wrong. What should have been said was that in a capitalist government run by the SPD at the behest of counterrevolution, the police force *had* to serve counterrevolution.

The German Spartacists had the duty to defend the masses who took to the streets to protest Eichhorn’s ouster. At the same time, the outpouring indicated that the workers regarded a USPD police chief as a gain of the Revolution. If one could simply take over the existing organs of the bourgeois state, then there is no reason for the workers to forge their own insurrectionary force, a workers militia, to sweep away that state.

This fatal illusion helped determine the course of events in January 1919. The workers, many of whom were armed, were

not organized to struggle for power. Once this became evident, even the military units most sympathetic to the Revolution, such as the People’s Naval Division, vacillated. The door was opened for the counterrevolution to go on the offensive.

As V.I. Lenin explained in *The State and Revolution* (1917), the state is “an organ of class *rule*, an organ for the *oppression* of one class by another.” Polemicizing against Kautsky in that work, he wrote: “If the state is the product of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms...the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, *but also without the destruction* of the apparatus of state power which was created by the ruling class.” Although the Spartacists were well acquainted with Lenin’s book, they had not yet sloughed off all the old social-democratic baggage when they came face-to-face with revolution.

Eichhorn’s “socialist” police force had zero connection to socialism because the working class had not seized power, instituted a workers government and smashed the capitalist state. Under capitalism, police cannot be “reformed” nor can citizens “police” them to make them act in the interests of the exploited and oppressed. Along with the courts and the prisons, the cops have a job to do—to protect and defend private property and the capitalist system itself.

For Revolutionary Leadership

Although the January workers insurrection is dubbed the “Spartakist Uprising,” the KPD neither anticipated nor led it. Rather, the new party was swept up in the mass revolt. Liebknecht in particular got caught up in the dithering USPD-controlled Revolutionary Committee. One version of events has it that when he returned from the meeting where the proclamation “deposing” the government was signed, Luxemburg reproached him: “Karl, is *that* our program?”

Over the years, socialists had deeply adapted to the strictures of the state under the Kaiser. For example, a law passed in

1853 required all political meetings to have in attendance a police agent, who could terminate the meeting at will. The socialists accommodated to it, changing their language and their work to suit the law. While any organization would have to take into account the law, part of the necessary response was to create an underground organization, which the SPD and its direct predecessors failed to do.

In contrast, the Bolsheviks had developed their faction of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party separately from the reformist Mensheviks. By 1917, the Bolsheviks had through years of struggle forged a programmatically and organizationally cohesive cadre, as well as their own underground apparatus. Within a few weeks of the outbreak of the war, Lenin had resolved to split with the social-democratic Second International and to fight for a new, revolutionary international.

The Spartacists fought against the war on an internationalist basis, but their failure to appreciate the yawning gulf between revolution and opportunism meant they remained within the Social Democracy. As Lenin later put it in “A Letter to German Communists” (August 1921): “When the crisis broke out, however, the German workers lacked a genuine revolutionary party, owing to the fact that the split was brought about too late, and owing to the burden of the accursed tradition of ‘unity’ with capital’s corrupt (the Scheidemanns, Legiens, Davids and Co.) and spineless (the Kautskys, Hilferdings and Co.) gang of lackeys.”

From the first days of the November Revolution, the SPD vilified “Spartacus,” picturing them in *Vorwärts* as rapists and arsonists and Luxemburg as a wild, blood-thirsty beast. But despite the tightening of the noose, Luxemburg, Liebknecht and Jogiches remained in Berlin. Still holding that the necessary organization and consciousness would spring from the masses themselves and failing to appreciate the indispensability of leadership, they did not get out of the line of fire when they had the chance. This was very different from Lenin, who retreated to Finland when counterrevolutionary forces temporarily gained the ascendancy in Russia in July 1917.

Germany in 1918-19 cried out for a steeled revolutionary party like the Bolsheviks, one based on the absolute independence of the working class from the capitalist state. When the workers rise up in revolutionary struggle against capitalist rule, they must have their own bodies of self-defense and their own organs of rule, under the leadership of communists. In the heat of events, the KPD leadership was moving closer to this Leninist understanding, but too late. The bloody tragedy in January 1919 underscores the danger of placing confidence in the possibility of taking hold of the bourgeois state to advance working-class interests, illusions that can prove fatal to revolution. ■

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CIA Torture...

(continued from page 1)

is responsible to the people, disguises the brutality at the core of capitalist class rule. Witness Feinstein, who is prancing around with a halo as a supposed defender of civil liberties. The Senator has helped push through the massive expansion of the repressive powers of the state under the “war on terror” and howled for the heads of those like Julian Assange and Edward Snowden who exposed some of the imperialists’ crimes. Leading Congressional Democrats, including then-House speaker Nancy Pelosi, were briefed on the CIA’s “enhanced interrogation techniques” as early as 2002.

A former White House official told the *New York Times* (26 December 2014): “Many presidents tend to be smitten with the instruments of the intelligence community. I think Obama was more smitten than most,” adding, “this has been an intelligence presidency in a way we haven’t seen maybe since Eisenhower.” Such a reference may seem bizarre to liberals who like to quote Eisenhower’s warnings against the growth of the “military industrial complex.” Like Obama today, Eisenhower fretted over military quagmires costing American lives and dollars. So he vastly expanded covert activity, authorizing the CIA to engineer the overthrow of left-nationalist governments, beginning with Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954, with many more to follow. His efforts to undo the Cuban Revolution included a proposal for the U.S. government to carry out murderous acts of sabotage within the U.S. and blame them on Cuba as a pretext for war.

For his part, Obama, who never wanted the Senate investigation, has an anti-terror strategy that he presents as more compatible with the trappings of bourgeois democracy than that of his predecessor: pervasive snooping by the National Security Agency (NSA) and its ilk coupled with the CIA’s take-no-prisoners drone attacks, which have killed thousands, including many women and children. Torture isn’t by any means off Obama’s menu, though, as the 122 people still held in Guantánamo could attest.

Many liberals feel that the lack of any prosecutions weakens the effort to clean up the CIA’s image. Thus, the headline of a *New York Times* (21 December 2014) editorial calls to “Prosecute Torturers and Their Bosses” (by which its editors did not mean Bush). Since 2009, before his first inauguration, Obama has made clear that he did not intend to subject the torture carried out under Bush to official scrutiny, offering: “We need to look forward as opposed to looking backwards.” Shortly after taking office, he promised CIA officers that none of them would ever be prosecuted and, indeed, a Justice Department review of the torture program found no reason to indict anyone. In response to the Senate report, Obama declared that “a profound debt of gratitude” is owed to “the dedicated men and women of our intelligence community, including the Central Intelligence Agency.”

We are all for those responsible for torture getting their just deserts, while recognizing that such savagery is endemic to this system of exploitation and oppression. Justice for the innumerable victims of imperialist terror will only come when the working class has overthrown capitalist rule, sweeping aside the capitalist state apparatus and establishing a workers state. Reformist socialists pretend otherwise, sowing illusions in the possibility of a kinder, gentler imperialism, if only enough pressure is applied to Democratic Party politicians.

One such group, the Workers World Party, cites the Senate’s 1975-76 Church Committee as an example of the “struggle to restrain the CIA” (workers.org, 13 December 2014). Coming in the wake of the Watergate affair and the tumultuous social struggles of the 1960s and early ’70s, the Church Committee was set up to contain outrage sparked by investigative journalist Seymour Hersh’s revelations that the CIA was not only desta-

Imperialism in Decline



“It’s disappointing that even the secret shadow government can’t get anything done.”

Paul Noth

bilizing foreign governments but also spying on thousands of Americans. Committee hearings exposed the FBI/CIA’s repeated efforts to assassinate Cuba’s Fidel Castro and other foreign leaders as well as the campaign of spying on anti-war and civil rights activists.

