

Imperialists Stoke Religious Fires



Reuters photos

Smoke rising from Iraqi city of Tikrit after U.S. air strikes, March 27. Inset: Shi'ite forces, acting as U.S. proxies, launch rocket near Tikrit during fighting with ISIS forces, March 8.

U.S. Out of the Near East Now!

MARCH 30—The blood of tens of thousands who have been slaughtered in communalist violence throughout the Near East is on the hands of the U.S. imperialist rulers, who continue to stoke religious and ethnic hatred throughout the region. To undermine the Iran-allied regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, the U.S. incited and armed sectarian Sunni forces, plunging that country into civil war. In Iraq, the U.S. is relying on militias controlled by longtime pariah, Shi'ite Iran, as ground troops against ISIS, which itself arose out of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq and now controls a wide swath of the country. In Yemen, where for years the Obama administration has been launching drone strikes against the population in the name of targeting Sunni Al Qaeda forces, the U.S. is backing the Saudi-led attack against the Zaidi Shi'ite Houthis, who are viewed as an Iranian proxy.

At the same time, the White House has taken a spin at diplomacy with Iran, much to the alarm of Israel and the U.S.'s Sunni Muslim allies in the Persian Gulf. The Obama administration's latest round of negotiations over Iran's nuclear program—with the participation of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China—has also worked leading Republicans into a frenzy. In January, without informing the White House, Republican House Speaker John Boehner invited Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to rail against Iran at a joint meeting of Congress. The head of the Near East's only nuclear-armed state, Netanyahu was enthusiastically applauded throughout his March 3 speech in which he ominously declared that the terms the White House was offering Iran “will inevitably lead to nuclear war.”

A week later, 47 Republican members of Congress sent an open letter to the

Iranian government declaring that any agreement it negotiated with the Obama administration could be revoked by the next president “with the stroke of a pen and future Congresses could modify the terms of the agreement at any time.” Although the Israeli government has denied it, U.S. officials report that Israel has been spy-

world's “superpower,” U.S. imperialism is the greatest enemy of the world's workers and oppressed.

Down With U.S. Imperialism!

It is the duty of class-conscious workers everywhere, particularly in the U.S., to oppose all wars and occupations carried

forces in Northern Iraq and the Syrian Kurdish nationalists. This does not mean we give the slightest political support to the reactionary ISIS butchers.

Since early March, a coalition dominated by Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias has been waging an offensive to recapture the Sunni city of Tikrit from ISIS control. Tehran has for some time used the sectarian bloodbath in Iraq to increase its influence in the region. When the U.S. began intensive bombing of Tikrit on March 25, several Shi'ite militias announced they would not collaborate with the U.S. and would pull out from the assault, a move the Pentagon claimed to “welcome.” In fact, the militias remain part of the offensive in Tikrit. And, according to the *New York Times* (27 March), American officials have acknowledged that Shi'ite militias would “play a crucial part in subduing Tikrit.”

For Marxists, what is decisive is the fact that in Tikrit the Shi'ite militias are acting as surrogates for U.S. imperialism, as they were even before the open involvement of U.S. forces. A victory for the Shi'ite militias and the Iraqi army would directly benefit the aims of U.S. imperialism, which is leading the regional war against ISIS. Likewise, if the militias were driven back by ISIS and other Sunni forces, this would

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Down With Sanctions Against Iran!

ing on the nuclear negotiations and—what has really got the White House worked up—leaking the information to Congress. The Obama administration has tried to rein in the rabid Netanyahu as it continues its nuclear negotiations with Iran.

On March 25, the Sunni monarchy of Saudi Arabia began bombing Yemen. With the support of a coalition including other Gulf states and Egypt, the Saudis aim to restore the government of Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who resigned the presidency in January in the face of attack by the Houthi rebels. The air campaign, for which the U.S. says it is providing “logistical and intelligence support,” was announced in Washington by the Saudi ambassador. The Iranian government has denounced the U.S.-backed assault in Yemen.

Those who run U.S. imperialism add a twist to the expression that today's ally is tomorrow's enemy. For them, today's ally is *today's* enemy. The only constant is that imperialist domination breeds misery and war. Notwithstanding their bickering and conflicting policies, the Republicans and Democrats share a common class interest: maintaining U.S. supremacy in the oil-rich Near East. The imperialist system is based on war and plunder, and as the

out by the imperialists. When the U.S. began air strikes against ISIS last year, we explained that “any force, however unsavory, that attacks, repels or otherwise impedes U.S. forces strikes a blow in the interests of the exploited and the oppressed” (“U.S. Out of Iraq! No Intervention in Syria!” WV No. 1051, 5 September 2014). We take a military side with ISIS when it targets the imperialists and forces acting as their proxies, including the Baghdad government and the Shi'ite militias as well as the Kurdish *pesh merga*

Secretary of State John Kerry with Iran's foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif during talks over Iran's nuclear program, March 16.



Reuters



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Louisiana Museum Shows Horrors of Slavery

14 March 2015

To the Editor,

Readers of WV may have recently seen an article in the February 26 *New York Times Magazine*, “Building the First Slavery Museum in America” about the newly opened Whitney Plantation/The Story of Slavery here in Louisiana, 50 miles upriver from New Orleans.

Before the Whitney even opened, there was a sneering article disingenuously titled “Slavery Museum Faces Skeptics—Some Say Exhibit in Louisiana Seeks More to Elicit Emotions Than Impart Facts” (*Wall Street Journal*, December 8, 2014). In it, the official voice of American finance capital interviewed various naysayers who had not set foot on the site and likely would not be caught dead there.

Also before the Whitney ever opened, the local voice of capital, the *New Orleans City Business* called it “Selling Slavery” in oversized type on the front page (December 11, 2014). They quoted another party who hadn’t been to the museum, opining that it would only attract those looking for the “bleak version of history.” It was remarkable how these 2 bourgeois papers went out of their way to cover the planned opening of an otherwise little-known museum, a reflection of their anger to this day about the smashing of slavery in the Civil War.



WV Photo

Nineteenth-century slave cabins at Whitney Plantation museum.

So I went to visit the Whitney Plantation, which is on the old River Road along the Mississippi, once home to dozens of big sugar cane plantations, the most labor- and profit-intense plantation system in the south. Slave labor here was the hardest and the punishments most brutal, captured in the fearful phrase being “sold down the river.”

Considerably more than a 4-walls museum, the Whitney includes the renovated plantation home, 7 reconstructed slave houses, a slave jail, a memorial garden of granite panels inscribed with the words of former slaves recorded by the WPA Project in the 1930s describing life under slavery, and a Field of Angels naming thousands of infants born into slavery in Louisiana who died before the age of 3.

Dedicated to telling the story of the slaves, rather than the slaveowners, the Whitney contrasts with its neighbors like the iconic Oak Alley Plantation. Oak Alley is representative of those plantation owners’ homes that were renovated in the 1960s and ’70s, operating as B&Bs, wed-

ding rental sites, and tourist attractions. Hoop-skirted tour guides lead tourists about these finely furnished houses and well-kept grounds, telling tales of antebellum “Gone with the Wind” grandeur, and—until now—disappearing slavery almost entirely from the story.

The Whitney, and the nearby Destrehan and River Road plantations are literally scenes of the crime of human slavery. They are located right at the center of the little-known slave uprising of January 1811, the largest in American history. Between 200 and 500 slaves, inspired by the successful Saint-Domingue/Haitian revolt of 1791-1804, took up arms, set fire to plantation houses, chased out the slaveowners and marched toward New Orleans fully intending to destroy the planter class, smash slavery and establish a black republic.

They were met and repulsed by a makeshift military scant miles from New Orleans and driven back up toward the river road. Many of the rebel slaves were killed in the brutal suppression of the uprising. The survivors were tried and executed by a hastily convened tribunal of plantation owners at Destrehan Plantation. The executed were decapitated and their heads mounted on pikes at Destrehan and all along the river road to terrorize the other slaves into submission.

Partisans of the working class who honor these rebel slaves will appreciate seeing the Whitney and Destrehan Plantation exhibits and learning the history of the 1811 revolt (available in Daniel Rasmussen’s 2011 book *American Uprising*).

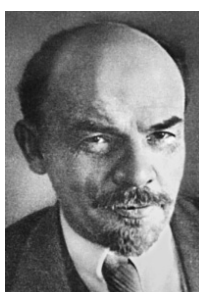
For finishing the Civil War,
Ruth
New Orleans, LA



TROTSKY

Civil War and Social Revolution

This April 9 marks the 150th anniversary of the surrender of the Confederate Army, which effectively ended the Civil War that smashed chattel slavery. Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin upheld the historic significance of the Civil War in a letter to American workers, written as U.S. imperialist forces were intervening in the Russian Civil War on the side of reactionaries out to overturn the proletarian October Revolution of 1917.



LENIN

The American people have a revolutionary tradition which has been adopted by the best representatives of the American proletariat, who have repeatedly expressed their complete solidarity with us Bolsheviks. That tradition is the war of liberation against the British in the eighteenth century and the Civil War in the nineteenth century. In some respects, if we only take into consideration the “destruction” of some branches of industry and of the national economy, America in 1870 was *behind* 1860. But what a pedant, what an idiot would anyone be to deny on *these* grounds the immense, world-historic, progressive and revolutionary significance of the American Civil War of 1863-65!

The representatives of the bourgeoisie understand that for the sake of overthrowing Negro slavery, of overthrowing the rule of the slaveowners, it was worth letting the country go through long years of civil war, through the abysmal ruin, destruction and terror that accompany every war. But now, when we are confronted with the vastly greater task of overthrowing capitalist *wage*-slavery, of overthrowing the rule of the bourgeoisie—now, the representatives and defenders of the bourgeoisie, and also the reformist socialists who have been frightened by the bourgeoisie and are shunning the revolution, cannot and do not want to understand that civil war is necessary and legitimate....

We are blamed for the destruction caused by our revolution.... Who are the accusers? The hangers-on of the bourgeoisie, of that very bourgeoisie who, during the four years of the imperialist war, have destroyed almost the whole of European culture and have reduced Europe to barbarism, brutality and starvation. These bourgeoisie now demand we should not make a revolution on these ruins, amidst this wreckage of culture, amidst the wreckage and ruins created by the war, nor with the people who have been brutalised by the war. How humane and righteous the bourgeoisie are!

—V.I. Lenin, “Letter to American Workers” (August 1918)

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Attica

The Nightmare That Never Ends

Teresa Miller

Inmates on “A” Block, Attica state penitentiary.

On 9 August 2011 George Williams, an inmate at New York’s notorious Attica prison, was beaten so badly by a mob of huge white prison officers that he required surgical implantation of a plate and six pins in one of his broken legs. A shoulder, eye socket and ribs were also broken. The officers’ shirts were so soaked with Williams’ blood they made an inmate burn them, and they got another to mop the dayroom floor and walls that bore testimony to the brutality. The beating was carried out where other prisoners could see, and Williams’ pleas for his life could be heard on other floors. Given the extent of his injuries, the prison infirmary nurse insisted that Williams be taken to an outside hospital, which likely saved his life. Although now released and living back in New Jersey, he is in constant pain and still suffers trauma from the attack.

On March 1, the eve of the scheduled trial of three of the sadistic prison officers, the *New York Times* published an in-depth exposé by The Marshall Project under the front-page headline, “A Brutal Beating Wakes Attica’s Ghosts.” This article shone a bright light on the institutional brutality and racist oppression at Attica. The next morning, the local District Attorney accepted a plea deal of misdemeanor misconduct. The felony charges of gang assault, conspiracy and evidence tampering evaporated. The thugs walked away with their pensions, case closed.

Announcing the plea deal, the D.A. said: “Let me be clear: This has never been about jail for these officers.” Ain’t that the truth! Until this case, no New York State prison guard has *ever* been charged, let alone convicted, of a non-sexual attack on an inmate. The Correctional Officers and Police Benevolent Association hired some of western New York’s top criminal defense lawyers and was confident a jury from the area near the prison would not find against the thugs. The *Times* article quoted an inmate who had done over 20 years in Attica saying: “What they did? How they jumped that guy? That was normal.... It happens all the time.” For prison officers—a part of the repressive apparatus of the state that keeps the capitalist class in power—racist brutality is not a crime; *it is their job*.

