

Black Baltimore's Justified Rage



Perna/Baltimore Sun



Reuters

Left: Riot police outside Baltimore building set ablaze during April 27 unrest following the funeral of Freddie Gray, victim of racist cop terror. Right: Demonstrator confronts cops at protest two days earlier.

APRIL 28—Following yesterday’s funeral of 25-year-old Freddie Gray, whose spinal cord was almost completely severed when he was arrested, inner-city Baltimore exploded, with black youth battling phalanxes of riot cops and state troopers. Maryland’s Republican governor declared a state of emergency, deploying over a thousand National Guard troops, while Baltimore’s black Democratic Party

mayor imposed a nighttime curfew. As of this morning over 200 people have been arrested. The bourgeois media rant against “thugs” and “criminals,” providing a pretext for the cops to spill more blood. *National Guard out now! Down with the cops’ state of siege! Free all those arrested and drop all charges!* Baltimore has long been notorious for the racist cop terror that is the norm across

the U.S. In this majority black city, conditions of life in its destitute inner city are a microcosm of the brutal reality that defines life for the black masses across America: segregation, police terror, wrenching poverty and decaying houses and schools. The life and death of Freddie Gray stands as bitter testimony. Poisoned as a child by lead paint in the decrepit housing his family lived in, Gray grew up

on the mean streets of West Baltimore. He was treated as a criminal by the racist cops who repeatedly arrested him on petty charges like having “gaming cards, dice.” What led to Gray’s fatal arrest was the “crime” of making eye contact with a cop and then fleeing. Thrown violently to the ground and pinned down with a cop’s knee on his

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Walter Scott Gunned Down in Charleston Racist Cop Terror: Time for Labor to Take a Stand

The widely viewed video images from North Charleston, South Carolina, are yet another grim reminder of the racist police terror that is a daily and deadly fact of life for the mass of the black population in capitalist America. A white cop pulled over 50-year-old Walter Scott on April 4, supposedly for driving with a faulty taillight. When Scott makes a break for it, Officer Michael Slager squeezes off eight shots in rapid succession. Hit five times from behind, Scott crumples to the ground, where he is handcuffed and left to die. Slager then plants his taser next to the body. A black cop, Clarence Habersham, arrives moments later and does nothing to save Scott’s life. Walter Scott’s brother Rodney, a member of International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) Local 1422, referred to Slager “using my brother for target practice.” This coldblooded execution, evocative of an overseer gunning down a runaway slave, is just one of many in the past year to have touched a raw nerve with black people across the country. Another is the gruesome killing of Freddie Gray, whose voice box was crushed and spinal cord almost completely severed by Baltimore police. As enforcers of a system



Inset: Walter Scott. Right: Protest against police violence at North Charleston City Hall, April 8.

Facebook [inset], Zoeller/Post and Courier

rooted in ruthless exploitation and racial oppression, cops harass, brutalize and kill black and Latino people without stop and attack striking workers when they set up effective picket lines. Hundreds of mourners attended Walter Scott’s funeral on April 11, and the NAACP and Black Lives Matter among others have held a series of rallies, vigils and meetings. In addition to Rodney, other relatives of Walter Scott are also

members of ILA Local 1422, as are relatives of Denzel Curnell and Asberry Wylder, previous victims of trigger-happy Charleston-area cops. Local 1422 (whose membership is made up of black workers) has made its union hall available as an organizing center for protest, but to date has given no indication that it will call out its members. In response to the killings of Scott and Gray, and the long roster of others whose

lives have been snuffed out by the police, a clarion call for massive labor-centered protest should ring out. What is necessary is for the social power of the working class to be mobilized independently of the capitalist class enemy and its political representatives in the Democratic and Republican parties. If, say, Local 1422 were to place itself at the front of protest against police terror, it would draw in other unions and

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Charleston...

(continued from page 1)

demonstrate the kind of muscle that could put the cops on notice. And in mobilizing under their own banners, workers could get a sense of their social power and gain confidence for the battles to come. Such an action would also drive home to workers everywhere that they have a vital interest in the fight against black oppression.

Longshoremen are in a position to show the way. The ILA in the “right to work” South is a bulwark of labor/black power, with an ability to cut off the flow of goods (and therefore profits) and a real authority in the broader black community. Today, any ILA action would resonate far beyond the waterfront. In a state where unionization is at rock bottom and poverty is rife, Local 1422 has admirably taken up important causes over the years. It has supplied its hall as a base, and its members as volunteers, for numerous union organizing efforts, including sanitation workers and port truckers, and other crucial struggles such as for immigrant rights.

But at the same time, the Local 1422 leadership has shied away from militant mobilizations of the union in its own name, not wanting to alienate false “friend of labor” Democrats, who no less than the Republicans build up the police and their repressive powers. In this vein, Local 1422 president Kenneth Riley pledged in an April 9 statement on the killing of Walter Scott that the union “will continue to work with community leaders and lawmakers throughout the State of South Carolina to prevent these types of tragedies from ever happening again.”

In response to an appeal from Local 1422 for solidarity from its allies in the workers movement, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in the Bay Area has announced it will stop work at the Port of Oakland on



WV Photo

June 2001: Longshoremen march (above) in Columbia, South Carolina, in defense of Charleston Five, arrested during January 2000 cop attack on ILA picket (right).



Smith/Post and Courier

May Day to protest against the killer cops and will march to City Hall. This planned shutdown points to the kind of working-class action that is needed. But an independent demonstration of union power would have to be counterposed to support for Democrats and liberal police reform schemes. However, that is not the policy of the ILWU officialdom.

A similar Local 10 work stoppage was held in October 2010 to demand “justice for Oscar Grant,” who was shot dead by a BART transit cop on New Year’s Day 2009 in Oakland. At the rally associated with the port shutdown, left-talking union bureaucrats channeled anger over Grant’s killing into appeals for the capitalist state to “jail the killer cops.” Such demands lull the working class and black people into

believing the illusion that the courts of the class enemy will punish its armed thugs.

Truth is, under capitalism, the role of the courts and prosecutors is to lock up the many victims of the marauding cops, not the other way around. According to an analysis by the *Washington Post* (April 11), among the thousands of fatal shootings at the hands of police since 2005, only 54 officers were ever charged, with most of those later cleared or acquitted. No South Carolina cop has been convicted in the last five years. On the rare occasion an officer is found guilty, he almost always gets just a slap on the wrist, like Oscar Grant’s killer.

The reason is that the cops are the guard dogs of capitalist rule. As Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin put it: “Forming a professional caste of men trained in the practice of violence upon the poor, men who receive somewhat higher pay and the privileges that go with authority (to say nothing of ‘gratuities’), the police everywhere, in every republic, however democratic, where the bourgeoisie is in power, always remains the unfailing weapon, the chief support and protection of the bourgeoisie.”

At first, city and state officials all rushed to defend the North Charleston killer cop, who had shared a laugh over his “pumping” adrenaline with a senior officer as Scott bled out. But the video, recorded and given to the Scott family by witness Feidin Santana, caught out the cops in their lies, showing the taser being planted (and CPR not being administered). If this thug in blue had simply blown away his victim, he undoubtedly would still be in uniform, video or no. In response to the ensuing uproar, bourgeois politicians, Republican and Democrat alike, scrambled to shore up public trust in the forces of “law and order” by issuing empty condemnations of Slager. The filing of murder charges against Slager was intended to put matters to rest so the police could better go about their business.

As usual when the image of the police is in need of some repair, black preachers and Democratic Party hucksters like Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson (who delivered a speech to a sizable crowd at the

Local 1422 hall) showed up to push the lie that the racist killers can be transformed into something more benign. Things would be different, it is claimed, if there were more black cops in North Charleston, or if the Feds came in to clean up the racist police. More body cameras and national legislation on policing standards, we are told, would improve accountability. This is a lie: the cops will never be “accountable to the community.”

These so-called reforms would change nothing fundamental. Black cops (like Habersham) do the same job as their white counterparts. The federal government isn’t going to help—it oversees the whole plantation of racist American capitalism. Needless to say, cop abuse of the black masses remains pervasive where the Justice Department has intervened into municipal police departments, such as in Los Angeles and Cleveland. And the Obama administration gave a free pass to the killers of both Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown. As for video, its proliferation in recent years has not slowed cop marauding in the slightest. Racist police brutality will not end short of the overthrow of the very capitalist system that cops “serve and protect.”

Labor Rights and Black Rights Go Hand in Hand

The cops run roughshod over the vast numbers of black people condemned to poverty and misery by a system that has no jobs to provide them. Many are swept up in the racist “war on drugs,” and more and more have fallen prey to the revived practice of imprisoning debtors, including Walter Scott who was ensnared in a cycle of unpaid child support, stints in jail and lost jobs. But the fundamental purpose of the machinery of state repression—the cops, the courts, the prisons—is to suppress the one force in this society that does have the social power, based on its role in production, to prevail against racist American capitalism: the multiracial working class.

ILA Local 1422 itself is no stranger to organized state violence. When picketing in January 2000 to stop a non-union operator from working a ship, unionists were met by an army of 600 municipal, county and state police clad in riot gear and backed with armored vehicles and helicopters. Firing tear gas, shock grenades and pellet bags, the cops waded into the union picket swinging long wooden clubs. The furious assault came only days after a Local 1422 contingent had participated in a 50,000-strong protest against the Confederate flag being flown atop the state capitol in Columbia.

Local 1422 backed down the union-busters, who returned the jobs to the ILA. The defiant stand of ILA members, a taste of the hard-fought class struggle by which the labor movement has won its major gains, inspired broad layers of the working class in South Carolina and beyond. The Charleston Five, arrested for defending their union that day, were saved from years in prison through a campaign of international labor solidarity.

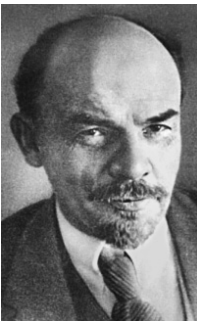
There is an inseparable connection between the fight for the rights of labor and of black people. Today, the need for the revitalization of the labor movement is sharply posed. A key task is organizing



TROTSKY

May Day Greetings!