In the end, the Church Committee covered up more than it revealed and led to the implementation of toothless “reforms”: Congressional “oversight” committees that have rubber stamped all the CIA’s machinations and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, which has given legal sanction to massive CIA/NSA wiretapping and surveillance. A rare dose of reality emerged from the Church Committee hearings when James Angleton, the CIA’s former chief of counterintelligence, said, “It is inconceivable that a secret intelligence arm of the government has to comply with all the overt orders of the government.”

The Long History of American Torture

Far from an aberration, torture has been a commonplace of modern capitalist society: the Belgians in the Congo, the British in Kenya and Northern Ireland, the French in Algeria, the now-ubiquitous “war on terror.” The U.S.—a society originating with the genocide of the indigenous population and built on the systematic oppression of black people from chattel slavery to today’s wage slavery—has its own long history of torture.

After seizing the Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico as colonies from Spain in 1898, U.S. troops killed up to half a million Filipinos to suppress a nationalist uprising. Colonel Jacob Smith (who a decade earlier participated in the massacre of Lakota Sioux at Wounded Knee) declared to his troops: “I want no prisoners. I wish you to kill and burn. The more you kill and the more you burn, the better you will please me.” Those who were taken prisoner were subjected to hideous torture. The most notorious was the “water cure,” in which bamboo tubes were forced down prisoners’ throats and dirty water pumped into their stomachs. Soldiers then jumped on their abdomens until the individual either “informed” or died.

While Washington was consolidating the country’s status as an imperialist power abroad, there was an epidemic of lynching at home. An average of two black people were lynched every week as Jim Crow segregation became the law of the land in the South. In addition to lynch mobs, there was the state’s legal lynching—the death penalty—often based on false confessions extracted with threats of the gun or the noose. But even the Mississippi Supreme Court in 1926 ruled that confessions obtained through waterboarding, “a specie of torture well known to the bench and bar of the country,” had crossed a line that mandated overturning a murder conviction.

Most of the world knows of the Nazi torture machine in the 1930s and ’40s. Kept hidden are the horrendous practices of the imperialist democracies at the time, including during the occupation of Germany after World War II. The Americans, along with the British, had set up Direct Interrogation Centers purportedly to uncover Nazi war criminals, but with the Cold War beginning they shortly turned to gathering intelligence on the Soviet Union. Anyone who had contact with the Soviet Zone could wind up in an interrogation center, where they were stripped naked, beaten, forced to stand for hours and deprived of sleep, mirroring the tortures described in the recent Senate report.



Bettmann

January 1968: U.S. soldiers and interpreter waterboard suspected Communist during Vietnam War.

As Giles MacDonogh records in his book *After the Reich: The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation* (2007):

“The Americans had used methods similar to those employed by the SS in Dachau. One of these was keeping the prisoner for long periods in solitary confinement.... Worse still were the mock executions, where the men were led off in hoods, while their guards told them they were approaching the gallows. Prisoners were actually lifted bodily off the ground to convince them they were about to swing.”

Many were kept imprisoned solely for having too much firsthand knowledge of the tortures to which they were subjected. Most of those held in American prisoner-of-war camps were German army conscripts drawn from the working masses, while former Nazi intelligence agents of the Gehlen organization were incorporated into the CIA.

CIA-organized torture was a weapon in U.S. imperialism’s efforts to overthrow the Soviet Union and the other deformed workers states, not least its attempted rollback of the social revolution in Vietnam. The CIA’s Phoenix program, begun in 1967, set up torture centers in every district of that country. In 1970, two U.S. Con-

gressmen went to Vietnam, finding tens of thousands of prisoners held in underground “tiger cages.” Then-Congressman Tom Harkin described, “There were as many as five people in an airless pit.... Many are forced to drink their own urine. Most of the men could not stand up, their legs having been paralyzed by beatings and by being shackled to a bar about one or two feet off the floor.”

In that same period, the cops and FBI tortured black militants in the U.S. One example was the effort to get Black Panthers to confess to the 1971 killing of San Francisco police officer John Young. During several days of interrogation in 1973, three Panther members were stripped, blindfolded and beaten, covered with blankets soaked in boiling water, shocked with electric cattle prods on their genitals and anuses. Even though the charges were thrown out in 1975 on the basis that their confessions had been coerced through torture, the vendetta against the former Panthers framed up for the killing of the cop continued until 2011.

Today, tortures such as isolation and sensory deprivation are a daily reality for the thousands of inmates—overwhelmingly black and Latino—in the solitary confinement Special Housing Units (SHU) of America’s prisons. The High Security Units in the Lexington, Kentucky, women’s prison were a prototype for the SHUs. Those units were designed to hold leftist political activists as part of Ronald Reagan’s “war on terror,” launched in 1986. Among the women locked up in them were leftists Susan Rosenberg and Silvia Baraldini as well as Alejandrina Torres, a supporter of the Puerto Rican-nationalist FALN.

The prisoner held the longest in solitary confinement in this country is Albert Woodfox. He has been in solitary since 1972, framed up with another Black Panther for the killing of a prison guard. Woodfox is kept in a closet-size, windowless cell 23 hours per day. He eats all

his meals alone and has no access to the prison’s educational or religious activities. Even though he is under constant supervision and is shackled whenever he is moved, he is subjected to visual body cavity searches up to six times a day. Woodfox’s conviction has repeatedly been overturned, most recently this past November, but his conditions remain unchanged.

Socialist Revolution Will End Imperialist Barbarism

While torture is an intrinsic part of the armory of repression of capitalist states everywhere, another type of society is possible, the model for which issued out of the Russian October Revolution of 1917. Led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, that revolution made the working class the rulers of society for the first time in history. The Soviet workers state was a fundamentally different state than any capitalist state. It defended not the interests of a tiny exploiting minority but of the vast majority of society—the working masses of the proletariat and poor peasantry. As part of their liberating program, the Bolsheviks repudiated dehumanizing barbarities like torture, even while using

What compels a person to take action on his own and at great personal risk against the most deadly government on earth? Why does a so-called democracy spy on its own citizens, foreign nationals and even allied heads of state? *Citizenfour* is the story of Edward Snowden, a former private contractor for the National Security Agency (NSA) and the CIA who disclosed details of how the U.S. government, in cahoots with the largest telecommunications and internet service companies, spies on virtually everyone, everywhere. Those disclosures revealed Big Brother's spy apparatus to be far greater than previously known.

Snowden used the alias "Citizenfour" to make contact with Laura Poitras, a writer and filmmaker who for years has tenaciously exposed U.S. surveillance activities. For her courageous truth-telling,

By A. Stevens

Poitras earned a spot on a government watch list. *Citizenfour* is the third part of her trilogy about how the world has changed since September 11, 2001 under the endless U.S. "war on terror."

Snowden's story, which captured the front pages of newspapers across the globe in 2013, is well known. Yet it is riveting to watch it unfold in real time, with Poitras behind the camera as Snowden gives his account to journalists Glenn Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill in a Hong Kong hotel room. The film also provokes the disturbing recognition that people feel so powerless in the face of relentless government overreach that Snowden's exposure of the NSA, which caused a tremendous stir just over a year ago, is now met with little more than a collective shrug of resignation. Worse yet is the acquiescence, expressed in the often-heard line: "If you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear." Tell that to the legions of fighters against class and race inequality in this country whose lives have been wrecked or snuffed out through government surveillance and repression.

Surveillance is a weapon in the arsenal of state repression. *Citizenfour* reveals that there are 1.2 million people on U.S. watch lists. The small city of Dearborn, Michigan, (population 96,000) has the largest percentage of Arab Americans and Muslim Americans per capita and has thus been racially profiled by law enforcement as the number two place in the country where suspected terrorists reside.

In the aftermath of the cold-blooded killing of black teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, where another white cop walked away with a pat on the back, it's important to recognize the connection between surveillance and racial and political profiling. Protesters against

Hail Edward Snowden!

Citizenfour: A Review



Edward Snowden (left), with David Miranda, Glenn Greenwald and Laura Poitras.

racist American injustice need to be aware that fighters for social change in this country are put on one or another government watch list. And in a nation founded on black chattel slavery, a special place is reserved for fighters for racial equality and opponents of capitalist class rule. As James Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time* (1962): "People find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger."