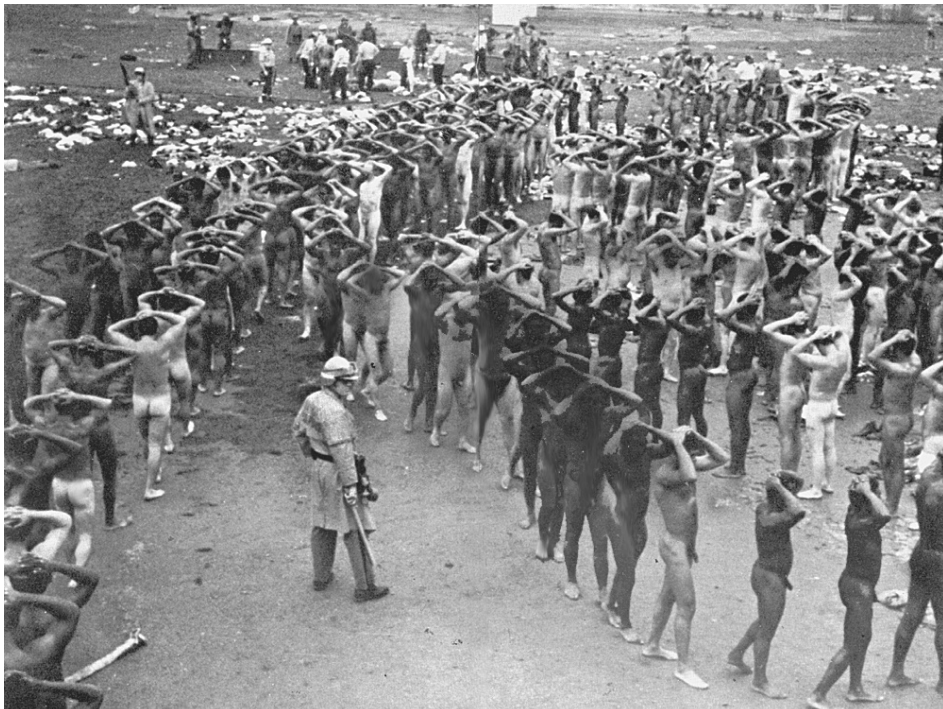
Rockefeller’s Massacre

Attica is infamous for the 1971 massacre by state troopers and prison officers who retook the prison from insurgent inmates at the end of a four-day stand-off. While the overcrowded prisons and brutal treatment the inmates were protesting sound very similar to the hellish conditions at Attica today, the social context was dramatically different. In 1971, there were intense social and political struggles taking place throughout society, from the “black power” movement to radical protests against U.S. imperialism’s war in Vietnam. The rebellion in Attica reflected these struggles inside the prison walls. Attica inmates were heavily black

and Hispanic, and many identified with the Black Panther Party and the Puerto Rican Young Lords. Others were members of the Nation of Islam.

In the early morning of September 9, the prisoners erupted, seizing most of the institution and taking 39 hostages. They proclaimed: “WE are MEN! We are not beasts and do not intend to be beaten

Such brutality was no surprise. In *Uprising: Understanding Attica, Revolution, and the Incarceration State* (2011), Clarence Jones wrote that it was known at the time that “a substantial number of Attica prison guards were also members of the local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan or its equivalent.” As editor of the black newspaper *Amsterdam News*, Jones served at



N.Y. State Special Commission on Attica

September 1971: After murderous suppression of Attica prison rebellion, inmates were forced to strip and run gauntlet of baton-wielding guards.

or driven as such.... We have set forth demands that will bring closer to reality the demise of these prison institutions that serve no useful purpose to the People of America, but to those who would enslave and exploit the people of America.” The prisoners went on to demand the minimum wage for their labor, and an end to censorship and restrictions on political activity. They wanted a healthy diet, medical care and an end to segregation and punishment—i.e., some approximation of the minimum standards of life.

For the capitalist ruling class, the Attica rebellion had to be crushed with particular vengeance because the rebels had begun to see their struggle in political terms, including aspirations toward revolution. The inmates demanded amnesty and transfer to a “non-imperialistic country”; instead they got a death sentence.

Nelson Rockefeller, the liberal Republican governor, prepared the bloodbath. At 9:43 a.m. on September 13, a helicopter dropped CS gas over the yard, and 1,000 troopers and guards moved in for the kill. Prisoners were mowed down as they held their hands over their heads. Twenty-nine inmates and ten hostages were killed and many more injured, but the savagery of Rockefeller’s goons was only just starting. Hundreds of black prisoners were made to strip, lie face down and crawl in the mud. They were lined up and forced to run a gauntlet of crazed, sadistic guards.

the request of the Attica inmates as one of the observers during the rebellion.

In the aftermath, 62 of the Attica Brothers were charged with a total of 1,300 crimes. Many charges were dropped after setbacks to the prosecution in the courts. Even an official report recognized that the police assault was “the bloodiest one-day encounter between Americans since the Civil War” except for the massacres of Native Americans in the late 19th century. Nevertheless, the real criminals of Attica—the racist authorities whose hands dripped with blood—were never even given a slap on the wrist. Rockefeller went on to serve a brief term as U.S. vice president.

We honor the heroic martyrs of Attica for their courageous stand against overwhelming odds. It is for their fight for justice and against oppression that we want the world’s working people to remember them. Their demands for education and job training stood in stark contrast to the standard procedures of capitalist so-called justice: vindictive punishment designed to reduce the prisoner to a subhuman condition. The prisoners themselves refused to degrade the prison officer hostages as they themselves had been degraded.

Prisons and Racist U.S. Capitalism

We observed at the time of the Attica rebellion that the “despicable racist guards are despised even by the ruling class that

cynically uses them. The governor not only served notice on the prisoners that *rebellion does not pay*, and rebellion linked with revolutionary ideas means *certain death*, but he had a message for the guards too: Keep the upper hand or else!” (“Massacre at Attica,” WV No. 1, October 1971). The spectre of the rebellion continues to haunt the prison authorities, who use it to impress upon all new guards that their job is to keep the inmates in line, using all available means.

Joseph Jazz Hayden, a former inmate who was transferred out of Attica seven days before the rebellion, wrote a letter that is posted on The Marshall Project’s website commenting on its recent exposé. He stated: “It is apparent to me that nothing has changed...[the guards] are little more than ‘Overseers’ on a slave plantation.” He continued, “Would things be different if the ‘Overseers’ were black? Nope!” Indeed, at the Rikers Island jail complex in New York City, the majority of the corrections officers are not white, but that does not change in the slightest their role as vicious overseers for the ruling class, delighting in the brutalization and humiliation of convicts and those awaiting trial (see “Rikers Island: Racist House of Horrors,” WV No. 1048, 13 June 2014).

Today, the incarcerated population in the U.S. has mushroomed to some 2.4 million, seven times the number in 1971, not least as a result of the racist “war on drugs.” The prison population grew massively in the 1970s and 1980s in direct proportion to the sharp decline in unionized manufacturing jobs, a measure of how the bourgeoisie has deemed whole layers of the ghetto and barrio masses “surplus.” Prisons and jails represent, in concentrated form, the brutality of this racist capitalist society, with severe dehumanization and oppressive conditions directed against an already marginalized and demoralized population.

As Marxists, we support ameliorating the hideous conditions in the prisons, as seen in our defense of the California prisoners who went on hunger strike in 2013 to demand an end to the Security Housing Unit system of solitary confinement. At the same time, we understand that the capitalist state’s prisons cannot be reformed into humane institutions. To lay the basis for abolishing the whole wretched system of crime and punishment requires a workers revolution to sweep away the bourgeois state and expropriate the class in whose interest the state is administered.

The rulers of U.S. imperialism, who in 1971 rained napalm and bombs on Vietnamese peasants fighting for revolution and CS gas and bullets on the Attica Brothers, today carry out incessant slaughter and torture abroad along with relentless state terror against the black population and attacks on the working class at home. It is the historic task of the working class to construct a socialist order where state torture and oppression will only be found in the pages of history books. The Spartacist League is determined to build a revolutionary proletarian party capable of leading the multiracial working class to power at the head of all the oppressed. ■

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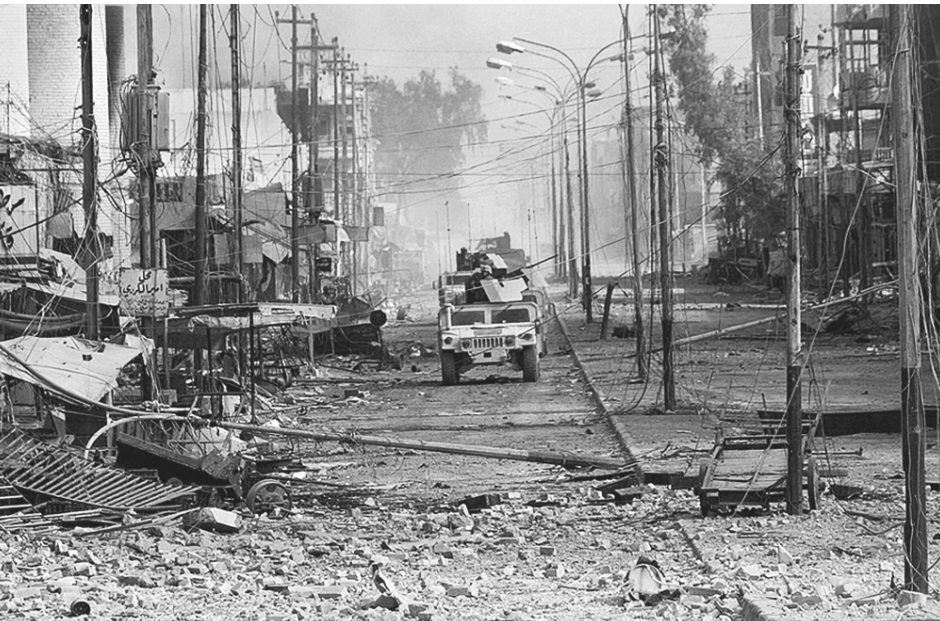
Near East...

(continued from page 1)

be a blow against U.S. imperialism. The brutality of ISIS forces is widely broadcast in the Western media, but the Shi’ite militias and Iraqi government forces are cut of the same cloth. Whole Sunni vil-lages have been wiped out after having been “liberated” from ISIS.

This is not the first time the clerical regime in Iran has served the interests of the U.S. The Iranian regime supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, engaging in extensive intelligence and military coordination and supporting the U.S.-installed government. Not that this collaboration did the Iranian government any good—in January 2002, Iran became part of George W. Bush’s “axis of evil” and subsequently the target of rounds of crippling sanctions under both the Bush and Obama administrations.

In the past, Israel attempted to bolster Persian-dominated Iran, even under the mullahs, as a bulwark against the regional Arab regimes. Israel played a key role in assisting the U.S. in the sale of weapons to Iran, as revealed when the Iran/contra scandal broke in 1986. At the time, U.S. military officials were shipping guns to the Iranian government in violation of Congressional bans, in order to fund right-wing contra death squads in Nicaragua. This was despite the U.S.’s strong tilt toward Iraq in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War.



November 2004: U.S. Marines roll through Fallujah, Iraq, devastated by imperialist bombardment and occupation.

Although today the U.S. and Iran are effectively cooperating on the ground in Iraq and nuclear talks are ongoing with a March 31 deadline, the U.S. has not let up on the punishing economic sanctions against Iran. The sanctions are an act of war, hitting Iran’s poor and working population the hardest. The White House’s professed purpose is to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. The Iranian government has always denied seeking to develop nuclear weapons, and even pro-imperialist analysts and U.S. intelligence agencies have admitted there is no evidence of such a program. The 20 percent uranium enrichment level cited by the imperialists as the level that can be quickly converted to weapons-grade is the same needed for medical isotopes for cancer treatment.