Jamaican-born black poet Claude McKay was part of a wave of radicals who, inspired by the Russian working class’ conquest of power through the 1917 October Revolution, were recruited to Communism. He traveled to Soviet Russia in 1922 where he served as a special delegate at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. The last poem that he wrote in Russia, excerpted below, hailed the Soviet workers’ May Day celebration and was published in a monthly journal of the Communist Party of America.



LENIN

The Nevsky glows ablaze with regal red,
Symbolic of the triumph and the rule
Of the new Power lifting high its head
Above the place where once a
sceptered fool
Was mounted by the plunderers of men
To awe the plundered while they
schemed and robbed.
The marchers shout again, again, again!
The stones where once the hearts of
martyrs sobbed
Their blood are sweet unto their feet today
In celebration of the First of May.
[...]

Jerusalem is fading from men’s mind,
And Christmas from its universal thrall
Shall free the changing spirit of mankind:
The First of May the holy day for all!
And Petrograd, the proud,
triumphant, city,
The gateway to the new awakening East—
Where warrior-workers wrestled
without pity—
Against the powers of magnate,
monarch, priest!
World Fort of Struggle! each day’s a
First of May
To learn of thee to strive for Labor’s Day.

—Claude McKay, “Petrograd: May Day, 1923,” *Liberator* (August 1923)

WORKERS VANGUARD

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Communist-led sit-down strike by steel workers at American Casting Company in Birmingham, Alabama, won union recognition in 1937.

British Elections: No Choice for Workers, Minorities

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 230 (Spring 2015), newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain. The British general election is scheduled for May 7.

In the eyes of the state, Malcolm Burge’s life was worth £809.79 [\$1,206] net. That was the amount in “overpaid” benefits that Newham council [in East London] demanded from him after they slashed his housing benefits by half, driving the penniless 66-year-old retired gardener to

WORKERS HAMMER

light a match to a can of petrol and burn himself to death last June. In November, 39-year-old Julia Kelly of Northampton, who suffered severe chronic back pain, was hounded to suicide when the Department of Work and Pensions insisted she pay back £4000 in disability payments that were retroactively denied her.

Day in and day out, countless lives are snuffed out or devastated in a less newsworthy manner. One “revelation” of official state cruelty follows another. Job centre staff are threatened with “performance reviews” if they do not meet their target of punitive measures, depriving the most desperate and downtrodden of benefits for weeks or months at a time for as little as being a few minutes late to job centres (that have no jobs). The number of such sanctions imposed annually soared after the global recession started to bite, climbing to more than 900,000 last year. In direct proportion, the number of emergency parcels handed out by food banks likewise soared above 900,000 in the year up to April 2014, almost triple the figure a year before.

Does anyone truly believe that the dystopia that is capitalist Britain today will be significantly bettered by whoever steps into No 10 Downing Street [the prime minister’s residence] in May? The choices on offer come down to which party is the least distrusted and despised. David Cameron’s Tories [the Conservative Party] revel in being “red in tooth and claw” in grinding the victims of unbridled capitalist greed. [Labour Party leader] Ed Miliband’s shadow work and pensions secretary, Rachel Reeves, has declared that Labour in office will be “tougher” than the Tories in slashing benefits (*Guardian*,

12 October 2013). The Liberal Democrats lost whatever shred of credibility they had by entering into Cameron’s government and promptly reneging on their pledge to oppose any tuition fee increases, further burdening those who manage to make it to university with a lifetime of debt. And all three parties vie to keep up with the in-your-face racists of Nigel Farage’s UK

ishment of Britain’s working people. On the other side are the Scottish Nationalists (SNP) and the Greens, bourgeois parties that have adopted a populist posture to position themselves to the left of Labour as it has moved to the right. Posing as opponents of austerity, friends of working people and champions of all good things, the environmentalist Green Party are

over Scotland and Wales. We uphold the right of self-determination for the Scottish people. We advocated neither a yes nor a no vote in last September’s referendum and, while opposing all forms of English chauvinism, we warned against illusions in Scottish nationalism.

Some six months after losing the referendum on independence, the Scottish Nationalists look set to sweep much of Scotland, continuing Scottish Labour’s meltdown. The SNP’s popularity has set off such English-chauvinist hysteria that one might be forgiven for thinking that the tame Scottish nationalists are about to re-enact the Jacobite rising of 1745. Cameron, echoed by voices within Labour itself, has called on Miliband to rule out a future Labour/SNP coalition government, howling: “You cannot let the people who want to break up our country into the government of our country.” Miliband, who is never found wanting when his UK loyalty is questioned, shot back: “There will be no SNP ministers in any government I lead” (*mirror.co.uk*, 16 March). Another Tory, Lord Baker, has mooted a possible Tory/Labour coalition to keep out the SNP.

Whatever the differences between Tories and Labour—and people may be forgiven for finding them hard to detect these days—and however unpredictable the outcome of the upcoming election, one thing is certain. This election offers nothing for working people but the prospect of more capitalist oppression, racism and war. What we need is nowhere on offer but must be built: a revolutionary party of the working class committed to fighting for the interests of all the exploited and oppressed against capitalism and its attendant miseries.

The Strange Death of “Old” Labour

The SNP is expected to win a significant number of seats at the expense of Labour, which grew toxic in many parts of Scotland for spearheading the crusade for a “no” vote in the referendum. A commentator in the *London Review of Books* (9 October 2014) described the scene when 60 Labour MPs arrived in Glasgow and were “chased through the streets by a guy in a rickshaw who was playing the *Star Wars* theme and hollering through a megaphone: ‘Welcome, imperial masters! Welcome to Scotland, imperial masters! People of Glasgow, here are your imperial masters!’ As one blogger said, that was surely the moment Labour in Scotland died.”

Labour’s decline in Scotland reflects broader changes that have taken place throughout Britain over the years. In an insightful piece titled “Labour Vanishes” (*London Review of Books*, 20 November 2014), Ross McKibbin observes:

“Anyone wishing to chart the fragmentation of the party system and the origins of Labour’s predicament could start in 1951. In that year’s election 97 per cent of the electorate voted either Labour or Conservative: 49 per cent Labour and 48 per cent Conservative.... By 2010 only 65 per cent of voters—and, given the low turnout, only 42 per cent of the electorate—supported one or the other of the two major parties. Next year that figure may well be lower and the number of serious parties higher: five in England, four in Scotland (six if we include Ukip and the Greens), five in Wales if we include the Greens, five in Northern Ireland excluding various independents....

“In 1951 about 70 per cent of voters were in or from the manual working class. Today the figure is less than 40 per cent. For Labour, these figures are dire. Not all manual workers voted Labour in 1951, but the majority did, and they had no doubt that Labour was the party of the working man and woman (though more

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London,
21 March:
Trade-union
contingents at
demonstration
against racism
and fascism.



Independence Party (UKIP) in bashing immigrants and Muslims.

Farage’s vile denunciation of British Muslims, referring to them as a “fifth column,” only gave voice to the policies the Tories, and Labour before them, have actually implemented. It was Labour which joined the U.S.-led wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, and fanned murderous hatred of Muslims at home under the rubric of the “war on terror.” It was Labour’s privatisation schemes (including of chunks of the NHS [National Health Service]) which led to the situation where billions have been shovelled to a handful of capitalists at the expense of working people and the poor. Tories and Labour together have presided over an ever more oppressive state in which the chasm between filthy rich and desperately poor has widened continuously.

Not surprisingly, as elsewhere in recession- and austerity-ridden Europe, more marginal parties are coming to the fore. On the right, UKIP is leeching votes from not only prospective Tory but also many Labour voters who buy into the lie that immigrants are to blame for the impover-

ishing support, crucially including from elements of the trade-union bureaucracy.

The SNP are tapping into just hatred of Westminster rule and austerity policies, the better to win voters to their own version of capitalist oppression. Decades ago, Scots who despised the SNP’s fundamental conservatism dubbed them “Tartan Tories”—a term dating to 1979, when SNP MPs [Members of Parliament] formed a bloc with Thatcher to bring down the Callaghan Labour government. The SNP have since retooled, winning votes on the basis of administering a gentler, more humane capitalism, e.g., keeping universities in Scotland free (for Scots and non-UK EU [European Union] citizens!). They remain loyal to the monarchy and pledge that an independent Scotland will remain in the EU and NATO.

As Marxists we oppose the monarchy, the House of Lords and indeed the whole entity known as the “United Kingdom,” of which the Westminster parliament is the linchpin. The City of London [financial center] and its Home Counties environs are the core of British capitalism and lord it over other regions of England as well as

of the bosses. They have no place in the workers movement. Tellingly, the Fraternal Order of Police in the Charleston area vituperated against “professional race agitators” after the shooting of Walter Scott, and its Baltimore branch, fully backing the killers of Freddie Gray, denounced protesters as “a lynch mob.”

A genuine fight against police terror can only proceed from a standpoint of implacable opposition to the capitalists, their state and political parties. It must also entail an unwavering commitment to the fight against all aspects of black oppression, attacks on immigrants and every other manifestation of the tyranny and barbarity of this capitalist profit system. To lead this struggle requires the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party. Such a party would mobilize labor/black power in the workplace and on the streets not just against the latest outrage of capitalism but with the aim of putting an end to the reign of the capitalist exploiters. Socialist revolution will sweep aside the machinery of capitalist state terror and install in its place a workers government where those who labor rule, opening the road to freedom for all. ■

the “open shop” bastion that is the South, where much of the country’s industry has shifted. This task is impossible without taking head-on the race-color caste oppression of black people that is a bedrock of the capitalist order in this country. Racism has proved invaluable to the capitalist rulers in dividing workers and weakening their struggles against the bosses.

ILA Local 1422 and South Carolina AFL-CIO officials are assisting the campaign by the IAM machinists union to organize the Boeing manufacturing facility in North Charleston. To date, the IAM bureaucrats have pursued an entirely legalistic, and losing, strategy. In the face of a vicious anti-union campaign by the company and bourgeois politicians (chief among them the union-hating Republican governor Nikki Haley), the IAM recently postponed its representation vote. A show of labor power in defense of the black population against unbridled police violence would breathe new life into the stalled organizing drive. If the union movement signaled in action that it would wage a fight in the interests of workers and the oppressed, it would inspire black and white workers alike to support the union organizing drive.