Capitalist Decay and Attacks on the Right to Privacy

The "war on terror" has been a pretext for unfettered force and violence by the American ruling class abroad and at home, from the wars and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq to the shredding of the civil liberties of the U.S. population. In Washington's "anti-terror" crusade, national security is the trump card to quash democratic rights. First the Republican Bush administration and then the Democrat Barack Obama seized on the September 11, 2001 attacks to institutionalize extraordinary government powers and snooping through such measures as the USA Patriot Act. These are merely the

top shelf of an entire arsenal of repressive legislation that includes the 1917 Espionage Act, which has always been used to criminalize dissent and repress labor and leftist opposition to the U.S. government during wartime. Among its first and most prominent victims was Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs, jailed for his political speech and agitation against the capitalist slaughter of World War I.

Snowden is threatened with prosecution under the Espionage Act if he were to return to the U.S. from temporary asylum in Russia. Chelsea Manning, who was tortured and now languishes in Leavenworth Prison, was sentenced to 35 years under the Espionage Act. Manning was gone after for letting the world see irrefutable government evidence, documented in its own military logs and diplomatic cables, of heinous U.S. war crimes as well as the everyday depredations of imperialist domination. Snowden was inspired by Manning's outstanding courage to step forward with his own gigantic trove of information. Curiously, Manning is not mentioned in Poitras's film, yet it is crucial to link all current struggles for justice with the fight to free victims of government repression. Julian Assange, who published Manning's

material on WikiLeaks, is threatened with U.S. prosecution and remains ensconced in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London. We demand: **Free Chelsea Manning! Hands off Edward Snowden! Hands off Julian Assange!**

The film does show tantalizing evidence of yet another insider with a conscience, who was inspired by Snowden to leak new evidence of U.S. government dirty tricks to Glenn Greenwald. The U.S. government has created its own security nightmare, as disillusioned idealistic servants bite back like the multiheaded Hydra and lift the veil on government secrecy.

In the salad days of its struggle against the yoke of the British monarchy's colonial rule, the American bourgeoisie fought for the right to privacy and enshrined it as the Fourth Amendment in the original 1791 Bill of Rights. This legal protection against unreasonable searches and seizures by the government grew out of English common law, which enjoined the police or other forces of the Crown from entering a private home without an official writ. This protection was effectively nullified in the American colonies, where royal magistrates and judges routinely issued writs and warrants to allow British soldiers to ransack private homes and seize property without so much as a suspicion of crime.

The legitimization of black chattel slavery in the U.S. Constitution bespeaks the limited, conservative goals of the bourgeois-democratic American Revolution. Nonetheless, the so-called "founding fathers," leaders from a period when the bourgeoisie was historically progressive, would be outlaws today in the period of advanced capitalist decay. America's rulers would appear to them as King George loyalists and traitors to their own revolution and citizenry. The U.S. government has long served as the gendarme for reaction worldwide and backed the bloodiest regimes on the planet. The silver-tongued Obama intones "freedom" while shredding democratic rights at home, prosecuting more whistleblowers than all prior presidents combined and directly authorizing assassinations of U.S. citizens abroad.

It's Gonna Take a Revolution

Glenn Greenwald's latest book, *No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014), is a good read in conjunction with viewing Poitras's *Citizenfour*. The same conversations with Snowden that Poitras captured on film are related in greater detail in Greenwald's book. Poitras and Greenwald have both moved to other countries to continue their work at greater distance from vindictive and threatening American authorities. Poitras has been

continued on page 8

all means necessary to ensure victory in the civil war against Russian counterrevolutionaries and the 14 capitalist powers that sent troops to overthrow the workers government.

Temporary and drastic measures were required to defeat counterrevolution. For that purpose, the early Soviet workers state established the Cheka (Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution and Sabotage). The Cheka's methods reflected the proletarian morality of the Soviet power. In 1918, Cheka head Felix Dzerzhinsky issued the following instructions:

"Let all those who are assigned to conduct searches, take people into custody, and imprison them behave solicitously toward those being arrested or searched. Let them be much more courteous even than toward close friends. Let them remember that the incarcerated cannot defend themselves and that they are in our power. Each and every one must remember that they represent Soviet power, the workers' and peasants' government, and that any verbal abuse, rudeness, injustice, or impropriety is a blot upon the Soviet power."

When a small Moscow journal, *Cheka Weekly*, published a letter calling for the use of torture, the Cheka responded, "The proletariat is merciless in its struggle. At



Felix Dzerzhinsky (center) with other Cheka members, September 1919. Cheka (Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution and Sabotage) was founded in 1917 to defend fledgling Soviet workers state.

the same time it is unshakable and strong. Not a single curse at our most wicked enemies. No tortures and torments!" The Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, the highest governmental body, passed a decree: "The Soviet

regime fundamentally rejects the measures advocated in the indicated article, as despicable, dangerous, and contrary to the interests of the struggle for Communism" (quoted in Roy A. Medvedev, *Let History Judge* [1972]). The *Cheka Weekly* was

closed down, and the authors of the letter dismissed and forbidden to hold office in the Soviet republic.

The economic backwardness of Russia, the decimation of the advanced layers of the proletariat during the civil war and the failure to extend the revolution internationally allowed a bureaucratic caste headed by J.V. Stalin to usurp political power from the proletariat in 1923-24. Under the Stalinist regime, all the old "tortures and torments" denounced by the early Soviet government were revived. Despite its Stalinist degeneration, the Soviet Union remained a workers state, based on proletarian property forms, until its final undoing through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92.

We stand in the tradition of the liberating goals of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks. Our aim is to win revolutionary-minded youth and proletarian fighters to the necessity of building revolutionary parties, in the U.S. and internationally, to lead the working class to power. Only then will mankind be able put an end to torture, repression and imperialist war and develop a society of abundance, where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. ■

Citizenfour...

(continued from page 7)

detained and had her notes and electronics seized more than 40 times at U.S. airports. Some of Greenwald’s colleagues in the capitalist media howled for him to be prosecuted because he dared print what the government sought to keep under wraps. In a gratuitously vicious move to torment Greenwald, the British authorities, in league with the U.S., detained and terrorized his partner and political collaborator, David Miranda, when he ferried documents from Poitras to Greenwald through London’s Heathrow airport.

Edward Snowden was compelled by his conscience to risk everything he had in life by taking a stand against omnipresent U.S. government surveillance because he thinks people have a right to know what the government is doing and a right to debate and change policy. In this, Snowden shares a moral and political compass with Chelsea Manning. We hail their courageous acts. Despite Manning’s and Snowden’s self-identification as U.S. patriots, their disclosures provide a factual basis for Marxists like us to help working people see through the stupefying fog of patriotism and democracy that is peddled by the bourgeoisie to dull the wits of those they exploit. It is going to take more than leaks and whistles to fundamentally change society. An essential precondition is the understanding that the government is not “ours,” nor can it be made into a neutral arbiter.

Rather, it is part of the machine to maintain capitalist class rule, suitably disguised as an expression and tool of “the people.”

Glenn Greenwald expresses the views held by many libertarians, liberals and reformist leftists that the problem with the encroaching police state is simply that it is wildly out of control. Greenwald argues, “The alternative to mass surveillance is not the complete elimination of surveillance. It is, instead, targeted surveillance, aimed only at those for whom there is substantial evidence to believe they are engaged in real wrongdoing.” Asking capitalism’s secret police to play nice is like asking a great white shark to chew softly.

In capitalist society, where a tiny minority of the population lives off the labor of the working class, the rulers will always resort to spying, lying and violence to keep the vast majority down. Anything that challenges property rights and the racial, ethnic, religious and moral prejudices that prop up this whole capitalist system of exploitation and injustice constitutes “wrongdoing.” The liberals are blinded by lofty words like “freedom” and “democracy”—classless terms that snooker working people into believing they have equal rights in an increasingly unequal society. Any talk of achieving freedom that does not involve a struggle for the abolition of classes is simply a lie.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels explained the fundamental difference in purpose between petty-bourgeois democrats and communists in their 1850 “Address of the Central Authority to the [Communist]



Demotix

London protest calling for Chelsea Manning’s freedom, December 2013.