The possession of nukes is no guarantee of security from attack by U.S. imperialism, with its massive nuclear arsenal and overwhelming military power. Nevertheless, nuclear weapons are an important deterrent against military attack and can provide a measure of independence from imperialist diktat. This was demonstrated in the negative in Libya. In 2003, in addition to signing on to the imperial-ists’ war on terror, Muammar el-Qaddafi renounced Libya’s nuclear weapons program and welcomed imperialist inspectors. Eight years later, he was overthrown by the U.S. and allied imperialist powers, setting the stage for the current bloody chaos in Libya. Despite the fact that we give no political support to the reactionary mullah regime in Tehran, we Marxists



Left: Student protester in Tehran, November 2014. Right: Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounces any deal with Iran at joint session of U.S. Congress, March 3.

recognize that Iran needs nuclear weapons as well as effective delivery systems to deter attack, not least from Israel.

For Proletarian Internationalism!

March marked the 12th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which toppled Saddam Hussein’s Sunni-dominated government and plunged the country into communalist slaughter. To buttress their occupation, the U.S. imperialists system-

atically played off sectors of the Iraqi population against each other, fueling the communalist bloodshed. The U.S. and allied powers committed and unleashed mass murder, indiscriminate terror and torture on a scale far exceeding that of the brutal Iraqi strongman they replaced. A recent report by Physicians for Social Responsibility found that some one million Iraqis died as a result of the U.S. invasion and occupation.

ISIS, an offshoot of Al Qaeda, is itself a product of U.S. interventions. The founding elements of Al Qaeda, including the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of its Iraqi affiliate, were trained and funded by the CIA as it assembled a reactionary horde to oppose the Soviet Union’s intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s. In Iraq, ISIS was able to garner support among even some secular Sunni Arabs as a result of the repression they suffered at the hands of the overwhelmingly Shi’ite government installed by the U.S.

Iraq today is a shattered society, with its industry and infrastructure in ruins. To be an Iraqi is to live under the constant threat of sectarian murder: Sunni vs. Shi’ite, Arab vs. Kurd. And if you are from a small community—e.g., the Christians or Yazidis—with no militias to back you, you live or die at the sufferance of others. This is the “liberation” that U.S. imperialism brought to the peoples of Iraq.

The social emancipation of the Iraqi masses is dependent on working-class struggle in nearby countries where there are strategic concentrations of the indus-



trial working class, centrally Iran, Turkey and Egypt. We have no illusions that it will be an easy task to break workers of the Near East, including in Zionist Israel, from nationalism and religious reaction and win them to the Marxist program of proletarian revolution. But there will be no end to ethnic and national oppression, no liberation of women, no end to the exploitation of working people short of shattering the capitalist order and laying the basis for a socialist federation of the Near East.

What is needed is the construction of Marxist workers parties, sections of a reformed Fourth International, to unite the working classes of the region around a program of revolutionary internationalism and class independence from the imperialists, the local bourgeoisies and forces of religious reaction. This perspective crucially hinges on linking up with the multiracial working class in the U.S. in a fight against capitalist rule here in the belly of the imperialist beast.

If our readers can make no sense of what is happening in Iraq, Yemen or anywhere else the U.S. is intervening, there is a reason: this ruling class is crazed. Jon Stewart gave it his twist on the *Daily Show*: “It took decades of destabilizing conflict, but we finally figured out how to wage a proxy war against ourselves.” Not only is Washington promising even more years of war in the Near East—whatever happened to pulling out from Iraq and Afghanistan?—it is also simultaneously provoking capitalist Russia, a major nuclear power, over Ukraine while constantly menacing the Chinese bureaucratically deformed workers state through spy flights and military encirclement.

The American ruling class flaunts its barbarity, openly debating the virtues of

torture, riding roughshod over nations around the world and leading the planet in the incarceration of its own population while carrying out grisly executions at home. As the U.S. imperialists sow death and destruction across the Near East, working people in the U.S. have seen their wages driven down, social services gutted and legal rights whittled away. While U.S. drones blow away schoolchildren and wedding parties in Muslim countries, the cops gun down black and Latino men on American streets.

Since the destruction of the Soviet de-generated workers state in 1991-92, the arrogant, power-mad U.S. rulers have seen no significant obstacle to their global designs. Self-designated cops of the world, they believe they can do anything to anybody and get away with it. But the U.S. bourgeoisie’s status as supreme world power is beset by contradictions. They can direct killer drones to take out today’s “enemy” from thousands of miles away, but at home bridges are near collapsing, public education is starved of funds (except in wealthy suburbs) and much of industry is hollowed out. One bit of infrastructure they have built up is super-high-speed data networks for Wall Street, where “economic growth” spells only the latest speculative investment craze. Meanwhile in New York City’s East Village, people are killed and buildings leveled by an exploding gas line.

This decrepit, depraved profit system has got to go! The struggle of the working class in this country to liberate itself from exploitation is also the struggle that can liberate all those ground under the heel of the imperialist colossus. The American proletariat, currently demoralized by decades of defeats, must be imbued with the consciousness of its revolutionary potential to sweep away the capitalist system and create a new society organized to serve human need. In “Imperialist Rape of Iraq” (WV No. 800, 28 March 2003), written at the time of the U.S. invasion, we argued:

“Mass slaughter is the concentrated expression and ultimate logic of the ‘normal’ brutal workings of the capitalist system, which daily condemns countless numbers around the world to death by malnutrition, lack of medical care and industrial murder.
“If there is to be a choice for coming generations of working-class and minority youth other than one of grinding exploitation, joblessness, mass imprisonment or military servitude, if the impoverished masses of the world are to have a future other than starvation and slaughter, this whole system must be torn up by its roots through a socialist revolution and replaced by a rational, planned economy internationally.”


The Spartacist League is the U.S. section of the International Communist League, which is dedicated to building the parties that can bring this perspective to the working class in the U.S. and internationally. ■

ICL Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program

The Declaration of Principles of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist) is a concrete expression of our purpose: to build national sections of a democratic-centralist International which can lead the struggle for worldwide socialist revolution. This important document, which was adopted at the Third International Conference of the ICL in early 1998, was published in the four language editions of *Spartacist* and additionally in eleven other languages.

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For New October Revolutions!


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PAGINA 10



State Vendetta Continues

Free Albert Woodfox Now!

On February 12, class-war prisoner Albert Woodfox was indicted once again for the fatal stabbing of Louisiana prison guard Brent Miller in 1972. Woodfox has seen this frame-up conviction overturned three times before, only to find himself entombed in solitary confinement in the notorious Angola prison.

Last November, a federal appeals court upheld the 2013 federal district court decision granting *habeas corpus* relief, overturning his conviction on the grounds of racist grand jury rigging. On March 2, Woodfox briefly emerged from the prison hell that has been his home for over 40 years to attend a hearing in federal district court seeking bail pending his retrial. Determined that this patently innocent fighter for black rights rot in solitary until he dies, the prosecution told the federal court judge who granted Woodfox's *habeas* petition that this was a state court matter—and that the judge should just butt out. The judge made no ruling on

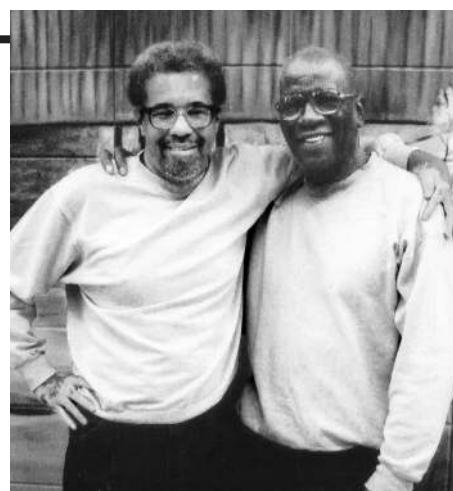
Woodfox's bail application, keeping him behind bars.

After they organized a Black Panther Party chapter at Angola prison, Woodfox and fellow inmates Herman Wallace and Robert King, known as the Angola Three, were put in the crosshairs by their jailers. Woodfox and Wallace were framed up for stabbing the prison guard. King was falsely convicted of killing a fellow inmate a year later. Wallace died from liver cancer in October 2013, only three days after his release from prison. In an act both sadistic and vindictive, the State of Louisiana responded to the court order releasing Wallace by indicting him again the day before his death. King was released in 2001 and has been active in the fight to free Woodfox.

As for Woodfox's conviction, there was not a shred of physical evidence linking him to the murder, and it was later revealed that the key prosecution "eyewitness" was bribed for his testimony at

trial. So transparent was the frame-up that prison guard Miller's widow, Leontine Rogers, believes Woodfox to be innocent and has joined in the call to release him. In 2008, Angola prison warden Burl Cain declared that even if Woodfox were not guilty, he would still keep him in solitary because "I still know that he is still trying to practice Black Pantherism."

The persecution of Woodfox highlights the ongoing capitalist state vendetta against onetime members of the Black Panther Party—the best of a generation of black activists who sought a revolutionary road to black liberation. Thirty-eight members of the Panthers were killed by the cops and FBI, and hundreds more were framed up and imprisoned on bogus charges. Panther leaders Geronimo ji Jaga (Pratt) and Dhoruba bin Wahad among others spent decades behind bars before their release, while Mumia Abu-Jamal and Panther supporters Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter have between them spent



Carrie Reichardt

Angola Three prisoners Albert Woodfox (left) and the late Herman Wallace in 2008.

over 120 years behind bars for crimes they did not commit.

Now 68 years old, Woodfox has spent decades confined in a two-by-three-meter cell 23 hours a day. According to his lawyers, he suffers from hypertension, heart disease, chronic renal insufficiency, diabetes, anxiety and insomnia—conditions no doubt caused and/or exacerbated by decades of vindictive and inhumane treatment. We reiterate our call for Woodfox's immediate freedom and encourage our readers to take up his cause. ■

Palestinian Activist Rasmea Odeh: Overturn Conviction! No Deportation!

Capping a political witchhunt, on March 12 in Detroit, U.S. district court judge Gershwin Drain stripped Rasmea Odeh of her American citizenship and sentenced her to 18 months in prison to be immediately followed by deportation. A Chicago-based Palestinian activist and the associate director of the Arab American Action Network (AAAN), Odeh was convicted last November of the bogus charge of "unlawful procurement of citizenship." Her supposed crime was failing to disclose on her 2004 naturalization application a 1970 frame-up conviction by an Israeli military tribunal for alleged involvement in planting bombs at a supermarket and the British consulate in Jerusalem. The evidence for that conviction was a false confession secured through torture—a common practice of the Zionist military in the Occupied Territories.

Judge Drain, a President Obama appointee, blocked every effort by Odeh to mount an effective legal defense. While giving the prosecution wide latitude to use whatever evidence it wanted from Israeli documents, he derisively excluded evidence of "torture, rape and all that stuff." The judge later ruled that Odeh's attempts to present this evidence constituted "obstruction of justice." Drain barred expert testimony that Odeh suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder because of her brutal treatment at the hands of the Israeli state. Part of Odeh's defense was that the disorder caused her to omit her wrongful Israeli conviction when replying to the question on the naturalization form about prior imprisonment or arrest.

During sentencing, Drain repeatedly claimed that Odeh's was not a "political case." In fact, the Obama government's prosecution of Odeh underscores how "anti-terrorism" has been a pretext for the capitalist rulers' attacks on basic democratic rights and is ultimately aimed at the left and labor movement. Odeh came



Reuters

Rasmea Odeh leaving Detroit federal courthouse with supporters after her sentencing, March 12.

to the attention of the Feds during a 2010 "war on terror" witchhunt in Chicago and Minneapolis. The FBI raided the homes of several leftists and union activists, including supporters of the AAAN and Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO), for alleged "material support to terrorism"—in this case, support for the struggle for Palestinian national rights. Seeking to link Odeh's AAAN with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a secular-nationalist organization designated by the U.S. State Department as "terrorist", the Feds obtained thousands of documents from the Israeli government, some of which called Odeh's 1970 conviction to their attention. As a result of those raids, some two dozen leftists still live with the fear of indictment hanging over their heads. Hands off the leftist activists!