Vietnam 40 Years Ago: U.S. Imperialism Defeated, Capitalist Rule Smashed



AFP



Bettmann

Vietnam was a victory! Left: North Vietnamese tank drives through main gate of presidential palace in Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, 30 April 1975. Right: A day earlier, CIA evacuation of U.S. mass murderers' South Vietnamese collaborators from Saigon.

April 30 was the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City, marking the defeat of U.S. imperialism and its South Vietnamese puppet forces. The heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants fought not just for national liberation but also for social revolution. Soon after, Pathet Lao guerrilla insurgents in Laos gained state power as well, establishing a regime there based on proletarian property forms in conjunction with Vietnam, its more advanced neighbor. These social overturns in the former French colony of Indochina humiliated the American imperialists and were a victory for the exploited and oppressed around the world.

The brutal, decades-long war in Vietnam led to massive discontent and protest in the U.S. and radicalized a whole generation of youth. Self-described socialists and ex-radicals nostalgic for the massive demonstrations of the Vietnam War era peddle the myth that the antiwar movement ended the war. But it was the tenacity of the Vietnamese fighters on the battlefield that broke the imperialists' will and drove them out of the country.

It remains the duty of revolutionaries to unconditionally defend Vietnam, Laos and the other deformed workers states—China, Cuba and North Korea—against imperialist attack and domestic counter-revolution. The main target of U.S. imperialism in the region is China, the largest and most powerful of the remaining countries where capitalist rule has been overthrown.

The Stalinist nationalist regime in Vietnam has in recent years criminally lined up with the U.S. imperialists' campaign to encircle China. This diplomatic rapprochement with the U.S. reflects Vietnam's isolation following the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, as well as the continuing pressures of poverty and the historic mutual animosity between Vietnam and its larger and stronger Chinese neighbor. The Trotskyist program of proletarian political revolution—the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracies and the establishment of governments based on workers, peasants and soldiers councils—is linked to the strategy of socialist revolutions world-

wide, not least in the U.S., to put an end to the imperialist order.

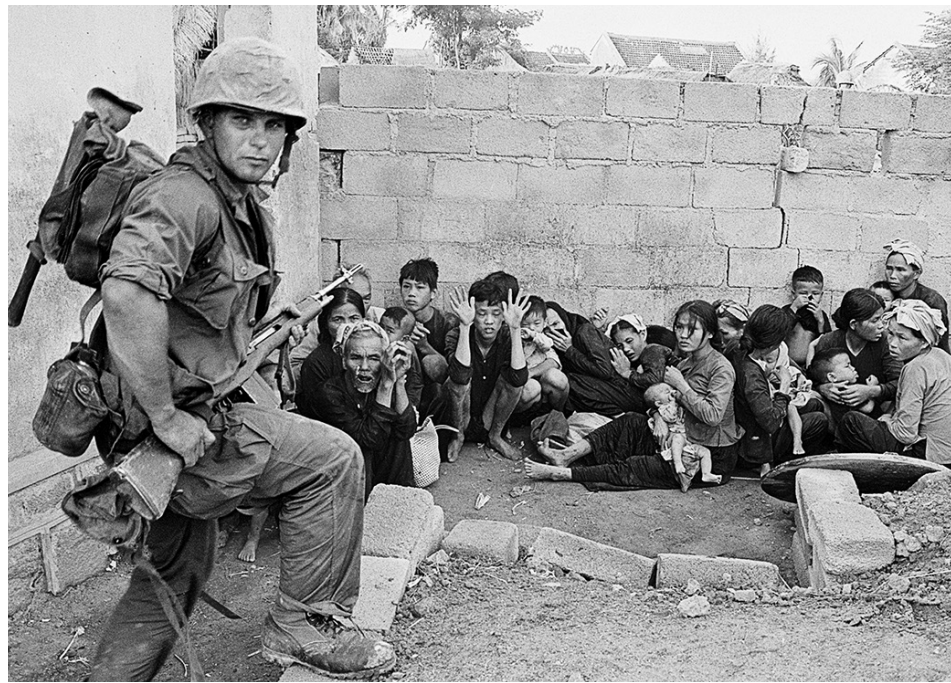
We reprint below an article published in *WV* No. 68 (9 May 1975) headlined "Take Vientiane—For Political Revolution in Hanoi, Saigon, Phnom Penh—All Indochina Must Go Communist! Capitalist Class Rule Smashed in Vietnam, Cambodia!" The article reflects our initial characterization that Cambodia was also a deformed workers state. However, we later noted that Cambodia under the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime, which decimated the tiny proletariat and depopulated whole cities, was "a barbaric nightmare which was not even a hideously deformed version of a workers state" ("U.S., China Arm Pol Pot Butchers," *WV* No. 493, 12 January 1990).

* * *

MAY 4—On April 30 the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and the National Liberation Front (NLF) rode triumphantly into Saigon as leaders of the defeated puppet regime and

the South Vietnamese bourgeoisie fled the country by every available means. The military victory of the DRV/NLF marks the end of 30 years of civil war against colonialism and imperialism and their local allies. It means the overthrow of capitalist rule in South Vietnam, a historic conquest for the working people of the entire world and one which must be unconditionally defended by class-conscious workers against imperialist attack.

We hail this stunning defeat of U.S. imperialism, the first in a major war during this century, and greet the victory of our class brothers and sisters in Indochina with internationalist proletarian solidarity. The struggle against the imperialists' Vietnam war has also been a major task of socialists in the imperialist centers, dominating the political experience of a whole generation of young aspiring revolutionaries. And it is as fellow combatants in the international class struggle that we warn the Indochinese masses that they must place no confidence in their Stalinist leaders.



Bettmann

September 1965: U.S. Marine terrorizes Vietnamese villagers rounded up as suspected Communist sympathizers.

The victory in Vietnam, like that in Cambodia two weeks earlier when the Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh, belongs to the heroic worker and peasant fighters in Indochina who have struggled resourcefully and tenaciously for decades in order to break the grip of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation on the peninsula. But while a victorious social revolution has occurred, the struggle to establish revolutionary and internationalist workers states in the region is far from over. A phantom coalition with venal rightist generals and a playboy "neutralist" continues to "rule" in Vientiane [the capital of Laos], although it is clear to all that it could be quickly eliminated by a resolute offensive of the Pathet Lao.

Meanwhile, in Cambodia and Vietnam (both North and South) political power is not in the hands of the working masses, expressed by democratic rule through Soviets (workers councils) as was achieved by the Russian Revolution of 1917. Nor is there in Indochina today a Bolshevik party which could lead the revolutionary struggle forward by extending it internationally to the centers of world capitalism. The new Stalinist rulers in Phnom Penh and Saigon are as committed to the treacherous policy of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism as those in Moscow and Peking, or Hanoi and Havana.

Instead, what has been created in South Vietnam and Cambodia are *deformed workers states*, qualitatively equivalent to the degenerated workers state which emerged in Russia with the consolidation of the Stalin-led bureaucracy. The ruling bureaucracies of the deformed workers states are narrowly nationalist in outlook, attempting to balance precariously between imperialism and the working class. Based on the property forms of a workers state, they occasionally put up a limited and distorted defense of the social conquests achieved by the overthrow of capitalism in order to preserve their own privileged position.

But because their rule is based on the political expropriation of the working class, these petty-bourgeois bureaucratic castes are incapable of mobilizing the pro-

letarian masses for an international revolutionary assault on the bastions of world capitalism, since it would simultaneously mean their own demise. The Stalinist rulers in Hanoi, Saigon and Phnom Penh must be overthrown by a workers’ political revolution led by a Trotskyist party in order to establish the organs of proletarian democracy and open the road to socialism. All Indochina Must Go Communist!

Military Victory and Social Revolution

The cost of these momentous victories in terms of human suffering by the toilers of Vietnam has been tremendous. The barbarous policies of the cynical mass murderers of U.S. imperialism and French colonialism—the “free fire zones” subjected to saturation bombing by B-52’s, the “pacification programs” consisting of the assassination of all political opponents of the puppet regimes, the “strategic hamlets” which sought to eliminate the insurgents’ popular support by locking up peasants in concentration camps—have produced millions of dead and maimed.

But still the Indochinese workers and peasants fought on, driven by a burning desire not only to be rid of the pimps and butchers who sat in air-conditioned offices in Saigon, but also to remove the daily oppression inexorably caused by capitalist exploitation. At a tremendous disadvantage in terms of firepower and sophisticated weaponry—the result of the refusal of the USSR and China to deliver adequate military supplies—they were able to militarily defeat the cream of the French army, the largest U.S. expeditionary forces since World War II (over 500,000 American military personnel in Vietnam at one point), and the most mechanized army in Asia.

However, the program of the bureaucracies in Hanoi, Peking and Moscow who led, controlled and supplied the insurgents was not to carry out a social revolution through defeating the bourgeoisie. Justifying their appetites for class collaboration by the Stalinist schema of “two-stage revolution,” they sought to achieve “democratic” (i.e., bourgeois) governments of national reconciliation of all classes save the imperialists and their most direct lackeys. This was expressed in programs (such as those of the South Vietnamese NLF and Cambodian FUNK) which called for popular-front coalition governments with the bourgeoisie, omitting demands for agrarian revolution and guaranteeing the “right” of capitalists to continue to exploit their wage slaves; and in repeated sellouts at the bargaining table (especially 1945 and 1954).

But while the Stalinist leaders remained committed to a strategy of betrayal and class collaboration, they were also confronted with fundamental historical and social realities. The extreme weakness of the Vietnamese bourgeoisie which prevented it from rebelling against French colonial and U.S. imperialist domination made that coterie of drug traffickers, rice merchants, rack-renting landlords, corrupt military mercenaries, textile sweatshop bosses, rubber plantation managers and Honda salesmen doubly afraid of any mobilization of the exploited masses. Although the NLF and FUNK continued to call for the formation of coalition governments until scant hours before they marched into their respective capitals, the fabled anti-imperialist national bourgeoisie never materialized. To the lasting benefit of the Indochinese laboring masses, the Paris “peace” accords were never implemented.