League.” Against a backdrop of the failed German bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1848, in which the bourgeoisie had gone over to the side of the old reactionary classes against the revolutionary proletariat, Marx and Engels observed:

“Far from desiring to transform the whole of society for the revolutionary proletarians, the democratic petty bourgeois strive for a change in social conditions by means of which the existing society will be made as tolerable and comfortable as possible for them....

“While the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible...it is our interest and our task to make the revo-

lution permanent, until all more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, the proletariat has conquered state power, and the association of proletarians, not only in one country but in all the dominant countries of the world, has advanced so far that competition among the proletarians in these countries has ceased and that at least the decisive productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians. For us the issue cannot be the alteration of private property but only its annihilation, not the smoothing over of class antagonisms but the abolition of classes, not the improvement of the existing society but the foundation of a new one.” ■

France...

(continued from page 1)

assassination of eight people since the early 1990s, were carried out in the name of biblical injunction. Of course, such anti-woman violence does not count as religious extremism in a country where Christian fundamentalists wield substantial political influence.

We print below a translation of a January 17 statement issued by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France. It refers to Vigipirate, a massive mobilization of the French police and military to sow terror in minority neighborhoods and to patrol transportation hubs hunting for supposed terror suspects.

* * *

The criminal attacks in Paris carried out by Islamic fundamentalists against the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and during a hostage situation in a kosher supermarket at Porte de Vincennes—civilians selected and killed in a store because they were Jewish—are horrific acts that we categorically condemn. But this does not stop us from also vigorously opposing the cynical campaign of “national unity” fueled by the capitalist government to promote its “war on terrorism” and reinforce the police and military apparatus of French imperialism. We oppose the Vigipirate security plan and the climate of war created by the bourgeois propaganda machine. We are also opposed to all measures that strengthen the arsenal of police repression as well as the new “anti-terrorist” military adventures that have already been announced or are being prepared. The calls for the “unity” of classes, supported by the misleaders of the trade-union federations, serve only to bind the working class and the oppressed to their oppressors. **Down with Vigipirate!**

This “national unity” campaign will continue to fuel an anti-Muslim pogromist atmosphere throughout the country and strengthen the rise of the fascists of [the National Front’s Marine] Le Pen and her ilk. In the days following the attack against *Charlie Hebdo*, a series of attacks took place against the Muslim community in a dozen cities across France—gunshots, grenades, graffiti desecrations and pigs’ heads left at the doors of mosques. In this sense, the Paris terrorist attacks are also a blow against the Muslim population, which was already in the crosshairs of the capitalist state.



Corbis

“National unity” rally in Paris, January 11. Right: French president François Hollande and German chancellor Angela Merkel. Above: Communist Party banner invokes France’s “republican values,” cover for racist French imperialism.

The January 11 demonstration in Paris, organized by the SP government, was an obscene expression of imperialist arrogance and hypocrisy. There one could see the heads of capitalist states who are among the most brutal and barbaric criminals in the world today, from [Germany’s Angela] Merkel and [Britain’s David] Cameron to Israeli prime minister Netanyahu. And taking center stage was Hollande, who pursues a savage domestic policy of austerity and attacks against the working class and expels Roma and other immigrants by the thousands. Hollande is the leader of French imperialism, which has a history of over 100 years of oppression and the massacre of millions of colonized subjects. Recently, it has conducted murderous interventions in Iraq, Libya, the Central African Republic and Mali.

The repeated military interventions by France and other imperialist powers, with their legacy of destruction and massacres, have played a direct role in the rise of Islamists in the Near East—and in France itself. From North Africa to the Levant, the French bourgeoisie and its successive governments carry on today, as do other imperialist powers including the U.S. and Great Britain, a policy that dates back to colonial times. They plunder the natural resources and retard the economic development of their former colonies, and they have reduced entire regions to a pile of rubble while stoking deadly ethnic and religious divisions.

The National Assembly has just decided



Reuters

in an almost-unanimous vote to extend France’s military commitment in Iraq against ISIS. The imperialists have never had the slightest qualms about supporting such reactionary forces when they feel this can serve their sordid interests. For three years, the French in particular supported the “Syrian revolution,” even as the number of reactionary jihadists was steadily increasing. Now the French rulers have cynically turned against the monster they themselves helped to create.

It is the imperialists who are responsible for the bloody chaos into which this region has been plunged. They are the worst enemies of humanity, and any blow to the imperialist forces and their foot soldiers, even on the part of forces as repugnant as ISIS, would thus serve the interests of the international working class. Marxists place themselves militarily on the side of ISIS against imperialism, without giving the least political support to these reactionaries, who are our resolute enemies. **Down with American and French imperialist intervention in Iraq! French troops out of the Near East and Africa!**

The capitalist rulers have seized upon the Vincennes atrocity in order to posture as defenders of the Jews. What hypocrisy! The sordid history of the French bourgeoisie vis-à-vis the Jews includes the Dreyfus

affair as well as the deportation of over 75,000 Jews—men, women, children and the elderly—to the Nazi death camps.

Since 2012, when Mohamed Merah killed three Jewish schoolchildren and their teacher, there has been a sharp increase in the number of Jews emigrating from France. The bourgeoisie has seized on that attack to pass off the entire population of the immigrant suburbs as repugnant anti-Semites, while supporting the terrorist actions of the Israeli state against the Palestinians. All of this is used by fundamentalist preachers and fascist scum like Dieudonné/Soral, who seek to whip up reactionary anti-Jewish prejudices in the suburbs by identifying all Jews with the murderous Zionist rulers.

Of all the European countries, France has the largest population of Jews and Muslims. The French bourgeoisie uses the policy of “divide and rule” in order to benefit from the conflict between Jews and Arabs in the Near East as well as to sow divisions within the working class here in France between its various components—those of so-called “French origin,” Jews, those of North African or Sub-Saharan African origin. The workers movement must defend Jews, Muslims, homosexuals, women and all the oppressed against attacks by reactionaries and fascists as well as against the offensive of the capitalist state.

The Paris demonstration was awash with “I Am Charlie” placards. The attack against *Charlie Hebdo* was a despicable criminal act. However, we are not “Charlie.” Since 11 September 2001, *Charlie Hebdo* has carved out a niche for itself in the Islamophobic bourgeois press. In a context of growing racist campaigns against the population of North African and African origin, and in the guise of the fight against Islamic fundamentalism, *Charlie Hebdo* has regularly published anti-Muslim cartoons and articles. The front page of the issue published on the day of the murders promoted the latest racist and Islamophobic rant of writer Michel Houellebecq. *Charlie Hebdo* also provocatively published the racist Danish cartoons in 2006, including the one in which the turban of the prophet Mohammed covered a bomb. We denounced these cartoons, which serve only to encourage attacks by the state and the fascists against the oppressed. [See “Racist Anti-Muslim Cartoons Spark Fundamentalist Frenzy,” WV No. 864, 17 February 2006.]

While the French bourgeoisie and its government hail the right of free speech for Islamophobic provocations, this right is

Greece...

(continued from page 12)

like lawyers, doctors, professors, etc.—a layer with no independent class interests, which under capitalism is generally drawn behind the interests of the bourgeoisie. Syriza’s mild anti-austerity rhetoric and left-sounding stances on some social questions may make the bourgeoisie scream about their supposed radicalism. And the EU imperialists and Greek capitalists are clearly worried that Syriza cannot be trusted to impose EU-dictated austerity. But Syriza’s class character is nonetheless bourgeois. This makes it unprincipled for revolutionary Marxists to give it any form of political support.

The reformist Antarsya has no such principles and even though it claims to oppose the EU, it cannot bring itself to call explicitly for a vote against Syriza. Antarsya complains that the KKE “turn their fire more toward the militant left forces instead of the government and the system” (“ANTARSYA statement for the elections of 25/1”). Given that the KKE’s polemical fire is overwhelmingly aimed at Syriza, this amounts to an attack on the KKE from the right in defense of Syriza. *No vote to Antarsya!* In contrast to the rest of the reformist left, the KKE opposes any kind of political support to Syriza and has continued to reject its overtures to form a coalition in order to bring a “left” capitalist government to power.