"In 1967, Israel Destroys Everything"

Odeh and her family were among the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians forced from their homes with the establishment of the Zionist state of Israel in 1948. Shortly after her birth, Odeh and her family fled their home near Jerusalem,

settling in Ramallah in the West Bank, only to have the nightmare begin again in 1967 with the Israeli occupation of the area following the Six Day War against Egypt, Syria and Jordan. As she described at her sentencing hearing, "In 1967 Israel destroys everything.... There were bodies in the street, houses destroyed, and one part of our house destroyed."

In 1969, the Israeli army of occupation rounded up 500 Palestinians, including Odeh and her father. During three weeks of detention, Odeh's jailers beat her repeatedly, ultimately extracting a "confession" by threatening to force Odeh and her father to have sex. Her captors then raped Odeh with a wooden stick. In 1979, after ten years in prison, she was released in a prisoner swap. Later, Odeh obtained a law degree in Jordan, and in 1995 immigrated to the U.S., first living in Detroit before settling in Chicago. She has spent the last 20 years as a community organizer and activist.

Odeh's case has sparked solidarity protests across the country. Palestinian activists and leftists, among them the reformist FRSO, packed Judge Drain's courtroom and staged protests outside. Following her release pending appeal, the FRSO fatu-

ously declared, "Victory as Rasmea Odeh Goes Home After Sentencing" (*Fight-Back! News*, 12 March). Expressing the FRSO's view of the American capitalist state as neutral, FRSO member Joe Iosbaker, who was himself a target of the 2010 FBI raids, denounced her sentencing but went on to state that the Israeli army "brutally and sadistically tortured her into signing a confession.... In the U.S. we do not accept confessions signed through torture." Perhaps Iosbaker never heard of Guantánamo, CIA torture or the many people who have been exonerated after being locked up based on false confessions extracted through cop torture.

While it is good that Odeh did not get the seven-year sentence the prosecutors sought, this outcome is hardly a victory for a woman who should not have spent one second in jail—in Israel or the U.S. Her looming deportation to Jordan is particularly ominous given Jordan's well-known history of torturing Palestinian activists, not to mention the mass slaughter of Palestinians by the Jordanian monarchy in 1970. Our defense of Odeh is linked to our defense of the oppressed Palestinians, who have suffered for decades under the boot of Israeli occupation, as well as our opposition to the assault on democratic rights waged under the "war on terror." Odeh's prosecution is meant to chill dissent for those who speak out against Israeli and U.S. depredations. While we Marxist revolutionaries do not share Odeh's Palestinian nationalist politics, we stress that an injury to one is an injury to all. We urge trade unions, civil liberties organizations and others to demand that her conviction be overturned and her citizenship reinstated. Funds are urgently needed for Odeh's legal defense, to which the Partisan Defense Committee has contributed. Donations can be mailed to: Committee to Stop FBI Repression, PO Box 14183, Minneapolis, MN 55414. ■

After Criminal Attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and Jewish Market France: Down With Anti-Muslim Repression!



AP



Reuters



Etat-major des armées/armée de Terre

Center: “National unity” march in Paris, January 11, led by French president François Hollande and a host of capitalist rulers. Left: Masked cops arrest suspect in anti-terror sweep in Lunel, southern France, January 27. Right: French imperialist troops in Mali, March 10.

The article below is translated from *Le Bolchévik* No. 211 (March 2015), newspaper of the *Ligue Trotskyste de France*.

LE BOLCHEVIK

One month after the criminal murders of Jews—targeted for the sole reason that they were Jewish—and of *Charlie Hebdo* journalists in Paris by three Islamic fundamentalists, [French president] François Hollande declared at his February 5 press conference that the “spirit” of the January 11 [reactionary “national unity”] demonstrations must live on. He added that the Republic “will be uncompromising and merciless.” Hollande and other world leaders all seized upon the killings as an opportunity to further extend their “war on terror.” Islamic reaction in the French *banlieues* [minority and working-class neighborhoods on the outskirts of big cities] is being fueled by racist segregation and discrimination, which mainly target youth of Muslim background, as well as by imperialist terror in the Muslim world.

During the press conference, Hollande stated that “The top challenge facing France is the struggle against terrorism.” He welcomed the “protection of the Sahel zone” in Africa provided by French troops, which are also fighting Islamic fundamentalists in Iraq. One doesn’t have to be a Marxist to know that French troops invaded Mali two years ago, and more recently invaded Niger, not to protect the local population from Islamic law but rather to secure the uranium mines operated by the French [nuclear group] Areva in Niger, not far from the border with Mali, as well as other French interests in the region. Niger provides around a third of the uranium supplied to French nuclear plants. *French troops out of Africa and the Near East!*

Wars and military occupations are intrinsic to the decaying capitalist system and opposition to imperialist war requires a fight for socialist revolution. Since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, ever-bolder imperialist depredations have fanned the flames of Islamic fundamentalism. The rise of Islamic reaction in the Muslim world itself is a product of imperialist machinations and of the bankruptcy of secular bourgeois nationalism and Stalin-

ism in the region. For example, it was the betrayals of the secular-nationalist PLO [Palestine Liberation Organization] that paved the way for the rise of reactionary Islamist groups like Hamas. Hamas was initially supported by the Zionist rulers of Israel as a counterweight to Yasir Arafat’s organization.

In Afghanistan, the imperialists gave massive financial and military support to the *jihad* against the Soviet Union in the 1980s. French and other secret services have for years played a murky role in support of Islamic fundamentalist insurgents in Syria (until very recently). With each new massacre perpetrated by the imperialists in the countries subjected to their bombing campaigns, a new wave of Islamic fighters is created.

While the imperialists, through their military, political and economic might, are the world’s biggest criminals, the Islamic fundamentalists, who don’t have the same means at their disposal, are no less inclined to bigotry and violence. Today, groups such as Al Qaeda or ISIS are recruiting thousands of youth to their feudal worldview, which considers women to be little better than slaves and equates all Jews with the Zionist butchers running Israel. In this sense, the Islamists share the outlook of the Western racist imperialist rulers, for whom anyone of Muslim background has become the new all-purpose “enemy within” and the official “enemy without.” In the name of the “war on terror,” the imperialists are strengthening their arsenal of repression and waging war on working people at home and abroad.

The attitude of the French ruling class and its imperialist partners to other terrorist attacks in recent years shows their hypocrisy and reveals where their real concerns lie. When terrorists attacked the synagogue in the Rue Copernic in Paris in October 1980—the first deadly attack on French Jews since the days of the Vichy regime—then-Prime Minister Raymond Barre described it as an “odious act that intended to strike Jews who were going to synagogue and struck innocent Frenchmen crossing the Rue Copernic.” He thus inadvertently exposed the French bourgeoisie’s deeply held anti-Jewish prejudices, implying that Jews might not be truly French and at the same time that they might not be innocent. At the time, the French ruling class was hailing bin Laden and his *mujahedin* reactionaries in Afghanistan

as “freedom fighters” against the Soviet Union.

In the 1980s, Catholic fundamentalists also planted bombs in French cinemas, killing one and injuring a dozen members of the audience. They were seeking to shut down [Martin] Scorsese’s film *The Last Temptation of Christ* as well as *Une Affaire de Femmes* [Story of Women], a film by Claude Chabrol about a French woman who was executed for performing abortions under Vichy. In response, there were no “republican” mass demonstrations to defend free speech.

Nor did the heads of state of the imperialist world organize a mass assembly when Anders Behring Breivik killed eight people with a van bomb in Oslo, Norway and massacred 69 social-democratic youth at a summer camp four years ago. Breivik claimed that the main motive behind his carnage was to publicize his anti-Muslim, woman-hating, white nationalist “manifesto.” The attitude of the imperialists to such crimes reveals where they really stand: for them, anti-Muslim massacres are not terrorist attacks.

“We are Charlie”— Recipe for Fascist Growth and Police Repression

The “spirit of Charlie” was also evident in the early February by-election in Doubs [in eastern France]. The FN [National Front, a fascist party] came close to winning after campaigning against the “Islamic peril.” In

our statement published following the January attacks [WV No. 1060, 23 January], we pointed out that the display of “national unity,” French chauvinism and anti-Muslim “Republican values” would strengthen the fascists. On February 12, five high school students desecrated hundreds of graves in a Jewish cemetery in Sarre-Union, Alsace [in northeastern France], giving Nazi salutes and spitting on Stars of David. And in the month following the January attacks, the Collective Against Islamophobia in France had already recorded 33 attacks on mosques and prayer rooms.

In the Doubs by-election, the FN got twice the number of votes it had obtained in 2012, in the context of significant working-class abstention fueled by deep disillusionment with the virulently anti-working-class policies relentlessly carried out by the Hollande government. The outgoing Socialist Party deputy Pierre Moscovici was a member of this government until he was transferred to Brussels. Moscovici, a front man for the Peugeot [auto manufacturing] family, played his part in the austerity and industrial restructuring policies that led to a massive downsizing of the local Peugeot Sochaux plant. Sochaux had been the biggest auto plant in France for decades; its workforce has shrunk from 40,000 to 10,000 workers.

The continued support of the left for the European Union (EU), with its attendant austerity and increasing economic dislocation affecting the whole of soci-



Didier Crasnault/Voix du Nord

January 30: Workers at Bombardier train factory in Crespin rally to prevent firing of union militant Karim Khatabi, targeted as part of anti-Muslim witch-hunt after attack on *Charlie Hebdo*—in the midst of union-led fight over health and safety issues.

ety, has also fueled the growth of the FN, which is the only significant political force opposing the EU and the euro. The left reformists spend their time spreading the lie that with a little more pressure from below, the EU could become more “social” and dole out a few crumbs to the workers and poor. *Down with the capitalist-imperialist European Union!*

The government has also seized on the January attacks as an opportunity to further roll back civil liberties and heighten state regimentation of the entire population. Its attacks are being carried out in the name of defending “free speech.” In our January statement, we denounced the trade-union leadership for embracing the bourgeoisie’s “Charlie” campaign of “unity” with the “republican” ruling class. The workers movement must mobilize to defend the teachers and workers under attack for refusing to march in lock step with national unity for “Charlie” and salute its racist cartoons. *An attack against one is an attack against all!*

There are currently 10,000 armed soldiers patrolling the country as part of Vigipirate [a police and military mobilization to sow terror in minority communities and patrol transportation hubs hunting for supposed terror suspects]. Hundreds of new hires have been announced for the political police (the DGSI) and there are plans to extend isolation wards and create mini-Guantánamos for those prisoners classed as radical Muslims. The UMP [Union for a Popular Movement, a right-wing party] and the FN are increasingly clamoring to extend the criteria for stripping people of French citizenship and to arm the cops more heavily, among other ever more draconian measures.

In February, the government added a new “Big Brother”-style tool to its arsenal in order to keep the exploited and oppressed in line. The Office Central de Lutte Contre la Cybercriminalité [Central Office for Combating Cybercrime] was launched as part of the “war on terror” law enacted in November. This “administrative body,” as the government calls it, can now block websites without first referring the decision to a judge. It has already targeted 50 “jihadist” sites for closure.

Furthermore, a new bill will be debated in March that would grant the state additional powers to extend and legalize its existing massive surveillance operation. In the wake of Edward Snowden's revelations about the U.S. spy network in 2013, *Le Monde* revealed that the DGSE [the French foreign intelligence service] runs its own electronic surveillance program and uses methods similar to those of the U.S. National Security Agency's Prism program, exposed by Snowden, to collect the population's telephone and Internet data. We demand: ***Free Chelsea Manning! Hands off Edward Snowden! Hands off Julian Assange!***

NPA and Lutte Ouvrière Pay Tribute to *Charlie Hebdo*

The despicable murder of the *Charlie Hebdo* editorial team must be condemned. But that does not mean that their anti-Muslim bigotry should therefore be condoned. The Greens, the Left Party and the PCF [French Communist Party] all joined in the “national unity” for Charlie, but reformist groups such as Lutte Ouvrière (LO) and the NPA [New Anticapitalist Party] also bought into the “We are Charlie” loyalty oath to the Republic. While Israeli liberal historian Schlomo Sand could state that “In the majority of the magazine’s cartoons about Islam that came to my attention over the last decade, what I saw was a manipulative hatred, mainly designed to appeal to its readers, obviously non-Muslims,” the so-called “far left” here, the NPA and LO, instead published pages upon pages in honor of a newspaper which had become a tool in the bourgeoisie’s “war on terror.”