Though DRV/NLF military forces fought well and defeated the puppet troops in the only two real battles of the last six weeks (Ban Me Thuot and Xuan Loc), the fall of Saigon came not as a result of a successful insurgent offensive, properly speaking, but because of the complete collapse of the Thieu regime and army. A single defeat in the Central Highlands produced a panicked retreat that put DRV/NLF forces within 50 miles of the capital in two weeks, practically without firing a shot.

The scenes of this jumbled collapse dominated the news from Vietnam during

the last days of the puppet government. The wild looting and chaotic terror unleashed in Da Nang by drunken bands of ARVN [South Vietnamese army] soldiers was succeeded by the desperate clawing of Saigon merchants and collaborators to get into the U.S. embassy and join the select circle of those who would get a ticket to America from President Ford. While Thieu and Lon Nol sent off a final shipment of \$16 million in gold bullion to Switzerland, well-connected prostitutes and wives of military officers began arriving in Guam by the plane-load. The predominance of air force families among the early passengers was explained by a threat from Saigon fighter pilots to shoot down the C-130s if their relatives were not included.

Subsequent news reports are extremely sketchy. Some reports quoted official broadcasts from Saigon as “announcing the nationalization of banks and virtually all other business and industrial enterprises” (*New York Times*, 2 May); administrative authority was reportedly

of “people’s committees” were formed in the Saigon area, the dominant influence in them being that of the Trotskyists. Although the Stalinist police succeeded in arresting and shooting most of the leaders, a working-class uprising broke out a few days later in response to British-French moves to take power from the popular-front “government.” While the Viet Minh negotiated, to no avail, the Trotskyist-led resistance went down fighting.

The Trotskyists had also been active in the north, but there the domination of the Viet Minh was unchallenged. As Ho was preparing to sign an agreement permitting the reintroduction of French troops in early 1946, the witchhunt against Trotskyists was intensified. Ta Thu Thau was murdered on orders from Stalinist leaders at that time, as were virtually all remaining Trotskyist cadre. Thus, if since 1946 the Stalinist leaders have been dominant in Vietnam, it is not because of a revolutionary line but rather because of the efficiency of their assassination squads.



Spartacist banner at 1973 anti-Vietnam War protest in Washington, D.C.

being exercised by the Saigon-Gia Dinh Military Management Committee. In any case, it is clear that the ignominious collapse of the U.S.’ puppet government, was accompanied by the flight of the bulk of the devastated bourgeoisie. The fall of Saigon was the fall of Vietnamese capitalism as a political force.

45 Years of Struggle Against Imperialism

The struggle of the Indochinese masses against colonial oppression and the yoke of capitalist exploitation goes back well past the end of World War II. The Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) was formed in 1930 and led an important peasant revolt in central Vietnam during the same year. During the late 1930’s, however, the Stalinist ICP faced considerable competition from two Trotskyist groups, particularly in southern Vietnam. One, the International Communist League (ICL) led by Ho Huu Tuong, was founded in 1931, while the second, larger, group around Ta Thu Thau was in a common front with the southern Stalinists from 1933 to 1937. As the ICP was obliged by Kremlin dictates and its program of class collaboration to give support to French colonialism during the period of the popular-front government in Paris, the Trotskyists were able to greatly expand their influence. In 1939 Thau’s group swamped the Stalinists in colonial elections, winning 80 percent of the votes, as the masses decisively rejected Ho Chi Minh’s support for “progressive” colonialism.

In August 1945 the Stalinists (now known as the Viet Minh) moved together with bourgeois nationalists to take over the French-Japanese colonial government apparatus as the Japanese surrender was announced. However, when British troops entered Saigon they were greeted by the Viet Minh, in line with Stalin’s policy of alliance with the Western “democratic” imperialists during World War II. In contrast, the Trotskyist ICL called for opposition to the imperialists, agrarian revolution, expropriation of the bourgeoisie and a workers and peasants government.

The ICL’s call did not remain simply on paper, but found a mass response as scores

After the reintroduction of colonial troops (with the assent of Ho Chi Minh), the Stalinists were forced to abandon the cities and retreat into guerrilla warfare. However, by 1954 they had been able to inflict a military defeat on the French army, not only in the north but throughout Indochina. While Russian and Chinese pressure was instrumental in inducing the Viet Minh negotiators at Geneva to abandon everything below the 17th parallel (as well as Laos and Cambodia), decisive victory was within reach. Thus Ho’s agreement to the Geneva deal was another sharp blow against the struggle of the Indochinese masses.

With the change in the imperialist paymasters from Paris to more affluent Washington the regime of Ngo Dinh Diem was able to partially stabilize South Vietnam for a couple of years through the use of ruthless terror. Peasants were driven off their land, suspected Communists were “tried” by special tribunals and murdered by the hundreds. Sporadic resistance sprang up, often led by underground former Viet Minh cadre who had stayed behind. But not until 1960 when the National Liberation Front was formed did Hanoi give any appreciable aid to the southern rebels. Ho’s concern was above all to scrupulously respect the terms of the Geneva sellout, vainly hoping that the butcher Diem would allow “free elections”!

The subsequent intervention of large numbers of U.S. troops represented a major setback for the NLF and DRV. But with the massacre of several hundred thousand workers and peasants in Indonesia, accomplishing an important objective of imperialism in the area, and given the absence of any prospect of victory for the Saigon regime, and the active hostility to U.S. intervention among large sections of American youth and increasingly in the working class, the basis was laid for the development of widespread bourgeois defeatism. This was not confined to peace demonstrations or McCarthy/McGovern left liberals, but became the dominant position of decisive sections of the ruling class. As economic problems multiplied and the U.S.’ inability to continue playing

the role of hegemonic world policeman became clearer, the Nixon regime moved toward negotiations finally resulting in the so-called Paris “peace” accords of 1973.

These accords did not lead to peace in Vietnam, and represented the extortion of concessions by the imperialists in return for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. While declaring “No Support to the Robbers’ Peace!” the Spartacist League also recognized an important difference from the 1954 sellout, the “ceasefire in-place,” i.e., the continued presence of large numbers of DRV/NLF troops in the south. We judged that the ceasefire “could well eventually lead to a Viet Cong victory in the South,” but pointed out that this was a gamble and did not represent a change in the Stalinists’ strategy of betrayal. When the NLF victory finally came, two years later, it was because of the military collapse of the puppet regime. Finding no substantial force with which to make a coalition government, the Stalinists finally were forced to take Saigon on their own.

Where Are the Two Stages?

Thus the history of the struggle in Vietnam, far from demonstrating the validity of Stalinist conceptions and “strategy” in fact reveals a series of attempts to sell out gains won on the battlefield in return for a compromise with imperialism. The recent events in Indochina fully confirm the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution, which holds that in the backward countries even the democratic tasks of national emancipation and agrarian revolution can only be solved by the dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by the peasantry. The weak bourgeoisies of these areas, closely linked to domestic feudal reaction and imperialism, are incapable of carrying out a bourgeois revolution.

The Stalinists claim that their calls for coalition governments, popular fronts, a “bloc of four classes” and so on correspond to the first stage of “national-democratic,” “popular-democratic,” or “new democratic” revolution. Now they claim the victories in Vietnam and Cambodia as validation for their line. This is a fraud.

The NLF, for its part, was quite clear what it stood for. Wilfred Burchett, writing in the 2 April issue of the Maoist *Guardian*, reported an interview with PRG [Provisional Revolutionary Government] representatives in Paris: “Asked why the PRG did not aim at taking over completely in the South, in view of the wholesale collapse of Thieu’s armed forces, Dinh Ba Thi said, ‘We are for the strict implementation of the Paris Agreements which call for national reconciliation and coalition government.’” He added only that Thieu must go.

Thieu went. “Big Minh” was brought to the presidential palace, but there was no coalition government. And official announcements by the PRG no longer mention the Paris peace agreement. Where, then, are the two stages?

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A SPARTACIST PAMPHLET/\$1.00

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Upholding the Revolutionary Legacy

The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919-1929

A Review



V.K. Bulla



Communist Party of Great Britain

Left: Lenin addresses Petrograd demonstration commemorating heroes of world proletariat during Comintern Second Congress, July 1920. Right: Delegates to Second Congress, including John Reed, American author of *Ten Days That Shook the World* (standing second from right).

Jacob Zumoff's *The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919-1929* examines the founding, development and degeneration of the Communist Party (CP) in the United States in the broader framework of the struggle for international proletarian revolution. Available in both paperback and hardcover, this fully indexed book, with extensive footnotes and references, will be of enduring value as a reference work for avowed socialists as well as scholars of communism. It is also a fun and interesting read and belongs in the toolkits of everyone seeking a coherent revolutionary program and lessons on building an organization capable of leading the working class in revolutionary struggle to sweep away capitalist imperialism.

The 1917 October Revolution in Russia, led by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky's Bolshevik Party, inspired millions worldwide by demonstrating for the first time that the working class could establish itself as the ruling class. The Bolshevik Revolution, occurring amid the imperialist slaughter of World War I, took the question of workers revolution out of the realm of Marxist theory and gave it flesh and blood. The Revolution was made *in* Russia but not *for* Russia alone; it was waged as the opening shot in the world socialist revolution.

The role of the Bolsheviks in leading the proletarian conquest of power gave great impetus to Lenin's fight for a communist Third International, which he had first called for in 1914. He had pronounced the social-democratic Second International dead after all its leading national sections supported the war aims of their "own" ruling class at the beginning of WWI. The Third (Communist) International, known as the Comintern, was founded in Moscow in 1919. The establishment of the Comintern was only the beginning of the fight to build revolutionary workers parties around the world. Forging new, Leninist vanguard parties internationally required a series of political fights to break the revolutionary elements completely from social-democratic program and practice.