The International Communist League has stood in principled opposition to the imperialist EU and the euro from the beginning. The EU’s purpose is to enable the imperialist powers of Europe, led by Germany, to subordinate weaker capitalist countries like Greece and impose savage austerity on working people throughout Europe, including in Germany. The EU, IMF and local capitalists have devastated the living standards of the masses in Greece, Portugal, Spain and other countries and continue to demand more vicious cuts and the total overturn of trade union rights. Working people are thus made to pay the debts racked up by the capitalists and their bloodsucking banks. *There is no way forward for the workers and the oppressed within the capitalist EU!*

The reformist KKE correctly says: “Out of the EU, cancel the debt” and “Reject the blackmail and lies of ND-Syriza, the people have bled enough for the EU-plutocracy.” As we did in our campaign of critical support in 2012, we call for a vote to the KKE while sharply criticizing their political program of nationalist populism, which is an obstacle to the consciousness the working class needs in order to carry out a successful socialist revolution.

A Greek exit from the EU as a result of militant workers struggle would be an

important step forward, but not a solution in itself. The crisis in Greece is part of a world economic crisis of the imperialist system, which cannot be resolved within the borders of any single country, particularly within small, dependent Greece with its low level of industry and resources. The only way forward is a series of socialist revolutions that will expropriate the bourgeoisies, including in the imperialist centers, and establish an internationally collectivized, planned economy under workers rule. For a Socialist United States of Europe!

But the KKE’s leaders posit that Greece can achieve “socialism” without an international extension of workers revolution, a Stalinist distortion of Marxism. They also call for “people’s power,” dissolving the proletariat, which uniquely has the social power to overthrow capitalism, into the “people.” This obscures that the central class division in capitalist society is between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and not between the “people” and the “monopolies.” The KKE embraces Greek nationalism, as shown by their defense of capitalist Greece’s borders. To prove their patriotism they are running as an election candidate Giannis Douniadakis, a retired Greek naval officer who served in defense posts for the Greek government. This bona fide representative of the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state also served in NATO, which makes a mockery of the KKE’s opposition to this imperialist alliance. *We say: No vote to Douniadakis!*

Greek nationalism, based on the pillars of the Orthodox church, the institution of the family and the military, is the poison used by the fascist Golden Dawn to win support among the ruined petty-bourgeoisie and to deflect its anger toward immigrants, leftists, gay people and trade unionists. The KKE leader-



Trotskyist Group of Greece
Piraeus, January 11: Crowd waves Communist Party (KKE) flags together with Greek national flags during rally for party’s 96th anniversary.

ship has remained criminally passive in response to fascist attacks on its party and others. Despite the KKE’s social weight in the trade unions, it has no perspective of taking the lead in mobilizing contingents of workers, based on the unions, to defend immigrants, leftists and gay people and sweep the fascists off the streets. The working class cannot defend itself against the capitalist crisis if it does not take up this urgent struggle. The fascists’ ultimate goal is the destruction of the unions and the left, which is why the capitalists keep them in reserve. *For mass, workers united-front mobilizations to stop the fascists!*

Workers must not believe that the fascists can be stopped through the jailing of some Golden Dawn leaders and other

legal measures by the state against them. Such measures serve to repress the left as well. No capitalist government, even a “left” one under Syriza, will be able to satisfy the desperate demands of the masses for jobs, healthcare and pensions. In these conditions, the fascists will continue to grow. It is necessary for the working class to come to the fore in militant struggle to defend all those ruined by the capitalist crisis. A class-struggle response to the populist demagoguery of the fascists is needed: Organize the unorganized! Unions must defend immigrant workers—for full citizenship rights for all immigrants! For jobs for all through a shorter workweek with no loss in pay! For a sliding scale of wages to keep up with the cost of living! Repudiate the debt! Nationalize the banks!

This struggle would point to the need for the working class to completely expropriate the bourgeoisie and establish its own government through socialist revolution. But this is not the perspective of the KKE leadership who might currently refuse a coalition government with Syriza, but are not opposed to administering the capitalist state. In fact, a KKE mayor currently administers the capitalist state on the local level in Patras, just as Syriza’s bourgeois prefect administers Attica. Nor has the KKE fundamentally broken with the program that led them to join bourgeois governments in the past, as explained at length in our article “Greece 1940s: A Revolution Betrayed” [in *Spartacist* (English-language edition) No. 64, Summer 2014, see the ad below to order, or read it on the ICL website at www.icl-fi.org].

We take Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party as our model for the kind of revolutionary party that needs to be forged here and internationally in counterposition to the reformist programs of both the Stalinist KKE and the rest of the Greek left. *For new October Revolutions!* ■



Reuters
Women gather for food handouts, Athens, April 2014. European Union-imposed economic austerity has devastated working people, unemployed.

denied to anyone who expresses an opinion—even in a private conversation or on Facebook—that does not coincide with the government’s “republican values.” Indeed, under the Cazeneuve law that was passed in November, they can be thrown in jail. Two hundred public-school students were identified for not observing the January 8 national minute of silence as well as for other acts; about 40 of them were reported to the police. More than 70 people have been arrested so far, including the anti-Jewish demagogue Dieudonné, for “apology for acts of terrorism,” simply for having expressed an opinion. In Lille, three civil service workers are threatened with being fired for not observing the minute of silence. Hearings and trials have been sped up and several people have already been convicted—one was sentenced to four years in prison. The accused can be hit with heavy fines and up to five years in prison for a verbal offense and up to seven years if an offending text is posted on the Internet. *We demand that these charges be dropped! Free those who have been jailed!*

In the aftermath of the attacks, [Prime Minister Manuel] Valls is preparing to further beef up the already enormous police powers introduced over the past few years, allowing the state, among other

things, to continue to siphon data from the Internet (now in all legality). Already, 10,500 soldiers and over 100,000 gendarmes and police have been deployed. Countless demonstrators on Sunday [January 11] applauded the cops. But the cops are the guardians of capital; their role is to protect the racist capitalist order. They are enemies of the working class and the oppressed. They persecute dark-skinned youth, round up undocumented workers and help the bosses break strikes. They are at the core of the state, which defends the capitalist ruling class, as shown for example in the police assassination of several hundred Algerian workers in Paris on 17 October 1961.

Islam in France is a minority religion in a country in which the bourgeoisie and its culture remain fundamentally Catholic. As Marxists, we are resolutely for the separation of the reactionary Catholic church and the state. That is what secularism is, but today in France it has become a code word used to stigmatize Islam.

The appearance in French cities of murderous Islamic fundamentalists, from Merah to Nemmouche and today the Kouachi brothers and Amedy Coulibaly, is a direct product of the segregation and alienation of millions of people, French

second-class citizens who are victims of unrelenting racist discrimination. The influence of Islamic fundamentalism developed in the ghettos following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state in 1991-92 and the many betrayals committed for decades by the chauvinist leaders of the workers movement. Notably, the leaders of the organized workers movement refused to defend dark-skinned youth during the 2005 revolt in the suburbs, which was a desperate reaction to increasing daily racist terror and unemployment.

Against the “national unity” campaign, we Marxists say that only the organized working class, conscious of its historical role in liberating the oppressed masses, is able to put an end to the domination of the capitalist class and its state. The working class can advance the struggle against capitalist exploitation only through uncompromising defense of the oppressed and democratic rights, and in opposition to all imperialist atrocities committed by “its” capitalist ruling class, at home and abroad. Our task is to build a revolutionary proletarian party based on the Marxist understanding that the whole rotten capitalist system must be overthrown through workers revolution. ■

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Selma...

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challenges an older black woman to name every county judge in the state, and when she cannot, sneeringly stamps “denied” on her application. King announced that his Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) would make the town the center of its own voter registration campaign.