The NPA published a full page of politically correct cartoons as a “tribute” to Charb [*Charlie Hebdo* editor Stéphane Charbonnier] & Co., noting that they had “known and appreciated” them. They managed to add a note of caution: “even though disagreements have for some time



Above: Jewish men amid broken gravestones at desecrated Jewish cemetery in Sarre-Union, February 17. Below: Vandalism at site of mosque under construction in Liévin, January 9.



led us to debate and polemicize with Charlie Hebdo” (*L’Anticapitaliste*, 15 January). For Lutte Ouvrière, there was no such hint of criticism of *Charlie Hebdo*’s constant racist provocations. They too printed a set of cartoons under a great big “Merci Charlie” headline to thank the paper for its “uncompromising vision of this society, of the political leaders or even the religious dignitaries, many of whom are today singing the praises [of *Charlie Hebdo*’s cartoonists] with the utmost hypocrisy while yesterday they fought against them. Thank you for this courage, which they paid for with their lives” (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 16 January). For LO, the anti-Jewish attack at the Hyper Cacher supermarket was barely worth a mention, while they were busy paying tribute to their “secular” buddies. Obviously, with such odes to “Charlie,” neither LO nor the NPA can begin to explain why Hollande, Obama, Netanyahu et al. were also all “Charlie.”

At its third congress, which ended on February 1, the NPA passed a motion calling for a “Campaign against national unity,” criticizing the fact that “most of the organizations of the workers movement lined up behind national unity by calling to demonstrate in Paris on January 11, at the risk of deepening the rift with a section of the population which felt stigmatized.” This is all well and good, but while the NPA may not have marched in Paris alongside Hollande and the other imperialist war criminals who attended on January 11, they did however call on the population to participate in similar “republican” demonstrations across the country (*L’Anticapitaliste*, 15 January).

These demonstrations, featuring the mayor or prefect and the whole gamut of local bourgeois and social-democratic politicians, had fundamentally the same politics of national unity as the Paris one. In Toulouse, the NPA built a demonstration called on the slogan "Charlie will live, hate will not pass." It signed the call for the march, which stated: "It is by continuing the struggle of those who have fallen in the fight against obscurantism and for freedom, peace, solidarity, respect and tolerance that the demands for justice and social progress that they stood for will go forward." In Perpignan, "every republican, man or woman, every democrat and every lover of liberty, equality and fraternity" was invited to the demonstration, which the NPA and others were building. The NPA finally pulled out when those most ardent "lovers" of French chauvinism, the fascists of the FN, accepted the organiz-

ers' invitation and sent [FN vice-president and member of the EU parliament] Louis Aliot to head up their contingent. The ultimate target of the fascists is the organized workers movement. In the absence of a revolutionary working-class leadership pointing the way toward a struggle against the racist capitalist order, the FN is dangerously gaining ground.

We call on workers to reject the drive for national unity and to fight instead for class unity. The reformist labor misleaders who are inspired by the “spirit of January 11” are an obstacle to this class perspective. Instead, it is necessary and urgent to mobilize workers and immigrants to stop the fascists.

NPA's Pro-Imperialist Record

Just as hypocritical was the NPA's new-found political virginity in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, with regard to the role of French imperialism. On January 9, just after the attacks, the NPA stated that "this barbaric violence is the monstrous child... of the continuous wars waged against the people since the first Iraq war, in Afghanistan, Libya, Africa and Syria.... These wars, which are solely aimed at maintaining the rule of multinational corporations and their right to plunder the wealth, thereby fuel the worst reactionary fundamentalists." But they simply forgot to add that they themselves, or their predecessor, the LCR [Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, affiliated with the United Secretariat], had most of the time criminally lined up behind their own imperialism in these bloody wars.

In the 1980s, at the time of the war in Afghanistan between the Soviet Union and the CIA-funded *mujahedin* Islamists, the LCR called for a Soviet withdrawal as early as 1981. In 1979, the Soviet Army was asked by the left-nationalist PDPA [People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan] government to intervene militarily against the anti-Communist tribal chiefs and mullahs, who were committed to mass illiteracy and the enslavement of women. We said: "Hail Red Army!" and called to "Extend the social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!"

The criminal withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1989 opened the door to the triumph of capitalist counterrevolution in the USSR itself and greatly contributed to the growth of Islamic reaction today. The NPA's predecessor, however, supported *mujahedin* leader Ahmed Shah Massoud, claiming he was a progressive element fighting both the imperialists and the Soviet Union. When this same Mas-

soud took power in Kabul in 1992, he instituted *sharia* law and reimposed the *burqa*. At the time of the 2001 imperialist attack, his [Northern Alliance] forces served as ground troops for NATO.

In 2011, the NPA also declared “its total support to the insurgents in their struggle for democracy and for the fall of the dictatorship” of Qaddafi in Libya. They maintained this position even after [then-president] Nicolas Sarkozy and other imperialists intervened militarily to topple Qaddafi and place these same “insurgents” in power.

The NPA learned no lessons from the imperialist devastation in Libya. Two years later, they were begging Hollande to arm the rebels in Syria: “The international workers and democratic movement must demand from our governments that they immediately provide weapons to the Free Syrian Army which has been mandated by the Syrian revolution to defend it” (*Tout est à nous!*, 13 June 2013). As for us, we have no side in the reactionary civil war between Assad and the rebels.

Last fall, the NPA went on to call on their own imperialist government to send weapons to the Kurdish nationalists of the PYD [Democratic Union Party] in Kobani (NPA statement, 9 October 2014), knowing full well that the PYD had become the imperialists’ ground troops against ISIS, with whom these same imperialists were allied only yesterday. In contrast, while stating our intransigent political opposition to the obscurantist reactionaries of ISIS, we wrote: “Marxists side militarily with the ISIS fighters when they target the imperialists and their proxies, be they Syrian or Iraqi Kurdish nationalists, or the Baghdad government and its Shi’ite militias” (*Le Bolchévik* No. 210, December 2014).

Since the start of the Syrian conflict, which is fueled by the imperialists in order to bring about regime change, over 200,000 people have died and more than 10 million Syrians have been forced to flee their homes. Looking to the imperialists for aid is like asking an arsonist to put out a fire; it is a suicidal strategy for the Syrian population. In this way, the reformists contribute to the current rise of reaction.

LO Provides Left Cover for “Republican Secularism”

As for *Lutte Ouvrière*, they denounced the “despicable policies and wars carried out by the great powers” which have fueled Islamic fundamentalism. They continued: “But what is most detrimental is that there is now almost no workers movement left worthy of its name, which makes it possible for reactionary ideas to spread among some youth” (*Lutte Ouvrière*, 16 January). In particular, LO has for many years bemoaned the weakening of the PCF, but back in the days when it was strong and administered the capitalist state in numerous municipal councils, the PCF betrayed the working class over and over again.

[illegible]

France...

(continued from page 7)

For example, it betrayed the revolutionary opportunity in May 1968. A dozen years later, in 1980, it sent a bulldozer to tear down a hostel for Malian workers in Vitry in order to prove their credentials in the hope of obtaining ministerial posts in the future government of [Socialist president] François Mitterrand. Such betrayals have greatly helped “reactionary ideas to spread among some youth.” LO here demonstrates that its political perspective does not go beyond a reformist workers movement negotiating a few reforms in exchange for maintaining social peace, i.e., the capitalist order.

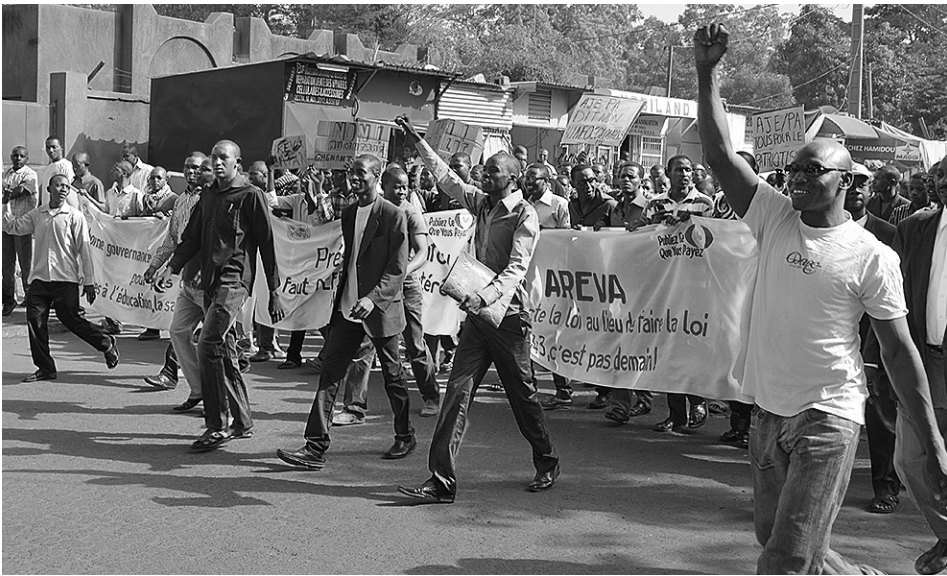
The French workers movement has certainly been weakened by many betrayals, especially since the capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. But the problem is not per se the weakening of reformist organizations such as the PCF or LO. It is the general, albeit uneven and not eternal, retrogression of workers’ consciousness. The most advanced layer of workers no longer believes that a collectivized, socialist society is possible. Workers no longer believe that this is an achievable goal, or that it is worth pursuing. This is an expression of the lying dogma, constantly propounded by the bourgeoisie since the destruction of the Soviet Union, that “communism is dead.”

The number of people who fundamentally identify with the proletariat has fallen, as seen by the growing appeal of petty-bourgeois populist formations like Podemos and Syriza. In France, we are also seeing certain sections of the proletariat, even some who were formerly on the left, starting to vote for the FN, the most dangerous *enemies* of the working class and the oppressed. The period will need to change, with a sharp increase in working-class struggle and the intervention of a communist vanguard, in order for Marxism to once again win the allegiance of a layer of the proletariat.

By joining the French bourgeoisie’s campaign to promote “secular” republican values, LO bears particular responsibility. Their own campaigns against the Islamic headscarf have contributed to racist segregation and to the exclusion of French youth of Muslim background today. This in turn encourages these youth to search for an illusory refuge in religion and other forms of social backwardness like anti-Jewish racism. This is both exploited and fueled by anti-Jewish demagogues like Dieudonné and his sidekick Alain Soral, a bona fide “national socialist” fascist.

LO was instrumental in spearheading the 2004 law banning the headscarf in schools through their active role in expelling two veiled high school students, Alma and Lila Lévy, from their school in Aubervilliers [a Paris suburb] in 2003. Ten years later, in the context of the economic crisis, anti-Muslim attacks are on the rise, particularly against veiled women. The FN is the first to benefit from this. Despite this, LO continues its secular preaching, and in 2013 they sided with the boss of the Baby Loup day-care center in a Parisian suburb, who fired a young childcare worker, Fatima Afif, for wearing a headscarf.

This “republican secularism,” which is



AFP

December 2013: Demonstration against French nuclear energy firm Areva in Niamey, Niger. French military intervention in neighboring Mali earlier that year aimed to secure French interests, including supply of uranium for nuclear power plants.

a cover for anti-Muslim prejudices, has nothing to do with the principle of secularism established by the French Revolution of 1789 and which we uphold to this day. As we explained in our article “Women and Immigration in France” (*Spartacist* [English edition] No. 57, Winter 2002-2003):

“The French state *deformed* the goals and values of the French Revolution with this attack on these Muslim girls. Under the *ancien régime* of the French king, France was known as ‘the eldest daughter of the Church.’ The principle of secularism in the French Revolution came from the need to protect the freedom to express ideas and to free society from the hands of the Catholic church. That this principle is used today by a Catholic majority to oppress a Muslim minority in French society is a cruel irony of history. It underscores the degree to which the French bourgeoisie in the epoch of capitalist decay has degenerated from the class that led the 1789 Revolution, a historic watershed in the struggle for human emancipation.”