How this struggle played out in the U.S. is thoroughly described in Zumoff's book, which focuses on the relationship between the American CP and the Comintern. The Communist movement in the U.S. was founded in 1919, a year that saw massive class struggles across the country and revolutionary struggles in Central Europe. The ranks of the American Socialist Party (SP) swelled and its pro-Bolshevik left wing grew. It was from splits from the SP's left wing that not one, but two Communist parties, both pledging allegiance to the Comintern, were formed in August/September 1919.

Just months after their formation, the two U.S. Communist groups were faced with massive government repression, dubbed the "Palmer Raids" after Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, which also targeted Socialists, anarchists and trade-union militants. Over 6,000 Communists were arrested in the first week of January 1920 and hundreds of foreign-born Communists were deported. In response to this repression, both groups went underground and many members of both CPs

The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919-1929 by Jacob A. Zumoff

443 pp.

Paperback: Haymarket Books, 2015, \$28.00

Hardcover: Brill, 2014, \$167.00

decided, invoking principle, to remain there.

The crucial and controversial thrust of Zumoff's account is his well-documented presentation of the *positive* role that the Comintern initially played in forging a Communist Party in the U.S. Zumoff analyzes in detail how interventions by the Comintern during Lenin and Trotsky's era, working with elements of the CP leadership, helped the nascent Communist Party grapple with American society. A key intervention of the Comintern was to support the unification of the two American parties and the establishment of a legal party, rejecting the ultraleft undergroundism. This struggle led to the establishment of the (legal) Workers Party in December 1921 and the definitive rejection of the fetish of undergroundism after debate at the Comintern's Fourth Congress in 1922.

Zumoff devotes two early chapters to the CP's work in the labor movement. The CP oriented toward the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), reflecting the Comintern's orientation to left-wing syndicalists internation-



Wayne State University

8 April 1926: Police in Passaic, New Jersey, attack workers, children during CP-led textile strike.

ally. While the CP was unable to recruit large numbers from the IWW, the few syndicalists who were won to Communism were crucially important. They enriched the American party with their experience of militant class struggle. The Comintern also pushed the CP to carry out work in the American Federation of Labor (AFL) despite its pro-capitalist leadership because it encompassed the majority of unionized workers.

Today, we are in a deeply reactionary period shaped by the 1991-92 capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union. The general level of political consciousness has been thrown so far back that even those claiming to be socialists have for the most part abandoned any notion of a revolutionary transformation of society. In the 1920s, unlike today, there was a layer of a few tens of thousands of subjectively revolutionary workers and youth who looked to the living example of the Bolshevik Revolution. However, they needed to learn the program of Bolshevism. In the early years, the Comintern was a teacher and guide for the young American CP. The fights for political clarity that Zumoff describes are instructive, and many of the political issues which the CP had to learn to address still exist: racist oppression; divisions between U.S.-born and immigrant workers; broad attacks on the labor movement; illusions in left-talking capitalist third parties.

A Marxist Exploration of History

Zumoff's forthrightly Marxist exploration of early American Communism is a breath of fresh air. It has received reviews from diverse points on the political spectrum, creating a welcome forum for debate. In its final issue, the *New World Finn* noted Zumoff's recognition of the importance of the Finnish-American foreign language federation, the largest voting bloc in the early American CP. The Communist Party USA published a quite positive review on its website (peoplesworld.org, 26 January). The review's author did not however address Zumoff's analysis of the destructive Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern and the CP, of which today's reformist Communist Party is the product.

Despite the generally favorable tone of his review, Dan La Botz of the social-democratic Solidarity group disagrees with the entire point of the book, complaining that Zumoff "fails to address the central question, the Soviet domination of the Communist International, including its domination of the American Communists in the 1920s" (newpol.org, February 27). The notion there was ever any positive intervention from Moscow sticks in the craw of anti-communist social democrats like La Botz, who view Stalinism as having flowed inevitably from Leninism.

In his introduction, Zumoff writes, "The study of American Communism is at once the study of Communists and previous studies of American Communism." His book thus acknowledges and supplements Theodore Draper's excellent two volumes, *The Roots of American Communism* (1957) and *American Communism and Soviet Russia* (1960). Other key works acknowledged by Zumoff that

should be required reading for all interested in the early history of American Communism include the letters to Draper from James P. Cannon, a founding member of the Communist and Trotskyist movements in the United States, published as *The First Ten Years of American Communism* (1962); Bryan Palmer’s biography, *James P. Cannon and the Origins of the American Revolutionary Left, 1890-1928* (2007); and the documentary volume of Cannon’s writings, *James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism—Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920-1928* (1992), published by the Prometheus Research Library (PRL). Zumoff also cites useful articles by Michael Goldfield, the author of *Color of Politics* (1997), on the CP and black oppression.

The most crucial source materials used by Zumoff were in the Comintern’s own archives in Moscow, which had been closed to historians until 1992. He also delved into other primary source materials that were not previously available, such as memoirs and FBI files. Zumoff additionally mined the archives of the PRL, of which he is an associate. The PRL is a working Marxist research library and the archives of the Spartacist League/U.S. Central Committee. It is Zumoff’s sympathy for the aims of the early CP that guides his use of previously neglected sources and his fresh interpretation of others, lending his work a richer color and texture than that of previous scholars.

Draper (a former writer for the CP’s *Daily Worker* who became a liberal anti-Communist) argued that the American CP was dominated by Moscow and that this relationship prevented the party from becoming a viable American revolutionary organization. As he claimed in an exchange with his critics in the *New York Review of Books*, “the Soviets exercised their hegemony and the Americans experienced it” (15 August 1985).

New Left historians, propelled by the mass radicalization and social struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, approached history “from the bottom up” and asserted against Draper that Moscow was not so significant and that the CP had sprouted from native soil. The New Left historians concentrated on the CP’s more successful work in the mass black and union struggles of the 1930s (see, e.g., Mark Naison’s *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* [1983]). By focusing narrowly on the 1930s, these historians obscure the fact that the CP’s work in that decade was built upon foundations laid, with the involvement of the Comintern, in the 1920s.

Zumoff explains that both interpretations of Communist history imbibe the bourgeois ideology that any Soviet influence had to be bad:

“Although there was no love lost between Draper and his critics, both *accepted* the same framework. The division between ‘American’ and ‘foreign’ in American Communism remained undisputed, with the Soviet/Comintern influence unquestionably negative....

“The present work rejects this concept of Americanisation as counterposed to Comintern guidance. Leninism, as understood by the early Comintern, did not represent a set of formulae or dogmas, but rather the understanding of the need for a political struggle not only against the bourgeoisie but also the social-democratic leadership that had shown its bankruptcy through parliamentarianism and support to the slaughter of World War I.”

Lenin and Trotsky realized that each country had its own history and conditions that required different revolutionary tactics. Recognizing that the founding cadres of the American CP were animated by the revolutionary internationalist vision of Lenin and Trotsky’s Comintern, Zumoff assesses Comintern interventions and the work of the American CP on the basis of the validity or otherwise of what the Communists fought for, how they fought for it and what they learned from the experiences.

The purpose and methods of the Comintern’s intervention in the American party changed as the Soviet workers state itself underwent a process of degeneration beginning in 1924. As Zumoff notes: “By the end of the decade, reflecting the political degeneration of the Russian Revolution under Stalin, the Comintern’s interventions were more negative.”

The Bolsheviks recognized that socialism, a society of material abundance based upon the highest level of productive technology and an international division of labor, required workers revolutions worldwide, especially in the advanced capitalist countries. The isolated workers state in backward Russia was plagued by economic scarcity and desperately needed proletarian rule to be extended to the West. With the defeat of revolutionary opportunities in Germany in 1918-19 and, critically, 1923, a conservative bureaucracy led by Stalin rose to political power beginning in 1924 amid a profound demoralization of the Soviet proletariat. The economic basis of the workers state (the collectivized property, the centrally planned economy and the monopoly of foreign trade) had not been overturned, but the proletariat was politically expropriated by a bureaucratic caste.

Promulgated by Stalin in late 1924, the dogma of “socialism in one country” became a justification for abandoning the revolutionary internationalist purpose of the October Revolution. Over the next several years, the Comintern (and its national sections) became subordinated to the foreign policy interests of the Soviet bureaucracy, ceasing to be the party of world revolution. Leon Trotsky doggedly fought the Stalinist degeneration of the Soviet Communist Party and the Comintern, while continuing to defend the Soviet workers state.



George Meany Archives
Cyril V. Briggs, founder of African Blood Brotherhood, from which the early CP recruited. ABB membership application (above) calls for “immediate protection and ultimate liberation of Negroes everywhere.”

The bulk of the American Communist Party, feeling the pressure of an expanding and powerful U.S. imperialism, readily followed in the degenerating Comintern’s wake. This was the “roaring twenties,” a period of fabulous accumulation of wealth for the bourgeoisie, a lull in class struggle and a rise of racist state and Ku Klux Klan terror against black people and immigrants. As Cannon wrote to Theodore Draper about these years: “The party became receptive to the ideas of Stalinism, which were saturated with conservatism, because the party cadres themselves were unconsciously yielding to their own conservative environment” (*The First Ten Years of American Communism*).

One important aspect of the Stalinist degeneration of the American party that Zumoff deals with is the division of the party into rival factions lacking any fundamental political basis. By 1925, the political differences around which the groupings had initially formed became displaced by struggles for party control, obscuring political clarity. As he notes, “Leading bodies often passed important political motions unanimously, yet factionalism hardened.”

A substantial section of one of these factions did acquire a revolutionary program. After becoming acquainted with some of Trotsky’s central criticisms of Stalinism at the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928, James P. Cannon was won to the program of Trotsky’s Left Opposition. The Trotskyists were fighting to return the Soviet regime and the Comintern to revolutionary internationalism. For this opposition to Stalinism, Cannon and a core of his factional supporters were expelled from the CP in 1928 and formed the nucleus of the first American Trotskyist organization.

The Russian Revolution and the Fight for Black Freedom

Fully four chapters of the book are devoted to the Comintern’s fight to force the American CP to address black oppression (then called the “Negro Question”), which now as then is integral to U.S. capitalism. The Bolsheviks had developed their party in intense opposition to the Great Russian chauvinism of the tsar’s empire and they understood that the struggles against national and other forms of special (i.e., non-class) oppression could be a powerful lever to advance socialist revolution. This was a new revolutionary idea that changed how Ameri-

can communists thought about their work in a country founded on black chattel slavery.