As we wrote at the time in “Conspiracy and Treachery in Alabama” (*Spartacist* No. 4, May-June 1965, reprinted in WV No. 1051, 5 September 2014):

“From the beginning the black voter registration campaign in the South was an assertion of potential independence—directed against the underlying social system as well as the segregationist political apparatus which helps maintain it. Revolutionary in implication because it involved organizing masses of black workers and share-croppers in struggle, the mass character of the movement poses a dangerous threat to the American ruling class and its politicians. Hence they use every means at their disposal to derail the movement—including sending in such kept leaders as Martin Luther King—to head it off and deliver it to the Democratic Party where the job of beheading and neutralizing it can be finished off.”

While lionizing King, *Selma* makes clear that MLK aimed to use the blood of black civil rights foot soldiers to pressure the capitalist ruling class to grant those demands its liberal wing was willing to concede. *Selma* portrays King lecturing SNCC militants: “What we do is negotiate, demonstrate, resist. And a big part of

Selma’s portrayal of Democratic President Lyndon B. Johnson as a recalcitrant racist who orchestrated FBI wiretapping of King has elicited a howl from liberal commentators. Former Johnson aides and historians point out that Johnson and King actually collaborated closely. In fact, the film captures LBJ’s attitude toward MLK when the president is depicted telling FBI director J. Edgar Hoover: “If he’s a degenerate, what I do know is he’s a nonviolent degenerate and I want him to go on leading the civil rights movement, not one of these bloodthirsty militants.” The Texas Dixiecrat Johnson’s catering to racists (which he did) and his administration’s spying on King (which it did) did not preclude the White House from collaborating with MLK.

As CEO of U.S. imperialism, Johnson was carrying out the will of a section of the American capitalist ruling class, which had its own reasons for acquiescing to the dismantlement of Jim Crow. With the mechanization of agriculture, which largely displaced sharecropping, and the increased urbanization of the black population, the system of legal segregation that had been consolidated to enforce the powerlessness of the black rural poor was rendered obsolete. Jim Crow also exposed the hypocrisy of the U.S. imperialists, who were extolling the supposed virtues of American democracy as part of their Cold War drive against the Soviet Union.

The tempo of the Selma events made it necessary for LBJ to offer some kind of voting rights law. The culmination of the



North Carolina, May 1965: Klan parades with murderers of Viola Liuzzo, civil rights activist killed hours after Selma-to-Montgomery march.

Party pressure politics. Far from being a transcendent leader of a unified movement, as *Selma* portrays, King was one of the political poles against which the left wing of the civil rights movement was defined.

Outrageously, the film slanders SNCC activists, particularly James Forman, as arrogant, petulant opponents of the Selma protests whose main interest was defending their own turf against the SCLC; and King wins every argument with them. In reality, the differences between King and the SNCC activists were over burning political issues, such as reliance on the Democrats and the federal government, along with the question of armed self-defense. (See “SNCC: ‘Black Power’ and the Democrats,” reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 2, 1985.)

When SNCC was formed in 1960, it was a constituent part of the Southern black liberal establishment, the youth group of what W.E.B. Du Bois had termed the “talented tenth.” But through bitter experience, SNCC had been radicalized by its grassroots organizing of poor black sharecroppers, which repeatedly brought it into direct conflict not just with the Dixiecrats, but the whole racist, capitalist state.

The film alludes to the 1961-62 protests in Albany, Georgia, where SNCC activists were already becoming disenchanted with King. When civil rights protesters were getting arrested by the hundreds in late 1961, King intoned: “Don’t get weary, children. We will wear them down by our capacity to suffer.” The next summer, black youth fought back with bricks and bottles when cops attacked a rally outside a black church. King declared a “day of penance” for the “violence.” SNCC, though, refused to condemn the protesters. In Albany, many SNCC members began to refer to MLK privately and derisively as “De Lawd.” This epithet is slipped into the movie so fleetingly that those unfamiliar with the history would not even notice it.

Selma was bracketed by the uprisings in Harlem in 1964 and Watts in 1965, which had a profound impact on SNCC

militants. It was now clear that the “turn the other cheek” pacifist ethos was losing its resonance for increasing numbers of the embittered urban black masses. In response to Watts, King declared, “It was necessary that as powerful a police force as possible be brought in to check them [the ghetto masses].” King’s defense of cop terror to smash the ghetto explosions was the ultimate proof of what his one-sided “nonviolence” was about.

Up to that point, the young SNCC militants broadly accepted nonviolence. Now many asked themselves how nonviolence and voter registration could answer the oppression of Northern ghetto blacks. After “Watts had exploded in August, 1965,” Forman later wrote, “could we still call ourselves ‘nonviolent’ and remain in the vanguard of black militancy? If we were revolutionaries, what was it that we sought to overthrow?” (*The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 1972).

It was SNCC activists who invited Malcolm X to Selma to speak after King’s arrest. In keeping with today’s liberal myth that King and Malcolm X were moving toward a meeting of the minds, the movie falsely portrays Malcolm X apologizing to Coretta Scott King for his criticisms of her husband. That apology never happened (nor was Malcolm ever the mealy-mouthed wimp shown on screen). In fact, Malcolm bitterly opposed King’s kowtowing, and that never changed. Around the same time, after a fascist punched King in a Selma hotel lobby, Malcolm fired off a telegram to Nazi *führer* George Lincoln Rockwell:

“This is to warn you that I am no longer held in check from fighting white supremacists by Elijah Muhammad’s separatist Black Muslim movement, and that if your present racist agitation against our people there in Alabama causes physical harm to Reverend King or any other black Americans who are only attempting to enjoy their rights as free human beings, that you and your Ku Klux Klan friends will be met with maximum physical retaliation from those of us who are not hand-cuffed by the disarming philosophy of nonviolence, and who believe in asserting our right of self-defense—by any means necessary.”

After the Selma protests, in April 1965 Stokely Carmichael and other SNCC activists stayed on to work in neighboring Lowndes County. There they organized an independent political party, taking a snarling black panther as its symbol, which soon came to be called the Black Panther Party. Although narrowly based on a single impoverished rural county, the Panthers were important because they were organized in *opposition* to the Democratic Party. As Carmichael said, it was “as ludicrous for Negroes to join [the Democratic Party] as it would have been for Jews to join the Nazi party in the 1930s.” Local residents agreed. One recalled, “SNCC mentioned about the third party and we decided we would do it, because it didn’t make sense for us to go join the Democratic party when they were the people who had done the killing in the county and had beat our heads.” Although *Selma* deals with numerous capitalist politicians, it doesn’t mention what party they were in. Why? They were all Democrats: from LBJ to Governor George Wallace to the local Alabama segregationists—to MLK!

The Lowndes County Black Panther Party was also important for its open



Cartoon from Muhammad Speaks captures cringing pacifism of Martin Luther King.

that is raising white consciousness, and in particular the consciousness of which ever white man happens to be sitting in the Oval Office.” King’s strategy of non-violent resistance was in fact a pledge of allegiance to the white power structure.

When King was jailed in early February, Selma exploded with protest marches, and over a thousand protesters were arrested. After the murder of 26-year-old protester Jimmie Lee Jackson by a trooper, the SCLC called for a protest march from Selma to the state capital in Montgomery. On March 7, a day subsequently known as “Bloody Sunday,” 2,000 marchers were stopped on the Pettus Bridge by a phalanx of state troopers and deputies, who attacked them with clubs, bullwhips and tear gas, driving them back through the city streets.

The film’s crisis point comes with the second attempt at the march to Montgomery three days later. At the bridge, again faced with a horde of state troopers, King gets everyone on their knees to pray, and then suddenly stands and turns the marchers back. In the movie, King’s decision to turn around is shown as a response to a directive from God. In reality, the directive had come from the federal government. As recounted in Clayborne Carson’s *In Struggle* (1981), the Feds worked out a secret deal with MLK that if he turned back the marchers, the state troopers would not attack them. The film shows that SNCC members were bitter at King’s reversal. Indeed, SNCC activists began openly talking of King as a coward and sellout. Instead of “We Shall Overcome,” the young militants sang “We Shall Overrun.”

film is the third, final march to Montgomery, portrayed as a brilliant success. We wrote at the time, “The march acquired the character of an ‘official’ parade directly launched from Washington, with a corps of food and latrine trucks, doctors and nurses, swarms of politicians, etc., and Federal troops standing guard along the route.” As the film shows, the march was a sea of American flags waved by an integrated crowd. It amounted to a support rally for LBJ and the Democrats.