While we fight against the ban on the veil, the Ligue Trotskyste de France has always opposed the headscarf and the veil, which represent a reactionary social program for keeping women within the narrow confines of the family and the home, and in a position of servitude. Likewise, we oppose the trappings of other religions, all of which promote the family, which is the basis of women’s oppression.

In France, the 1905 law [on the separation of church and state] went some way toward the separation of church and state, but Catholicism remains powerful and privileged. One-sixth of the school system is private and in the hands of the Catholic church, but it is funded by the state. The ruling class uses religion to reinforce social conservatism and sanctify capitalist class rule as seen in the recent anti-gay and anti-abortion mobilizations led by the Church. By 2010, “republican secularism” had become so synonymous with anti-Muslim racism that [FN leader] Marine Le Pen made the “Islamic danger” the central issue in her party’s propaganda, arguing that Islam was incompatible with the “secular values” at the core of the French Republic.

The “Muslim problem” is in reality a fabrication of the French bourgeoisie and above all of its social-democratic lackeys. In the early 1980s, there was a series

of important strikes in the French auto industry. Immigrant workers, mainly from North Africa, spearheaded these powerful workers mobilizations which shook the SP-PCF popular-front government. The government sought to break the strikes by using the classic tactic of divide-and-rule and denounced the strikers, claiming that they were being manipulated by the ayatollahs and other religious leaders.

Up until the 1970s, the bourgeoisie needed extra labor power and brought



Le Bolchévik

Union protest at Citroën-Aulnay auto plant, 1982. Immigrant workers played key role in 1982-83 auto strikes. In response, government launched racist campaign against foreign-born workers.

hundreds of thousands of immigrant workers into the country, particularly from North Africa. But in recent decades, deindustrialization has made jobs scarce, a situation that has only gotten worse with the economic crisis. Today, with widespread unemployment, the capitalists consider the children and grandchildren of these immigrant workers a surplus population from whose labor little profit can be extracted.

Back in the 1980s, these youth demonstrated for equality, most notably at the 1983 “great march of the *beurs*” [*“beurs”* referred to children of North African immigrants]. Their hopes were cruelly dashed by Mitterrand’s social democrats and their cynical ploys such as SOS-Racisme; as a result, some of them turned to religion. This is the origin of the Islamic headscarf affair in the schools, which dates back to 1989. Since that time, the French bourgeoisie has continually added to its bans on Muslim dress, while condemning Muslims’ so-called failure to integrate. Today the anti-Muslim witchhunt has reached such a point that the likes of Eric Zemmour [a right-wing anti-Muslim journalist and author] are given press columns and airtime to argue for the mass expulsion of France’s estimated four million Muslims. It is clearly the fascists who benefit from such calls, and without a doubt they will turn against the Jews as well, despite the services rendered by individuals like Zemmour [who is Jewish].

LO claims that Chirac’s 2004 law protects young women. In fact, racist expulsions as a result of this law can only serve to deepen these young women’s oppression, driving them out of the public schools and into religious schools or even keeping them at home! It is the capitalist state which is the main source of oppression of these women! In reality, LO reveals its touching faith in this racist French state, which it portrays as a bulwark for protecting young women against anti-woman (Arab) reactionaries. In 2012, [LO spokesperson] Nathalie Arthaud explained her position on this question: “The law, far from excluding girls, allows them all to come to school and allows those who don’t want to wear the veil to retain that realm of freedom.”

Schools: Key Prop of the Capitalist State

Today, even Arthaud probably wouldn’t dare claim that public schools are a “realm of freedom” when eight-, nine- and ten-year-old children have been reported to the police, suspected of “justifying terrorism.” Dozens of teenagers facing the same charge have also been reported to and questioned by the cops. Kids as young as 13 can face criminal prosecution. After two of his young students were arrested, one teacher stated:

“I believe that placing them in custody for remarks which are certainly shocking, but are still only words, is totally out of proportion and it is not educational! How can you talk to them about the Republic, democracy and the rule of law

after all this? I am deeply upset by what is happening to these kids. I talked to my student. He is what you would call a big mouth. He refused to talk about what happened while he was in custody. He is devastated.”

We demand that all charges be dropped immediately—for youth and adults alike. Free all those who have been jailed!

In mid January, Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem announced that the government was planning to strengthen republican values. From the beginning of the next school year, teachers, students and parents will have to sign a “charter of secularism” (and one can only imagine what punishment is being dreamed up for the heretics who refuse to sign). One thousand teachers will be trained to preach “secularism,” and there will be a special day in schools every year, on December 9, to celebrate “secular” mass. There are also plans afoot to implement and strengthen the authority of public school institutions with republican rites and symbols such as the *Marseillaise* and the tricolor flag being taught as early as the first year of primary school. In contrast, there will be no extra money for special education for students with difficulties, nor any money for more teachers to reduce class sizes or replace absent teachers. But there is plenty of money to teach kids in the ghetto schools to “conform” and respect authority from a tender age.

Schools are key institutions for maintaining capitalist rule. The bourgeoisie

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Greece...

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seeks to be the pressure on the streets that will push Syriza to the left. In addition to the SEK, Antarsya is also home to other ex-Trotskyists, ex-Stalinists and Maoists. In the January elections, Antarsya ran in a bloc with Plan B, a small split from Syriza. Plan B is no more socialist than Syriza. What passes for radicalism in Plan B's programme is a request that the parliament consider adopting direct democracy—to make Greece more like Switzerland. Of course, we know that Switzerland is a paradise—for the super-wealthy! While Antarsya and Plan B ran their own candidates, they were very careful not to oppose a vote to Syriza. That is why we said “no vote to Antarsya!”

One particular anecdote stands out to me. During the election campaign we were distributing our “Vote KKE” leaflet at a busy street corner in central Athens. Antarsya and the Communist Party also had leafleters. There was a Syriza office just a block away, and they were very hostile to our leaflet. I noticed, in contrast, that one of the Antarsya members was over with the Syriza guys chatting and laughing and being very comradely. So when she came back I made a snarky comment about their supposed “independence from Syriza” and she shoots back: “Well, just watch, we'll be striking in the streets right after the election.”

Today Antarsya is indeed in the streets, but they aren't striking against the government, they're supporting it. They've mobilised for pro-government, national unity protests in the last couple of weeks, where thousands rallied under Greek flags. Under the guise of opposing the Troika, these protests line up Greek working people in “solidarity” with their class enemy at home—the Greek capitalists. When Syriza talks about seeking European solidarity it is talking about solidarity with the bourgeois regimes of Italy, France, and Spain—once Podemos is in power. It is not referring to international working class solidarity—which must be forged around Europe-wide opposition to the EU.

Down With the EU!

We of the International Communist League have opposed the EU since its formation. Dominated primarily by Germany, the EU exists centrally to advance the interests of these imperialist powers. Together with their junior partners, they use the EU to subordinate dependent states, such as Greece and many East European countries. Equally important to remember is that the EU is a means of increasing the rate of exploitation of the workers in imperialist European countries as well. Workers in Germany have seen their wages slashed and living conditions undercut in the name of profitability. Today the French working class is facing EU-mandated austerity carried out by the

Socialist Party government of François Hollande. In Britain, which is in the EU but not the currency bloc, the government has launched massive cuts to health-care, welfare and housing. In Greece the attacks have been extreme. The health-care system is so inadequate that Doctors Without Borders is operating in major cities like Athens. In the capital, 25 per cent of school children go hungry, and the universities are so strapped that they lack the cash to pay even basic operating costs. Any *Guardian* or *New York Times* article will tell you: mass unemployment, mothers too poor to give birth in a hospi-



Economic crisis has spurred growth of fascists. Nazi salutes at Golden Dawn rally, Athens, February 2014.

tal, children and pensioners rummaging through rubbish bins for food.

The unions have been a special target of the EU imperialists and of the Greek bourgeoisie. Collective bargaining was shredded under the EU/IMF memorandum, and key sectors of union power have been weakened, most famously the port of Piraeus, half of which was privatised and where there is no union. The years-long economic depression has decimated the already small Greek working class. When I first visited Greece in 2012, I visited a picket line of striking workers at a steel plant outside Athens. When we met with them they had already been on strike for over 200 days. We talked to the workers there about their strike and published solidarity statements in our international press [see WV No. 1005, 6 July 2012]. The strike was launched after the plant's owner, a major Greek industrialist, threatened mass layoffs and wage cuts that were permitted under the EU-IMF memorandum. PAME, the KKE's trade-union front, helped organise the strike and the workers had led a long, militant and popular strike. However, they were isolated and threatened with state repression. About a month after our visit riot cops launched a massive attack on the picket lines and broke the strike. Crucial in the strike's defeat was that there were no sym-

pathy strikes in other steel plants, nor was there an attempt to broaden their struggle to other layers of the working class. As of 2014 the plant was closed, and the remaining workers had been laid off. The attacks on workers in Greece should serve as a warning. The workers of Europe must recognise that the EU is using Greece as a test case for what it has in store for all of them.

One of the reasons we offered critical support to the KKE is that it opposes the EU. But the Greek Stalinists' opposition to the EU comes from their nationalist perspective. Indeed, much of the left in

Greece has some rhetoric about Greece being better off outside the eurozone and EU, even as their comrades in other parts of Europe explicitly promote the idea of a reformed, democratic EU—a “social Europe.” In contrast our opposition to the EU is internationalist—we are for revolutionary struggle by workers across Europe against this imperialist consortium.

Recognising that the euro would be an instrument of the EU imperialists, we opposed its introduction. We noted that a common European currency was not viable in the long-term. Ordinarily, each country has its own currency, and a debtor country can get some relief and regain competitiveness by devaluing its currency. But this is not possible in a currency union like the eurozone. The imperialists, centrally the German bourgeoisie, demand that debtor countries slash wages, pensions and welfare in return for aid to the banks. There is no way out for debtor countries under this setup. In the eurozone, Greece is akin to a patient on life support, and the machine keeping it breathing is the cash provided by the Troika. Mass unemployment and hunger were deliberate policies enacted by the Troika and local rulers to cow the working class and to attempt to make Greece “profitable” again, which means driving up the rate of exploitation. The EU imperialists, centrally Germany,

have treated Greece like a colony, even getting rid of bourgeois politicians like former PM George Papandreou, who made the mistake of proposing to get a popular mandate for massive austerity. For years domestic political decisions have been vetoed by Berlin and Brussels.

The sharp cuts in public spending have had a predictable effect—the Greek economy has contracted by 25 per cent since the beginning of the crisis. A smaller economy means less tax revenue, thereby increasing the deficit and prompting demands for more austerity. As we pointed out in our election statement, a Greek exit from the EU as the result of workers struggles would be a step forward, but not a solution in itself. The economic crisis of the imperialist system cannot be resolved within the borders of one country, particularly in small, dependent Greece with its low level of industry and resources. International socialist revolution is the only solution to unemployment, wage cuts, imperialist war and the other depredations of decaying capitalism.

Nationalism: Poison for Workers Struggle

Don't be fooled by Syriza's name, which stands for Coalition of the Radical Left. It is anything *but* that, both in its current incarnation and in its origins. It originated, in part, from a right-wing split from the Communist Party by anti-Soviet elements. The forces that became Syriza spent the last decade immersed in the Social Forums, student struggles and populist “indignados” protests—the last of which were explicitly anti-working class. In 2004 Syriza was formed as a coalition including bourgeois and petit-bourgeois political forces like environmentalists and ex-PASOK members.

As for Syriza's transformation into a party, its founding conference in 2013 adopted a resolution, which is a dead letter today, where one of the most radical demands was to nationalise the banks. It proclaims itself to be for the *laos*, the people, of which the working class is only one sector. It was not built by workers organisations, unions, but rather emerged as a voice for the petty bourgeoisie.