As Cannon wrote in “The Russian Revolution and the American Negro Movement” (1959): “The earlier social-ist movement, out of which the Communist Party was formed, never recognized any need for a special program on the Negro question. It was considered purely and simply as an economic problem, part of the struggle between the workers and the capitalists; nothing could be done about the special problems of discrimination and inequality this side of socialism.” He went on to note:

“The American communists in the early days, under the influence and pressure of the Russians in the Comintern, were slowly and painfully learning to change their *attitude*; to assimilate the new theory of the Negro question as a *special* question of doubly-exploited second-class citizens, requiring a program of special demands as part of the overall program—and to start doing something about it.”

In describing this critical struggle, a frontal challenge to Jim Crow America, Zumoff highlights the stories of early black Communists, such as Caribbean immigrants Claude McKay and Otto Huiswoud as well as Lovett Fort-Whiteman, a former anarchist from Texas. He narrates the story of the important recruitment of cadre from the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), a Harlem-based organization of mainly Caribbean immigrants, including its founder, Cyril Valentine Briggs.

At the end of WWI, coinciding with the Russian Revolution, there was a burgeoning of black militancy and racial pride in the Northern ghettos. The “Great Migration” of black people from the rural Jim Crow South to the industrial cities of the North intersected the return of black veterans who thought their military service entitled them to some measure of equality. Organizations like the ABB championed the struggles of blacks in the U.S. and the colonial world and espoused black self-defense against racist terror.

Black revolutionaries joined the CP because of the appeal of the Russian Revolution and the authority of the Bolsheviks. As Zumoff puts it:

“Indeed, the American Communists with their social-democratic colourblindness must not have appeared attractive; the Communist Party would have been unable to recruit the ABB on their own. Briggs and the ABB, like many throughout the colonial world, were attracted to the Communist International because of its anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, as well as Lenin’s emphasis on fighting special oppression. Briggs and the other ABB recruits did not want to join the American CP per se, but saw themselves as enlisting in the American branch of international Communism.”

In the 1920s, the vast majority of the trade unions organized by the AFL (with the significant exception of the United Mine Workers) were narrow craft unions and consciously racially exclusionist, essentially job trusts for skilled white workers. The “Wobblies” of the IWW had been an exception in their fight for industrial unions and their energetic organizing of black and white workers together. There were few black members of the Socialist Party, the most prominent of which was Hubert Harrison. Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs was anti-racist to his bones but the Socialist Party was a “broad church” that also encompassed stone-racist segregationists like Victor Berger. Even Debs said that socialists “have nothing special to offer the Negro, and we cannot make separate appeals to all the races.”

Recognition of the necessity for revolutionaries to combat the special oppression of black people was part of the Communists’ struggle to fully break with the reformist political baggage of social democracy. It took a fight by Lenin at the Second Comintern Congress in 1920 to get the CP to begin to focus on the black question. Zumoff’s book brings to light correspondence between Lenin and the American Communist John Reed. Lenin insisted that Reed give a report to the Second Congress on the nature of black oppression, despite Reed’s protests that he would

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The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919-1929

by Jacob A. Zumoff

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Capitalist Repression and War

Canada's Creeping Police State

The following article is reprinted from Spartacist Canada No. 184 (Spring 2015), newspaper of our comrades of the Trotskyist League/Ligue Trotskyste.

SPARTACIST



The [Conservative Stephen] Harper government's Bill C-51, the "Anti-Terrorism Act 2015," is a sweeping attack on free speech and other civil liberties. The bill targets publications, web postings and even private conversations sympathetic to causes that the capitalist rulers deem to be "terrorism." It authorizes the CSIS secret police to go after any activity that "undermines the sovereignty, security or territorial integrity of Canada" or interferes with the country's "economic or financial stability." And you don't have to actually *do* anything; the bill provides for "preventive detention" of individuals who the police claim "may commit" an offense.

The most immediate targets are Muslims, who are being subjected to a wave of demonization and discrimination from the federal government on down. Bill C-51's timing is no accident. A federal election is on the horizon, and with oil prices having collapsed and the overall economy going down with them, propaganda extolling "Canada's economic action plan" just won't cut it. The killing of two soldiers in Ottawa and Quebec by converts to Islam last October was a gift from the gods to the Tories [Conservative Party], for whom a campaign centred on the glorification of war and scare stories about Muslim "terrorists" could be a ticket to re-election.

"A great evil has been descending on our world," Harper intoned as he introduced the bill on January 30. The Tories are churning out propaganda linking Canada's role in the war against the Islamic fundamentalists of ISIS to a supposed threat of mass "jihadist terrorism" at home. They're also railing against a Federal Court ruling that upholds the right of a Muslim woman to take the citizenship oath while wearing the niqab (full-face veil). The anti-Muslim hysteria has had particular traction in Quebec, where municipal authorities have shut down and blocked the opening of mosques and a Montreal judge refused even to hear a court case brought by a Muslim woman unless she removed her headscarf.

As Marxists and fighters for women's liberation, we recognize that the Islamic headscarf is a symbol and instrument of women's oppression. However, that is far from the main issue here: the moves by governments and the courts to restrict the democratic rights of Muslims, including the right to wear the veil, are part of a crusade to whip up bigotry and hatred against a vulnerable minority.

The labour movement and all those who uphold democratic rights must defend Muslims against these attacks. But make



Canadian Press

Cops menace June 2010 anti-G20 protest in Toronto. Right: Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

no mistake: the Tories' proposed law targets huge swathes of the population. Native people engaged in road or rail blockades, Quebec nationalists who oppose Canada's "territorial integrity," left-wing activists, political refugees who support national liberation struggles abroad—all these and more are in the gunsights of this reactionary bill.

The bottom line of the capitalist social system is private profit, and there is no greater threat to profit than the people whose labour produces it. That's why the organized working class will be the ultimate target of the rulers' repressive legislation. The government already bans strikes with metronomic regularity, from the railways to the post office and more, claiming such moves are essential for Canada's economic well-being. Bill C-51 goes further: in outlawing any interference with "critical infrastructure" or "economic or financial stability," Harper's new legislation could make even *calling* for a strike illegal.

Imperialist Terror and Hypocrisy

The U.S. imperialists launched the "war on terror" in conjunction with their occupation of Afghanistan and later Iraq after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Other imperialist countries followed suit, including the then-Liberal government in Ottawa. From the start, we exposed this "war on terror" as a pretext to increase the police powers and repressive apparatus of the capitalist state, constricting the democratic rights of the population. As we wrote:

"In 'normal' times, the class dictatorship of capital over labor, of wealth and privilege over the poor and oppressed, lies partly hidden in a wrapper of constitutions and rights, treaties and conventions, elections and parliamentary debate. But the 'war on terrorism' is lifting that cover, revealing the democratic imperialist state as nothing other than the bourgeoisie's repressive weapon against the working class....

"And the definition of what constitutes 'terrorist activity' is vague enough to include 'disruptions' like the Quebec City anti-globalization protests, Native blockades in pursuit of land claims, or 'illegal' strikes like the citywide Days of Action in Ontario in the mid-1990s."

—"For Class Struggle Against Canadian Imperialism!" *Spartacist Canada* No. 131, Winter 2001/2002

A decade and a half later, the racism and hypocrisy of the ruling class is even more brazen. After Islamists staged crim-



Press Association

inal attacks on a newspaper office and a kosher supermarket in France in January, capitalist politicians from across Europe and beyond linked arms in Paris in a grotesque display of "national unity," while Muslim and other minority youth were hit with heightened repression (see "France: Down With 'War on Terror' Repression!" [WV No. 1060, 23 January]). Yet four years ago when Norwegian fascist Anders Breivik massacred 77 people, mostly attendees at a social-democratic summer camp, the rulers orchestrated no such international outpouring.

Another example illustrating the self-serving hypocrisy of the capitalist rulers came when two youths—one of whom had a blog and social media postings replete with Nazi symbols—were arrested in Halifax in February for allegedly plotting a mass shooting and arson attack on a shopping mall. Justice minister Peter MacKay pointedly refused to call this terrorism because it was not "culturally motivated." For the government, the "terrorism" label is a political weapon aimed above all at scapegoating Muslims.

What capitalist governments deem to be "terrorism" is always determined by political purposes. In the 1980s, when Islamic reactionaries of the Taliban and Al Qaeda ilk were throwing acid in the faces of unveiled women in Afghanistan, the U.S. and Canadian rulers hailed them as "freedom fighters" against the Soviet Union and showered them with billions in aid. At the same time, the African National Congress, then fighting apart-

heid rule in South Africa, was officially declared a terrorist group.

Like Frankenstein's monster, the Islamists turned against their former masters. After the September 2001 attacks, U.S., Canadian and other imperialist forces bombed and tortured their way through Afghanistan, razing village after village. American forces similarly laid waste to Iraq. In 2011, NATO rained death on Libya, destroying that country and bringing to power rival cabals of Islamic fundamentalists.

The imperialist bombardment of ISIS is the latest episode in the wars and occupations that have wrecked much of the Near East and touched off escalating ethnic bloodletting. The world's toilers had no side in the reactionary, mainly Sunni-Shi'ite communal conflicts that have engulfed Iraq and Syria. It goes without saying that we communists are die-hard enemies of the ultra-reactionary social and political program of ISIS, and that we condemn all interethnic massacres. But ISIS is today under attack by U.S. imperialism, the main enemy of workers and the oppressed worldwide, and by Washington's junior partner in Ottawa. Under such circumstances, Marxists have a military side with ISIS when it targets the imperialists and their on-the-ground lackeys including the Baghdad government, its Shi'ite militias and the Kurdish nationalist forces in Iraq and Syria.

Military setbacks for the U.S. and its allies might give the imperialist rulers pause in their military adventures, including by encouraging opposition at home. Such opposition can add to the tinder that must be ignited in class struggle against the exploiters who, in their quest for ever greater profits, beat down workers and the oppressed. In the course of such struggle, the working class must be won to the program of socialist revolution, aiming to destroy the imperialist beast from within.