SNCC: Breaking with Nonviolence and the Democrats

What *Selma* disappears is that by 1965 a whole layer of SNCC militants were rejecting King’s liberal pacifist, pro-Democratic

Spartacist



Black History Month Forums

Racist Cop Terror and the Fraud of Police Reform For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Speaker: Diana Coleman, Veteran Activist in the Southern Civil Rights Movement

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Saturday, Feb. 28

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advocacy of armed self-defense, which was a burning necessity for the black movement in the South. In Monroe, North Carolina, beginning in 1959 local NAACP head Robert Williams’ courageous battle against KKK terror (described in his 1962 book *Negroes with Guns*) became a beacon to black militants throughout the South. Indeed, Forman had visited Williams in 1961 just before the FBI hounded Williams into exile in Cuba. In Lowndes County, the SNCC activists were influenced by and defended the local black sharecroppers who owned guns and were willing to use them against racist attack. By 1965, the Louisiana-based Deacons for Defense and Justice had spread to Alabama. Civil rights rallies in Lowndes County were often defended by these armed self-defense squads.

Class Power and Black Rights

Nonviolence versus armed self-defense was the way in which the question of reform versus revolution was posed in the civil rights movement. The emergence of a layer of radical black youth groping for an alternative to liberalism cried out for the intervention of Marxists to win them to a proletarian revolutionary perspective. In the early 1960s, the predecessor of the Spartacist League, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) within the ostensibly Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), advanced a program of revolutionary integrationism—the fight for the assimilation of black people into an egalitarian socialist society. This perspective, which was developed by veteran Trotskyist Richard Fraser, recognized that there can be no social revolution in this country without the united struggle of black and white workers led by a multiracial vanguard party, and there is nothing other than a workers revolution that can open the road to black freedom.

The RT fought for an active intervention into SNCC and other forces in the left wing of the civil rights movement, as a crucial opportunity for the crystallization of a black Trotskyist cadre. But the SWP majority refused to do so, covering its abstention with an opportunist “dual van-

On January 10, MOVE member Phil Africa died at the State Correctional Institution in Dallas, Pennsylvania. Phil had been incarcerated since he was framed up, along with the rest of the MOVE 9, for the killing of a Philadelphia police officer during the 1978 cop siege of MOVE’s Powelton Village home. Circumstances surrounding Phil’s death remain murky. Only a week earlier, he was seen to be his usual vibrant and active self.

Phil was held in total isolation in the hospital for five days during which time his wife of 44 years, Janine, was denied the right to call him on the grounds they were not blood relatives. On January 9, he was transferred to prison hospice care, where he died the next day. According to the *New York Times* (14 January), a prison spokesman attributed his death to “unspecified natural causes.” But what is “natural” in America’s dungeons where so many—especially black men, and those standing up to racist capitalist oppression—are incarcerated for life?

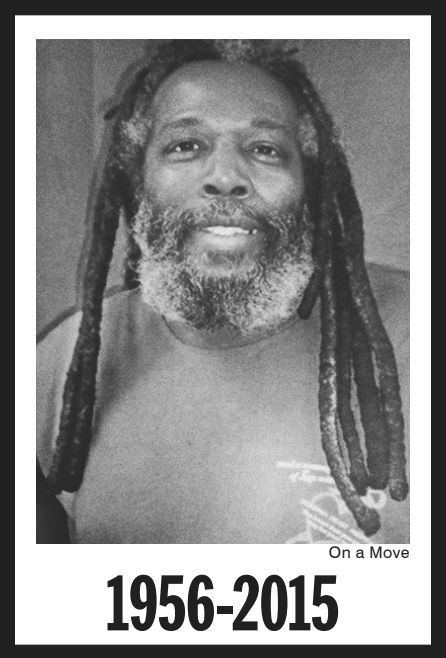
From its appearance in the early 1970s proclaiming the right of armed self-defense, the predominantly black, radical back-to-nature MOVE commune was met with vicious cop terror. After a year-long siege, on 8 August 1978 an

the bureaucrats to unleash that power.

In 1966, after his election as SNCC chairman, Carmichael raised the call for “black power” in a speech in Greenwood, Mississippi. Young black radicals picked up “black power” as the rallying cry against the preachers’ sermonizing and the liberals’ begging. It was a rejection of “faith in the system,” a vow to take matters into their own hands.

In intersecting these militants, the SL, which had been founded in 1966, explained that the “black power” slogan was contradictory. It raised questions whose answers

Phil Africa



army of nearly 600 police surrounded the MOVE home to evict its defenseless residents. The police unleashed a furious fusillade so intense that one of their own officers, James Ramp, was

killed in the police cross fire. At least eight witnesses testified that no gunshots came from the MOVE house, and no fingerprints of any MOVE member were found on the weapons supposedly taken from their home.

The MOVE 9 were among the first activists supported by the Partisan Defense Committee’s program of stipends for class-war prisoners. In 1985, eleven of their MOVE family members, including five children, were massacred by Philly cops in collaboration with the Feds. In 1989, Phil wrote the PDC, a class-struggle legal defense organization associated with the SL: “It is clear by the murders of our family on May 13, 1985 and the denial of parole to MOVE members who are eligible for parole on other cases this system has no intention of releasing MOVE members before our maximum sentences are served.”

A regular feature of PDC Holiday Appeal fundraisers in recent years has been the auction of Phil’s paintings to raise money for our stipend fund. In a recent letter, Phil thanked the PDC for “all the support you’ve given those of us locked away in these hell holes and your constant activities aimed at bringing every one home!” We honor Phil’s memory by keeping up the fight for all class-war prisoners.

The hardening of the black/white line in the New Left radical movement sealed us off from subjectively revolutionary black militants of the period. SNCC had expelled all its white members by the end of 1966. Absent a Marxist working-class perspective, many of the best of the “black power” militants turned toward one or another form of black nationalism, a petty-bourgeois ideology that has always been unable to generate a program for struggle in this country. It is based on fiction, as American blacks are not a nation and have not aspired to separation except when prospects for united struggle seemed foreclosed.

The avowedly revolutionary and anti-capitalist Black Panther Party (BPP), founded in Oakland in 1966, crystallized the best of a generation of black militants. But despite their militancy and personal courage, the Panthers’ nationalist program was disdainful of the multiracial working class. Instead, the Panthers looked to the lumpen ghetto masses. Their isolation from the proletariat left them especially vulnerable to government repression. The FBI’s brutal COINTELPRO vendetta killed 38 BPP members and jailed hundreds more on frame-up charges. Within a few years, many leading Panthers would join moderate SNCC members back in the fold of the Democratic Party.

From Selma to Ferguson

The killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson and Eric Garner in New York have galvanized young anti-racist activists bitterly aware that six years after Obama’s election the conditions of black America are as hellish as ever. When seven of them met with Obama on December 1, he issued the same advice the racist LBJ gave King: go slow. Some protesters have organized “die-ins” at showings of *Selma* to draw attention to their demands, and a series of “Reclaim MLK” events were held around MLK Day. The die-in demands, typical of other protests, are straight from the liberal playbook of appeals to the federal government: from “repurposing” law enforcement funding to demanding that the “Obama Administration develops, legislates and enacts a National Plan of Action for Racial Justice.”

A host of reformist socialist groups today are pushing King’s program of pressure politics. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) published a review (socialistworker.org, 15 January) hailing *Selma* as “magnificent” and crowing that the film shows “what he believed was needed to win: determination, courage, sacrifice.” Like the movie, the ISO disappears the split that led black youth to reject

King in favor of “black power,” instead reducing these debates over fundamental questions to “how they together developed and honed their strategy and tactics”!