In our January statement we called Syriza a petty-bourgeois party because it had not yet gained ruling-class support. That is no longer the case. Before the elections the main bourgeois daily newspaper *Kathimerini* ran editorials about “dealing with the Syriza virus” (*ekathimerini.com*, 24 September 2014) and accused Syriza of gambling with the country's economic development. But a few days after the elections, *Kathimerini* warned right-wing New Democracy, its former favourite, that it “must throw its support behind any government decisions that are for the overall good.” Syriza worked very hard to win the support of a wing of the bourgeoisie. In 2013 Tsipras promised to maintain the notorious tax scheme whereby the monumentally wealthy Greek shipowners pay

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maintains elite schools to ensure quality education for its children and to train the managers and technicians it needs to administer the capitalist system. When it comes to the working class and the poor, the capitalists seek to spend on education only what they calculate they can get back in profits. These youth are taught to comply with bourgeois authority or face expulsion.

Once out of school, many *banlieue* youth are faced with having no job security, or with unemployment and prison. Hollande has now announced that, starting in June, youth can sign up for “voluntary civil service,” which would nevertheless be “universal.” This scheme was originally dreamed up by Sarkozy, and Hollande now plans to extend it. For half the minimum wage and over a period of six or 12 months, young people will be able to help prop up the woefully understaffed public services by working in schools, retirement homes, hospitals and government administration. This is a gift to the capitalists which will drive down wages and working conditions fought for by the unions, destroy jobs and increase

competition among the poorest. It is also a bid by Hollande to reverse the unemployment trend, a goal he has vowed to achieve if he is to run for president again in 2017. What's needed is a massive program of hiring in the public services, with equal pay for equal work and permanent work contracts!

Nearly ten years ago, at the time of the 2005 *banlieue* revolt, we called on the workers movement to defend the *banlieue* youth. We do so again today in the face of the government's holy war against Muslim youth. To fight the policy of the French bourgeoisie and its reformist lackeys of continually pitting Muslims against Jews, whites against non-whites, men against women, heterosexuals against homosexuals, what is posed is the need for a revolutionary workers party, a tribune of the people fighting for the unity of the working class and for workers to take the lead of all the oppressed in a struggle for socialist revolution.

The multiracial working class has enormous social power—its labor produces the capitalists' enormous profits. When

the workers decide to collectively withdraw their labor through strike action, then the profit tap is turned off, the transport network shuts down and the lights go out. This social power must be wielded and linked with the anger of dispossessed ghetto youth in a fight to overthrow this rotting system.

We live in a reactionary period—the epoch of imperialist decay. But the only way to fight for a future for working class youth today is to study the lessons

of the history of class struggle and try to apply them. Lenin studied the lessons of the Paris Commune in order to lead the Russian Revolution to victory. Likewise, today we study the lessons of the Russian Revolution to prepare for the inevitable future outbreaks of class struggle. We seek to build a revolutionary party, part of a reformed Fourth International, grounded in the Marxist understanding that this racist capitalist system must be overthrown through socialist revolution. ■



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Greece...

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little tax. He also met with leaders of Greek industry last year, promising them a better business climate with fewer obstacles to profit-making.

Much of the left in Greece and internationally expressed dismay at Syriza’s alliance with the right-wing nationalist Independent Greeks (ANEL). Such surprise has to be deeply cynical. Syriza and the Independent Greeks have been courting each other for some time. They had an ongoing parliamentary alliance stretching back to 2013. That year, Syriza sent a representative to the Independent Greeks congress, and they agreed to a common front to bail out little brother (Greek) Cyprus. This alliance is useful for Syriza and its boosters, as it allows them to blame their backtracking and lies on the coalition. But, actually, there is *no* conflict of class interest between the Independent Greeks and Syriza, because both parties share a desire to promote Greek nationalism and national interests. For the Independent Greeks this means expelling immigrants from the country, accusing the tiny Jewish population of Greece (descendants of survivors of the Holocaust) of not paying taxes, and otherwise promoting horrible nationalism and anti-gay bigotry.

Knowing that its promises are largely empty, Syriza uses nationalist populism as an ideological prop for its rule. For years, Greece has been swept by almost daily strikes and protests against the government and its policies. But today you have flag-waving, *pro-government* protests, a confirmation of Syriza’s usefulness to the Greek capitalists in deflecting anger away from them. One of our comrades noted that this is the first time in her life she has ever seen pro-government demonstrations.

Tsipras has denounced Turkey for infringing on Cyprus’ sovereignty, and the Greek military announced last week that it will be carrying out military exercises with Cyprus, Israel and Egypt. Fascist Golden Dawn announced that they will support Syriza measures against privatisations as well as anything Syriza does to oppose sanctions against Russia. While Greece’s subordination to the imperialists understandably whips up national sentiment against the Troika, the solution for working people is not nationalism, in which is expressed the lie that there is a common interest between Greek workers and their capitalist exploiters at home.

Rather than pointing out to the working class that the Syriza-Independent Greek nationalist alliance is simply an alliance of left and right bourgeois populists, the left has turned its fire against the Greek Communist party for refusing to ally with Syriza. We called for a vote to the KKE



Athens, November 2014: Dock workers protest against privatization scheme for Greek ports.

not least because it had *refused* in advance to rule with Syriza. The KKE correctly said: “Reject the blackmail and lies of ND-Syriza, the people have bled enough for the EU-plutocracy.” An electoral alliance between the KKE and Syriza would be a classic popular front, or alliance between a reformist workers party (the KKE) and a bourgeois party (Syriza). When the workers are tied to the capitalists by their misleaders, as in China in the 1920s, Spain and France in the 1930s and Chile in the early 1970s, the result is not socialism but the disillusionment and disarmament of socialist-minded workers, the defeat of revolutionary opportunities and, very often, the rise of extreme right-wing reaction.

The workers movement of Greece has its own bitter memories of such betrayals. In the Second World War the Communist Party’s military forces led a successful resistance struggle against the German occupation and controlled nearly the whole country by 1944. However, the KKE, following Stalin’s diktat, handed power back to the British-backed capitalist forces. The Greek bourgeoisie murdered thousands of Communists after winning the years-long civil war, and the KKE remained more or less underground until after the fall in 1974 of the military dictatorship. I urge you to read the current issue of the ICL’s theoretical journal *Spartacist*, which has an in-depth article explaining the origins of the KKE’s popular-frontism and Stalin’s nationalist programme of “socialism in one country.”

There *is* a mass reformist workers party in Greece with tens of thousands of working-class members and deep trade-union links. It is the Communist Party, not Syriza, that maintains the allegiance of militant Greek workers. The KKE is one of the few remaining mass Stalin-

ist parties that has refused to dissociate itself from the Soviet Union. Today, the KKE claims to have turned its back on “coalitions” with the bourgeoisie and to have studied and corrected what it calls “mistakes” made when it did participate in bourgeois governments at various junctures. We called for critical support to the KKE, meaning that although we urged people to vote for it, we didn’t shy



Piraeus, January 11: Communist Party (KKE) flags together with Greek national flags during rally for KKE’s 96th anniversary. TGG election statement called for no vote to Syriza, critical support to KKE.

away from or disappear our differences with its Stalinist programme. We sought to use the tactic of critical support as a way to expose the reformist programme of the KKE. Our critical support allowed us to argue with KKE workers and youth against the party’s *nationalism* and *populism*. And we had lots to argue about.

The KKE views as sacrosanct the Greek borders, which were extended a hundred years ago in a series of fratricidal wars. Back in 2013 the Communist Party newspaper ran an article calling to strengthen the war industries in the name of national defence. In the last election the KKE ran NATO admiral Giannis Douniadakis as a candidate. This was an act of fealty to the capitalist state, and we said: “No Vote to Douniadakis!” The KKE denies that there is a Slav Macedonian minority in Greece, never mind that it should have the right to separate. But the democratic demand for the right of self-determination for national minorities is vital for a revolutionary party in Greece to uphold, and we raise it prominently. Because of the national conflicts in the Balkans and the imperialist subordination of the region, for the working class a Socialist Federation of the Balkans is the only way forward.

The KKE and the Capitalist State

The Communist Party’s pronouncements *can* sound like Marxism. In the latest issue of its theoretical journal *Communist Review* the KKE wrote, “The new power must smash the bourgeois state. No organ and its mechanism can be reformed

and transferred to the conditions of socialist construction.” There was also a very interesting letter by the KKE in a recent issue of the *Morning Star*, newspaper of the British Communist Party. The letter was a rebuttal of the international fake left’s criticism of the KKE for not joining with Syriza in government. The KKE makes a number of correct arguments against Syriza and its left tails, including that Syriza “accepts the strategy of the EU and Capitalism” (morningstaronline.co.uk, 23 January).

The KKE’s current posture can only partially obscure what is at bottom a class-collaborationist Stalinist programme. In fact, despite its left rhetoric, in practice the KKE *does* administer the capitalist state on the local level. There is a KKE mayor of Patras, Greece’s third-largest city, for example. Our international views it as a communist principle not to run for or accept executive office—mayor, president, sheriff etc. These are offices where, if in power, a communist would be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the capitalist state, including the local police, of course.

We distributed thousands of copies of our critical support statement, including to rallies and marches of the KKE and its youth group. We had a range of reactions from KKEers, some thanked us while others found it almost unbelievable that a Trotskyist group would be voting for

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WORKERS VANGUARD

many, for unconditional military defence against imperialism and internal counter-revolution and for workers political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and install regimes of workers democracy.

For Workers Struggle Against Fascism!

I would like to conclude with some comments on the rise of the fascist Golden Dawn, and the strategy needed to stop them. Golden Dawn now holds the third most seats in parliament, behind only Syriza and New Democracy. As you may know, one of its supporters stabbed and killed the leftist rapper Pavlos Fyssas in September 2013, and fascists are also responsible for other brutal killings and assaults on immigrants and leftists. Golden Dawn, with its Nazi symbolism and extreme nationalism, is seen by many lumpen and petty bourgeois as the only “radical” alternative to the system that brought on the economic crisis. In many working-class areas once dominated by the KKE, such as the port area of Athens, Golden Dawn has fed off years of hunger and unemployment.

This situation urgently cries out for *mass, united-front mobilisations centred on the power of the organised proletariat to stop the fascists*. The capitalist state keeps the fascists in reserve in order to use them to crush the workers when bourgeois class rule is threatened. It is therefore suicidal for leftists and workers to have any illusions that the institutions of the capitalist state can be used to stop the fascists. While the left hailed the arrest of more than a dozen Golden Dawn leaders in 2013, *we* warned that the very laws used by the state to go after the fascists would eventually be used to suppress the working class and oppressed.

The struggle for a workers united front against fascism does not mean that revolutionaries should ditch their programme to lash up with reformists and bourgeois forces. We advocate a united front premised on full freedom of criticism and political independence for the various organisations involved. In this way, revolutionaries seek to expose the reformist misleaders and win workers to the revolutionary programme. This is how Trotsky advocated the use of the united-front tactic in the early 1930s in Germany. The German Communist Party’s refusal to demand that the reformist Social Democracy join them in a workers united front against the Nazis allowed Hitler to come to power without a shot being fired.

The KKE itself has been attacked by Golden Dawn, but its leaders have offered no sustained resistance to the fascist threat. Shortly after Fyssas’ murder there was a large demonstration organised by the KKE’s union front PAME that stopped Golden Dawn from rallying. But this was essentially a one-off event. The KKE’s programme against fascism is expressed in its newspaper *Rizospastis*, where it has appealed to “isolate” the fascists ideologically and to use the “weapon of the vote” against them. The demo after Fyssas’ murder hinted at the real strength of the working class, but this strength has been held in check by the KKE’s leadership. The KKE argues that only socialism can stop fascism. It is true that ultimately only the workers in power can end the conditions that give rise to fascism, but for the KKE this is just a cover for its refusal to mobilise against the fascists,



February 21: Migrants at Amygdaleza detention center, near Athens, during protest to demand closure of detention camps after a young Pakistani detainee was driven to suicide by wretched conditions there.

and encourages passivity in the working class towards the deadly threat the fascists pose today.