Capitalist Justice = Organized Terror

As the Marxist militant Victor Serge explained in his 1926 book, *What Every Revolutionary Should Know About State Repression*:

"It is too readily forgotten that apart from the revolutions necessary to give it birth, bourgeois society took *centuries of terror* to emerge and grow. Big capitalist property took shape over the centuries through the implacable eviction of the tillers of the soil; manufacturing and then industrial capital were accumulated by the implacable exploitation, aided by bloody legislation, of the dispossessed peasantry, reduced as they were to beggary."

"Justice," added Serge, "has been nothing but terror organised to the advantage of the possessing classes. To steal from a rich man has always been a greater crime than to kill a poor man."

For the capitalists, "democracy" serves as a velvet glove hiding the iron fist of a class dictatorship over the working class, minorities and the poor. The yawning abyss separating the tiny class that owns industry and the banks from the working people they exploit has been made even wider since the onset of the latest global economic crisis in 2008. Well aware that

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galloping inequality is increasing social tensions that can sow the seeds of class struggle, the rulers are eager to put in place a panoply of “anti-terror” measures and laws to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the state against workers and the oppressed. Ultimately, the only rights the capitalists are committed to maintaining are their rights to hold property and exploit labour. At the same time, what the government can get away with will ultimately be determined by class and other social struggle.

The goal of Marxists is the overthrow of capitalist class rule through the mobilization of a politically conscious working class. We thus oppose individual acts of terrorism, which cannot root out capitalist oppression and inevitably lead to greater repression. However, we draw a distinction between odious attacks on innocent civilians, as in Paris in January, and those that target the repressive forces of the state, such as the soldiers killed in Ottawa and St-Jean-sur-Richelieu. As we wrote last issue: “For Canadian armed forces personnel, the possibility of retaliation for military operations comes with the territory” (“U.S./Canada: Out of Iraq, Syria!” *Spartacist Canada* No. 183, Winter 2014/2015).

It is in the direct interest of the working class to fight against the wars, occupations and domestic repressive measures carried out in the name of combatting “terror.” But this runs straight up against the class collaborationism of the trade-union bureaucracy and their political allies in the social-democratic NDP [New Democratic Party]. The labour tops have long embraced the “national interests” of Canadian capitalism, chaining workers to their own exploiters. If the unions are to be revived and transformed into bastions of the class struggle that is desperately needed, they must act in defense not only of themselves but of immigrants, other minorities and all those in the crosshairs of the state.



Spartacist Canada

Trotskyist League of Canada condemns racist “war on terror” at Toronto protest outside refugee detention center, February 2002.

After weeks of dithering, the New Democrats announced that they would oppose the Tories’ Bill C-51. However, they accept the whole framework of the government’s repressive “war on terror,” and are quibbling over details. They complain that the bill “was not developed in consultation with other parties, all of whom recognize the real threat of terrorism and support effective, concrete measures to keep Canadians safe” (ndp.ca, 19 February). The NDP criticizes the government for not providing enough “counter-terrorism” funding for the cops as well as “counter-radicalization” programs in the community. In plain English, they want CSIS and the RCMP to have *more* resources to police dissent and to regiment the population.

Various reformist outfits claim the NDP can be pressured into becoming an instrument that acts in the interests of the working class. The Fightback group calls for an NDP government “on a socialist program” while Socialist Action (SA) wants to win the party to a “Workers’ Agenda.” Saluting NDP leader Tom Mulcair for “getting off the fence” and opposing Bill C-51, SA claims that “the task is for the NDP and

its labour allies to win working class public opinion to oppose the terror law, and the corporate terrorists behind it” (socialistaction.ca, 4 March). Yes, if pigs had wings, they could fly. The idea that the NDP will mobilize the workers against “corporate terrorists” is just as likely. While the fake socialists nurture abject illusions in the New Democrats, even as the latter move ever rightward, authentic Marxists understand that struggle against the capitalist system requires breaking workers from the grip of pro-capitalist social democracy.

The Necessity of Revolutionary Leadership

The Harper Tories seek to regiment all aspects of social life. They want the population to venerate the military and the monarchy, to fear the “criminals” and “terrorists” who supposedly lurk around every corner, to extol a country that is, they claim, “glorious and free.” But who should working people and the oppressed really be afraid of? The cops gun down black youth and other minorities all the time. Such police violence is part of the

ongoing state terror against the oppressed that is integral to capitalist rule. Cuts to health care and pensions, crumbling infrastructure, work accidents due to the bosses’ neglect of elementary safety measures—these too are far greater dangers than the actions of a few religious zealots who dream of a return to the 7th century.

By orders of magnitude, the biggest sources of terror in the world today are the imperialist rulers in Washington, Ottawa and elsewhere, who viciously exploit the workers at home while lording it over the subjugated masses of the semicolonial world. With its overwhelming numbers and strategic role in producing society’s wealth, the working class has the historic task of leading a struggle against the all-sided attacks of the exploiters. The consciousness of the working class is today far removed from such a perspective, thanks in large part to the betrayals of the labour misleaders. But in the course of renewed social struggle, the workers and their allies among the oppressed can come to understand the need to uproot the entire social system that lies at the foundation of Canada’s creeping police state.

The working people need a leadership that doesn’t bow to the bosses’ dictates and champions the cause of all the victims of capitalist barbarism. Only the victory of proletarian revolutions in Canada, the U.S. and around the world can end the wars and occupations, the exploitation and racist oppression of capitalist class rule and its barbaric state repression. The necessary instrument for such struggle is a reformed Fourth International, world party of the socialist revolution. The Trotskyist League/Ligue trotskyste dedicates all our activities to building the nucleus of such a party. When capitalism has been swept into history’s dustbin, mankind will be able to develop a society based on abundance and equality, where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. ■

Vietnam...
(continued from page 5)

One group which believes there is some truth in the “two-stage” theory is the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. In a front-page National Committee statement in the *Militant* (9 May), the SWP hails “the victory of the Vietnamese rebels” and announces that “The objective conditions also exist for a social revolution to abolish the entire system of exploitation for private profit.”

This last sentence evidently means the SWP believes that a capitalist state still exists in South Vietnam. Not only does this ignore the powerful social revolution which has taken place, and the fact that capitalist rule can only be restored by a violent counterrevolution, but it funda-

mentally revises the Leninist theory of the state. Presumably if it decides next week or next month that nationalizations reportedly carried out by the PRG include the key sectors of the economy, then the SWP will declare South Vietnam to be some kind of a workers state. (It holds that China did not become a deformed workers state until the major nationalizations were carried out at the time of the Korean war.) But this amounts to a “peaceful transition” to a workers state!

The expropriation of the decisive sectors of the economy is indeed a key element of a workers state. But the state is at bottom an armed body of men committed to defending certain property forms. Thus Russia became a workers state in 1917, when the Bolsheviks took power and established soviet rule. The nationalizations came later.

The situation is different when the leaders of the revolution are not a proletarian Marxist party but a Stalinist bureaucracy based on a peasant guerrilla army. Neither the peasantry as a class nor the Stalinists as a political force are committed to establishing a workers state. The NLF has stated as much, on many occasions, and given ample proof of its intentions. But having taken power alone, without an alliance with significant bourgeois forces, and faced with the massive exit of the South Vietnamese bourgeoisie, the Stalinists are forced to establish the property forms of a workers state in order to revive production and above all to defend their rule against imperialist attack.

Toward a Communist Indochina

The victory of the Cambodian and Vietnamese Stalinists and the overthrow of capitalist rule in those two countries have occurred under exceptional circumstances: extreme disorganization of the native bourgeoisie, economic and political difficulties of the imperialists which have prevented renewed U.S. intervention, and above all the absence of the working class organized to fight in its own interests.

The regime which they establish does not, and cannot, base itself on organs of

proletarian democracy, but rather on the fiat of a bonapartist bureaucracy. The task of Marxists in Vietnam and Cambodia today is to take forward the revolutionary struggle by fighting for a workers’ political revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy, demanding the creation of democratic workers councils as the basis for the new state apparatus, and freedom for all parties which defend the revolution against counterrevolutionary attack. Above all, the struggle to go forward to final victory over capitalism requires the construction of Trotskyist parties, in Indochina and throughout the world, as part of a reborn Fourth International.

- Immediate Recognition of the Khmer Rouge and NLF/PRG Governments in Cambodia and Vietnam!
- Immediate Withdrawal of All U.S. Forces from Southeast Asia!
- Extend the Soviet Nuclear Shield to Cover Hanoi, Saigon and Phnom Penh!
- Take Vientiane! For Political Revolution in Cambodia and Vietnam (North and South)! All Indochina Must Go Communist!
- For Trotskyist Parties in Indochina! Forward to the Rebirth of the Fourth International! ■

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U.S. Communism...

(continued from page 7)

rather report on the American trade unions.

Over the next few years, black CP cadres, backed by the Comintern leadership, constantly prodded the American party to actively take up the fight for black freedom. Zumoff describes how McKay and Fort-Whiteman pushed this question at the Fourth and Fifth Comintern Congresses (in 1922 and 1924) respectively. Over the next period, there were several attempts by the CP to address black oppression, including the founding of the American Negro Labor Congress in 1925. However, these attempts were not particularly successful.

At its Sixth Congress in 1928, against the opposition of the vast majority of black Communists, the Stalinized Comintern wrongly declared that the American black population was an oppressed nation with the right of self-determination (i.e., national independence) in the so-called Black Belt in the South. As Zumoff writes, this theory was incorrect because black people “were an integral part of American society, albeit forcibly segregated at the bottom. Black struggle since antebellum times had been focused on ending racial oppression and for full *integration* into American society, not separation. A separate black nation state seemed fantastical and contradicted Marxist theory.”

Despite the erroneous theoretical framework, the Comintern’s intervention at the Sixth Congress had a positive influence in that it forced the CP to redouble its work among black people. It also underscored that black oppression was a form of special oppression and impelled the CP to establish roots in the South. The theory as such had little effect on the Communists’ day-to-day work; they continued to fight for black equality—not separation. The CP in

James P. Cannon and Red Army soldiers at time of Comintern Sixth Congress, 1928. Prometheus Research Library book of Cannon’s early writings and speeches, available from Spartacist Publishing Company, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116 for \$14.50.