The reformists like to tout the “transformative” last year of King’s life, when he supposedly was moving toward an “anti-capitalist” and “democratic socialist” perspective. His belated opposition to the Vietnam War in 1967 (at a time when a wing of the American bourgeoisie was also seeking to cut its losses) is cited as Exhibit A. In reality, King was explicit that with angry black youth and workers looking for a revolutionary solution to their own oppression, he was compelled to oppose that war to retain credibility. Far from reflecting a move toward anti-capitalism, King proclaimed that “the pursuit of peace” was “our greatest defense against Communism,” and that poverty should be combated because it was “the fertile soil in which the seed of Communism grows and develops.”

As we wrote ten years after King’s assassination in “Bourgeoisie Celebrates King’s Liberal Pacifism,” reprinted in *Black History and the Class Struggle* No. 2):

“We must break through the myths of ‘passive resistance,’ crack the mask of ‘King the Peaceful Warrior,’ and present a revolutionary analysis of the *failure* of the civil rights movement to provide a program for fighting the social and economic oppression of blacks under American capitalism.... While the reformists cover for King to camouflage their own treacherous tracks, the task of creating a black communist cadre requires destroying politically the exalted symbols of passive defeatism and reliance on the bourgeois state which led to the death of the civil rights movement.” ■



WV Photo

Washington, D.C., 1982: Thousands of protesters charge up Capitol Hill after stopping Klan march. SL-initiated united-front mobilization enlisted section of unions in South against KKK race terrorists.

guardist” outlook that implicitly defined the SWP as a “white party” whose only contribution to the black struggle was to enthuse over “whatever the black people want.” The RT was expelled from the SWP in 1963-64.

At the time, the main body of the AFL-CIO union bureaucracy was headed by open Cold War crusaders, who had been installed in the red purges of the late 1940s and ’50s. Another section of the union tops, epitomized by United Auto Workers head Walter Reuther, gave a labor gloss to MLK’s pressure politics. Both these wings of the labor bureaucracy were anti-Communist and openly hostile to labor and black militancy. The petty-bourgeois SNCC radicals, who were isolated from the mass of the black working class, equated the rotten politics of the labor bureaucrats with the union ranks. Without the intervention of Marxists, they had no concept at all of the power of the working class, much less the need to oust

lay outside the framework set up by the capitalist class, but was not consciously anti-capitalist. The “black power” movement was premised on the view that black militants should organize black people and forget about whites. We warned in “Black and Red—Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom” (*Spartacist* No. 10, May-June 1967): “The slogan ‘black power’ must be clearly defined in *class*, not racial terms, for otherwise the ‘black power’ movement may become the black wing of the Democratic Party in the South.”

We called for a “Freedom-Labor Party” as the axis to link the exploding black struggle to the power of labor, North and South. That call was coupled with a series of other transitional demands: a Southern organizing drive backed by organized labor; workers united fronts against federal intervention; organized, armed self-defense. But the SL was too small to reach and influence more than a very small number of radicalized black activists.

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WORKERS VANGUARD

The Bankruptcy of Pressuring the Democrats

Selma: The Movie and the Real Story

Director Ava DuVernay's film *Selma*, based on three months of tumultuous black voting rights protests in 1965, graphically portrays the courage and tenacity of civil rights activists in the face of racial oppression and KKK and state terror in the Jim Crow South. From the Birmingham church bombing and the savage attack on marchers at Selma's Pettus Bridge to the beatings and murders of black and white protesters, *Selma* paints a picture of the horrific racist violence.

But fundamentally the movie is a glorification of Martin Luther King Jr.'s liberal program of nonviolent protest and reliance on the federal government and the Democratic Party. The moral of the film is that

**By Brian Manning
and John Perry**

Selma—the last major battle of the Southern civil rights movement—was a watershed because voting rights for black people paved the way for black elected officials. As longtime Congressman John Lewis said in 2009 right before President Obama's inauguration: "Barack Obama is what comes at the end of that bridge in Selma."

The mass mobilization of black people against the Jim Crow system of legal segregation disrupted and challenged the racist American bourgeois order. But from the outset, the civil rights struggles were dominated by a black middle-class leadership wedded to Democratic Party liberalism, with King as its most effective exponent. The movement achieved important, though partial, gains for black people largely in the realm of formal democratic rights, whose main beneficiaries make up a thin layer of the black petty bourgeoisie. To this day, the blood shed to win the right to vote is invoked to herd black people to the ballot box to elect "lesser evil" Democrats.

The civil rights movement met its defeat in the mid 1960s when it swept into the North, where the Jim Crow segregation codes did not exist. Activists ran headlong into the raw reality of black oppression that is woven into the fabric of American



Above: "Bloody Sunday" at Pettus Bridge in Selma, 7 March 1965. Below: Black Panther Party of Lowndes County, Alabama, 1966. *Selma* film glorifies King's liberal pacifist, pro-Democratic Party politics, which more militant activists were rejecting at the time.



capitalism: rat-infested slums, crumbling schools, mass unemployment and rampant cop terror. Fifty years later, and six years after the election of a black president,

the hellish conditions of the urban ghetto masses have only gotten worse. While today possessing formal equality under the law, black people remain a race-color

caste, integrated into the U.S. economy but in the main forcibly segregated at the bottom of society.

Barack Obama proclaimed that the civil rights movement took black people "90 percent of the way" to full equality. But the yawning gulf between white and black America persists by every measure—employment, income, housing, education, incarceration rates. Black people are still blown away on the streets of America with impunity by the cops simply because of the color of their skin. The massive military mobilizations by the racist capitalist state against protesters in Ferguson, Missouri, last year could have been Birmingham or Selma in the 1960s. Those gains that were won in the civil rights struggles almost immediately came under attack. The 1965 Voting Rights Act, which *Selma* presents as a crowning achievement, has been gutted over the years, with the Supreme Court dealing it a major blow two years ago.

From the days of chattel slavery, American capitalism has rested on a bedrock of black oppression. Achieving genuine equality will take nothing less than a socialist overturn of the capitalist profit system by the multiracial working class, whose central role in production gives it the social power and objective class interest to put an end to capitalist rule. This country's rulers ably wield anti-black racism to divide and weaken the working class. In the course of class struggle against the common enemy—the owners of the banks and industry—white workers will be compelled to forego race prejudice. What is crucially needed is to forge a workers party that emblazons the cause of black freedom on its banner: *Finish the Civil War! For black liberation through socialist revolution!*

The 1965 Selma Protests

In early 1965, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) had been organizing a voter registration effort in Selma, combating an entrenched system that denied the right to vote through a combination of racist terror, poll taxes and "literacy" tests. In the film, a white registrar

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Greece: European Union Austerity Elections

Greek voters will go to the polls on January 25 with the dominant powers of the European Union (EU), centrally the German bankers, demanding continued austerity to pay for Greece's massive debt. The snap parliamentary election was called by Prime Minister Antonis Samaras of New Democracy (ND) when the parliament in late December failed for the third time to elect a new president.

In a country suffering mass unemployment and poverty due to the deep, ongoing capitalist economic crisis in Europe, the main issue looming behind the elections is Greece's continued membership in the imperialist EU and use of the euro. Most ostensible socialists, in Greece and internationally, look to a victory by the

left-sounding petty-bourgeois Syriza led by Alexis Tsipras, despite its explicit commitment to the EU. In contrast, our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece call for critical electoral support to the Greek Communist Party (KKE) as they did in 2012. Printed below is a translation of the TGG's January 15 statement, which

raises the demands: Down with the EU! For workers revolution! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

* * *

The Trotskyist Group of Greece, section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist), calls for a vote to

the KKE in the January 25 general election. The KKE, uniquely on the left, is standing in this election completely opposed both to the imperialist EU and to all those parties who defend the EU, including the petty-bourgeois Syriza party. *No vote to Syriza!*

As Trotskyists, our perspective is the fight for workers revolution here and internationally. We therefore oppose Syriza not only because it is committed to keeping Greece in the EU, which is a pledge for more hunger and joblessness, but also because it does not in any way represent the interests of the working class. Syriza's program is bourgeois and its base is among the petty-bourgeoisie—small business owners, farmers and professionals

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