In the fall of 2013, shortly before Fyssas’ murder, I witnessed the largest working-class demonstration I have ever seen. There were tens of thousands of workers, mobilised by the Communist Party and its trade-union front PAME. Many were waving red hammer-and-sickle flags, marching in close military formation through the streets of Athens to the U.S. Embassy to protest what seemed like the imminent bombing of Syria. Two months after Fyssas was killed, more than a thousand Hitler-loving scum marched right up to the Greek parliament in central Athens and rallied there unopposed. Had tens of thousands of workers been mobilised in the streets by the unions and the left, this fascist provocation could have been stopped. So our propaganda for a united front is not abstract in the least. One must only remember that this year is the 70th anniversary of the end of the Nazi Holocaust to be aware of what is at stake.

The SEK in Greece is a prominent organiser of KEERFA, an anti-fascist front group. We attended a KEERFA meeting during last year’s November 17th commemoration. This event is held annually to commemorate the students killed by the ruling military junta during a pro-democracy protest at the Athens Polytechnic in 1973. The commemoration draws thousands of Greeks from all walks of life, from schoolchildren with their teachers to aged veterans of the Civil War. Every left organisation in the country sets up literature tables inside the campus. We attended the event held by KEERFA to discuss the progress of their anti-fascist campaign. The main speaker, a public leader of KEERFA, spoke at length about the nature of fascism, the struggle for immigrant rights, etc. All of this led to a final, resounding crescendo: we must march in the streets—to pressure the government to throw the fascists in jail!

There can be no greater expression of illusions in the capitalist state than this demand. It is suicidal in any capitalist country to rely on the state to deal with the fascists, but in Greece it should be even more apparent because it is widely known that half of the cops support Golden Dawn. The last government’s health minister was known for using a homemade axe to hunt down leftist students when he

was a leader of a right-wing youth group. A supporter of the TGG intervened in the meeting from the floor. She really shook the room up. She explained why we call for the united front and then exposed the illusions in the cops and courts pushed by the SEK and KEERFA. She went after the SEK for being anti-Communist, and for being so repelled by our call for a workers united front with the Communist Party. She got a fair bit of applause after her remarks.

Well, of course KEERFA and the SEK are absolutely thrilled that Syriza was elected, because now they *really* push illusions that the state will take care of the fascist threat. The SEK calls on Syriza to continue the trials of Golden Dawn, root out their supporters in the state apparatus, and “disarm the police.” A recent anti-Turkey provocation launched by the new government illustrates the depth of these reformist illusions. Days after the election Panos Kammenos, the new defence minister, staged a nationalist anti-Turkey provocation by lowering a wreath over the Imia islets, where three Greek soldiers died in a helicopter crash in 1996. These are pieces of rock whose ownership is disputed by Greece and Turkey, and every year the fascists hold an Imia rally on 31 January.

This year’s counter-demonstration in Athens against the fascist rally was a crystallisation of the toothless, liberal, anti-fascist “common front” against fascism hailed by Antarsya and KEERFA. This demo, the first since the election of Syriza, saw the left rally hours before and in a different location from the fascists, obviously with no intention of stopping Golden Dawn. Everyone from the Syriza youth to Antarsya to anarchists was represented. Much was made of the fact that there was a minimal police presence. Of

course, had this been a serious mobilisation to stop the fascists, you can be sure that hundreds of riot cops would have been dispatched to protect Golden Dawn.

For a Leninist-Trotskyist Party

No capitalist government, including one led by Syriza, will be able to satisfy the desperate demands of the Greek masses for jobs, healthcare and pensions. In these conditions, the fascists will continue to grow. It is necessary for the Greek working class to come to the fore in militant struggle of all those facing ruin by the capitalist crisis. A class-struggle response to the populist demagoguery of the fascists is needed. In a country where the unionised working class has been decimated by the economic crisis, a massive campaign to organise the unorganised is needed. In Greece, immigrants are murdered in the street, detained in squalid camps, or pushed into the sea to drown before even reaching Europe’s shores. Against deportations and state repression against undocumented migrants, we call for full citizenship rights for all immigrants. In response to massive, sustained unemployment in a society where a whole generation has never held a job, we demand jobs for all through a shorter workweek with no loss in pay! In a society where the pitiful minimum wage leaves the working poor to burn firewood to heat their apartments, have their electricity cut off, and send their children hungry to school, we demand a sliding scale of wages to keep up with the cost of living! In contrast to Syriza’s timid begging for scraps from the imperialists, we say: Repudiate the debt! Nationalise 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. It will be necessary to extend any revolution in a dependent European country like Greece to the imperialist centres of Berlin, Paris, and London. Our programme is for the Socialist United States of Europe. I would like to conclude by quoting from an article written by our German comrades. They wrote: “The Socialist United States of Europe, in conjunction with the conquest of proletarian power in the U.S., Japan and throughout the world, would lay the basis for a real international division of labour in a planned economy, thus enormously increasing the productivity of society. Establishing the genuine equality of the peoples of Europe, it would eradicate the source of the imperialist wars that have brought Europe so many times near extinction” [“Economic Crisis Rips Europe,” WV No. 992, 9 December 2011]. Central to our perspective as Trotskyists is the reorganising of the Fourth International as the world party of proletarian revolution, the task the International Communist League has set for itself. ■

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Syriza Tries to Appease EU Imperialists

Greece: European Union Turns Screws



Scholz Press

Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras of Syriza with German chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin, March 23.

On February 20, less than a month after being propelled to victory in the Greek elections on the basis of its anti-austerity rhetoric, the Syriza-led government of Alexis Tsipras caved in to the diktat of the imperialist European Union (EU) and accepted a four-month extension of the EU's extortionate "bailout." Syriza agreed to come up with a new package of austerity measures, but more than a month has passed without any new austerity agreement being reached. Instead there is a tense stand-off and Greece's relationship with Germany in particular has grown increasingly venomous. The European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—the rapacious Troika (now called "the institutions" as a face-saving concession to Syriza)—are increasingly frustrated with Athens, leading to renewed speculation about a Greek exit from the euro single currency.

In the January 25 elections, our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece opposed on principle any vote for Syriza—which pledged from the outset to keep Greece within the EU—because it is a capitalist party. The "radical" Greek government's conciliation of the Troika fully vindicates our characterization of this bourgeois, pro-EU party. In a January 15 statement for the elections, our comrades explained that "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" (see "Greece: European Union Austerity Elections," WV No. 1060, 23 January).

We reprint below a presentation by a TGG spokesman at a February 21 forum in London held by the Spartacist League/Britain, which published it in *Workers Hammer*, No. 230, Spring 2015.

* * *

WORKERS HAMMER 

I will be speaking about the recent Greek elections and what the rise of Syriza means for the working class and oppressed in Greece and Europe. Despite what you might have heard, Syriza's election does not represent any kind of step towards socialism. We in the TGG called for no vote to Syriza. As we explained in our statement for the Greek elections, our perspective is the fight for workers revolution in Greece and internationally. We opposed Syriza because it is committed to keeping Greece in the imperialist European Union (EU), which is a pledge for more hunger and joblessness; moreover Syriza is not a workers party and does not in any way represent the interests of the working class. Its programme is bourgeois and its base is among the petty-bourgeoisie—shopkeepers, farmers and professionals—a layer with no inde-

pendent class interests that is generally drawn behind the bourgeoisie under capitalism. We called instead for a vote to the Communist Party (KKE), a party which is based in the working class but which has a reformist programme. The KKE opposed the imperialist EU and any support to Syriza.

In the 25 January election, Syriza

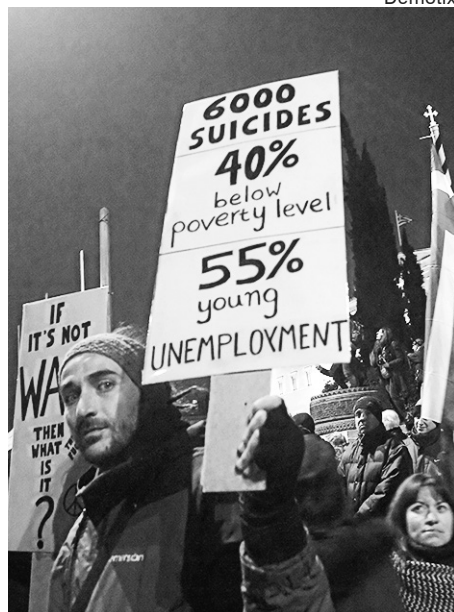
exchange for loans to bail out the blood-sucking banks. The pro-EU Syriza seeks merely to renegotiate the terms of imperialist oppression of Greece, by getting a break on the terms of repayment of the massive government debt.

Nonetheless, there are real illusions in Syriza among layers of the workers and the oppressed who are desperate for any

Why Greek Trotskyists Said "No Vote to Syriza!"

achieved an overwhelming victory, winning 36 per cent of the vote. The key factor was that Syriza promised to ease up on the grinding austerity faced by Greek working people since the world economic crisis began in 2007-2008. This austerity has been imposed by the imperialists who dominate the EU. They have demanded savage attacks on the workers and poor in

Demotix



form of relief. Furthermore, the fact that an election was won by a party other than the two main capitalist parties, PASOK (the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement) and New Democracy (ND), who have shared power for 40 years, is seen as a blow to the Greek oligarchs and their system of patronage and corruption. There is also a sense of national pride that a party the German government explicitly did not want in power won an election in Greece.

Since 2012, Syriza has been abandoning many of its more left-sounding demands and currying favour with industrialists and bankers. Before the election, Syriza jettisoned its opposition to NATO and dropped its call for a debt write-off. Since the election, it has promised not to renationalise any of the industries privatised by the previous government. Two years ago Syriza demanded the rejection of the austerity memorandum of the Troika. Now it is willing to accept 70 per cent of the austerity measures. While I was on my way to London to give this

Grim reality of austerity-hit Greece: Placard at February 11 pro-government rally in Athens (left). Desperate Greeks scramble for food handouts, April 2014 (below).

Reuters



forum, the Syriza government capitulated to the EU's demands. It has now agreed to extend the hated bailout in exchange for implementing even more austerity, the very thing it was elected to overturn.

In Greece the TGG is the only organisation outside of the Communist Party that describes itself as revolutionary Marxist and *opposes* the new capitalist Syriza government. The Socialist Workers Party of Greece (SEK), co-thinkers of the party of the same name here in Britain, argues that this government is a "big step forward" for the working class (socialistworker.co.uk, 6 January). The fake-Trotskyist Greek Workers Revolutionary Party (EEK) called before the election for a "powerful United Front" from the KKE to Syriza and including everyone in-between, in order to "smash... imperialist domination" and open the way to "universal human emancipation" (eek.gr, 28 December 2014). In other words, for them a Syriza government represents a transition to socialism. The Xekinima group, which is affiliated with Britain's Socialist Party [and Socialist Alternative in the U.S.], said that Syriza "can open a new epoch for the working people" and begin the "counterattack of the workers movement" against Greek and international capital (xekinima.org, 26 January). These leftists are now salivating at the prospect of parties similar to Syriza coming to power elsewhere in Europe, especially Podemos in Spain.

I read in the paper last week that Kenneth Clarke, British former Tory chancellor, called Syriza "latter-day Trotskyites." He intended this to be a derisive statement about Syriza's extreme radicalism. But as a supporter of a genuine Trotskyist organisation, I really was insulted to be compared with these pro-EU liberals. You don't need to know very much about the new Greek government to know that Syriza is not about to form workers defence militias, suppress the fascist-infested police, expropriate the key sectors of the Greek economy, and begin to rule through soviets. Syriza is very open about what it seeks to do: it wants to work within the bounds of the EU and Greek parliament. It wants to make Greek capitalism profitable again and it wants to protect the interests of the shipowners and banks. Syriza thinks the best way to do this is to put a more humanitarian facade on the imperialist EU and system of capitalist exploitation.

Most of the Greek left has jumped onto the Syriza bandwagon. Some are *inside* Syriza, including the Greek comrades of *Socialist Appeal*, which is part of the International Marxist Tendency founded by the late Ted Grant. Others, like the SEK, belong to Antarsya, a coalition that ran its own candidates in the election but

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