James P. Cannon and the Early Years of American Communism

Selected Writings and Speeches, 1920–1928



the 1930s carried out important and often dangerous work building integrated unions and organizing sharecroppers in the South. It also earned respect for leading the defense of black labor organizer and CPer Angelo Herndon in Georgia and of the Scottsboro Boys (nine black youth who faced legal lynching in Alabama on frame-up rape charges).

Revolutionary Continuity

An essential point that emerges from Zumoff’s detailed study is the importance of revolutionary continuity. As Cannon noted in *History of American Trotskyism* (1944): “Out of the Communist Party in the United States came the nucleus of the [Trotskyist] Fourth International in this country. Therefore, we should say that the early period of

the Communist movement in this country belongs to us; that we are tied to it by indissoluble bonds; that there is an uninterrupted continuity from the early days of the Communist movement, its brave struggles against persecution, its sacrifices, mistakes, faction fights and degeneration to the eventual resurgence of the movement under the banner of Trotskyism.”

Like Cannon, the SL/U.S. and our comrades in the ICL do not turn our backs on what was valuable from the early CP, rather we claim that history as our own. We fight to impart the lessons of our revolutionary forebears to new generations of socialist fighters. Learning and assimilating these lessons is essential to the struggle for a workers America, a step toward a global communist society. ■

Britain...

(continued from page 3)

that of the working man): they identified with it. None of this is true today.”

The Attlee government elected in 1945 was the high point of British Labourism, hailed to this day by sundry leftists as the embodiment of its “socialist soul” for its nationalisations and the launch of the National Health Service. With a declining industrial base and a crumbling empire, Britain emerged from World War II as a poor cousin of the U.S., by then the hegemonic imperialist power. Labour was entrusted with the task of salvaging clapped out British imperialism. As Ceylonese (Lankan) Trotskyist Doric de Souza noted in the *Fourth International* (July/August 1947), journal of the then-Trotskyist U.S. Socialist Workers Party: “In the face of popular hostility to capitalism in Britain, and popular disgust with the old ‘muddling’ policies of the Conservatives, so openly designed to protect vested interests, the British capitalist class had no alternative but to let the Labor Party hold the baby, certain that while this party was able to deceive and soothe the masses by its ‘socialist program’ it would do nothing to jeopardize the fundamental interests of British capitalism.”

Faced with continuing economic decline, subsequent Labour governments were saddled with the need to curtail the power of the trade unions while maintaining Labour’s working-class base, culminating in the “winter of discontent” under the Callaghan government in 1978-79. Thatcher came into office promising to do the job that Labour couldn’t do, pursuing nakedly union-bashing policies and devastating much of the remaining industrial base on which trade-union power rested. Today it is commonly acknowledged that Thatcher’s defeat of the heroic 1984-85 miners strike was a pivotal event in this regard. Yet the union bureaucrats who now point to the defeat of the miners and the flood of anti-union laws as evidence that struggle is impossible are of the same political breed as those, “left” and right, who allowed the defiant miners to face the power of the capitalist state alone, while Labour leader Neil Kinnock abetted Thatcher by violence-baiting the miners for daring to build mass pickets.

It was left to Tony Blair to draw the conclusion that the way forward for Labour was to eliminate the contradiction at its base by getting rid of its historic link with the unions and transforming it into an outright bourgeois party. For some years now, Labour has been moribund as a reformist



Locked-out Unite union workers protest outside oil refinery in Grangemouth, Scotland, 20 October 2013.

party of the working class, though it still retains the financial and political support of a number of sizeable unions.

The union bureaucrats, especially the leaders of Unite, the largest union, chose Ed Miliband as Labour leader in 2010 and embarked on a policy designed to “reclaim” Labour from the Blairites. The fruit of this policy was seen when the Labour leadership set up Unite for a vicious witch-hunting campaign at Scotland’s Grangemouth oil refinery in 2013 (see “Union Bashing at Scottish Oil Refinery,” WV No. 1035, 29 November 2013). Piling injury atop injury, last autumn the party leadership nominated arch-Blairite Jim Murphy, who is rightly despised for, among other things, his role in that witch hunt, to head up Scottish Labour. Unite, Unison and the GMB [general union] launched a vocal campaign for their own candidate, with Unite head Len McCluskey arguing that Murphy’s election would be a political “death sentence” for Labour (*Telegraph*, 13 November 2014). Meanwhile all three union leaderships demonstrated their fealty to Labour in their usual fashion, giving the party a total of £3.6 million—the largest donations Labour received. Labour took the money and kicked them in the teeth: Murphy was elected without a hitch.

No Vote to TUSC!

Seeking to harvest votes from Labour’s alienated trade-union base, the Greens have branched out from their comfort zone of anti-fracking and anti-nuke demonstrations. According to the *Morning Star* (10 March), for the first time ever, the Green Party will have a presence at the TUC conference this year. For years the Greens have been warmly received by the PCS

public sector union, whose head Mark Serwotka has voted Green in the past. The president of the RMT [Rail, Maritime and Transport union], Peter Pinkney, is running for MP in Redcar, a traditional Labour stronghold. RMT officials are drawn in particular to the Greens’ call to renationalise the railways. Far from being a socialist demand, this is simply a recognition that it is irrational—and deeply unpopular with the public—for essential services to be parcelled out to individual capitalists and speculators.

The Greens are a bourgeois party, thoroughly committed to capitalism. While in Britain today they claim to oppose austerity, the Green call for less consumption is inherently hostile to the industrial working class—and to social progress. In Brighton, where they have a majority on the city council, they have passed one budget after another implementing government cuts while pushing for a 5.9 per cent council tax increase that would hit the poor the hardest. However, to truly appreciate the hollowness of the Green pledge to peace and happiness, one need only consider Germany, where the German Greens were part of the government for seven years until 2005. During this time they pandered to the racist right by passing an immigration law that shut the door to most unskilled migrants. When Germany joined the U.S.-led wars against Serbia and Afghanistan, its foreign minister was a Green, Joschka Fischer. Recently German Green leader Rebecca Harms has been among the most fervent MEPs [Members of the European Parliament] in pushing for Western sanctions against Putin’s Russia.

The fact that a number of union officials are signing up with the Greens is a sore spot for the Trade Unionist and

Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which is running its own “anti-austerity” campaign. The RMT’s Pinkney, now running for the Greens, was a member of the TUSC steering committee in February 2013, as was the late Bob Crow. The history of TUSC is rotten to the core. It was formed by the Socialist Party and Crow in 2010 as a by-product of chauvinist strikes against the employment of foreign workers at British construction sites in 2009. TUSC proudly includes on its steering committee—alongside the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and assorted trade-union bureaucrats—leaders of the Prison Officers Association: the men and women responsible for inflicting sadistic misery on the wretched inmates of Her Majesty’s prisons. That they should be embraced as “comrades” by the rest of the TUSC leadership says it all about these fake socialists. We say: cops and screws out of the trade-union movement!

According to the Socialist Party, the Greens are not “the answer” because they are “forced to basically accept the economic framework set out for them by capitalism” (socialistparty.org.uk, 28 January). The SWP similarly avers that the Greens are not a working-class party. Yet such verities do not stand in the way of the SWP calling for a vote to Green MP Caroline Lucas in Brighton (*Socialist Worker*, 20 January). Political support to bourgeois formations violates the basic Marxist principle of proletarian class independence. However, any mention of principle must leave these reformist fakery scratching their heads.

Buried in “What TUSC Stands For” is the slogan: “No to austerity and anti-working class policies, whether from the EU or Britain.” It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to notice that this deftly avoids the question of whether TUSC is for or against the European Union—which Labour strongly supports—or the single currency. Feeling the pressure of UKIP on the Tories’ right flank, Cameron has vowed to hold a referendum on EU membership if he is re-elected. The growth of UKIP—and other racist anti-immigrant and fascist parties throughout Europe—partly results from the failure of the mass reformist and fake-socialist parties to oppose the EU, with many peddling the myth of a benignly capitalist “social Europe.” In fact, under the banner of the “flexible labour market” the EU has rolled back trade-union rights, imposing low wages and precarious work contracts, while callously presiding over the deaths of thousands upon thousands of desperate immigrants who drown on the shoals of racist “Fortress Europe.” *No deporta-*

Wage Slavery...

(continued from page 12)

in wages and working conditions.

The floodgates were opened by the 2009 bailout of the U.S. auto industry that the Obama administration engineered with the complicity of the UAW misleadership. As part of that betrayal, the union tops agreed to the slashing of wages and tens of thousands of jobs, the gutting of the retirement fund and a six-year no-strike pledge.

When the auto bosses expanded production again, adding 350,000 jobs, new-hires were brought in at half the pay of senior workers. Temp agencies have been increasingly used to undermine union protections and divide the workforce, with temporary contract workers toiling side by side with permanent employees for a fraction of the pay and no benefits. Many of these jobs are located in the open shop South, where not only U.S. companies but also German, Japanese and Korean corporations have opened plants to take advantage of low labor costs.

The struggle to unionize the South cannot be conducted on a narrowly economic basis but will have to directly confront the deep racial divide that has crippled past organizing efforts, depressing the living standards of all Southern workers. The importance of this struggle is underscored by the fact that low-wage production in the South has driven down the wages of workers more broadly—the wage and benefit gap between Midwestern and Southern workers narrowed from \$7 in 2008 to \$3.34 by the end of 2011.

Detroit auto sitdown strike of 1937. Industrial trade unions were built through militant class struggle.



Conditions in auto today are a clear condemnation of the UAW leadership’s class collaboration. In fact, the UAW was built through militant class struggle like the heroic 1936-37 Flint sit-down strike, which defied court injunctions and faced down brutal cop assault. Such tumultuous class battles gave rise to the CIO unions. At Ford’s River Rouge plant, union recognition was won through strike battles in 1941 that were forced to confront the racial prejudice that set white workers against their black class brothers.

The class-struggle methods that built the unions—strikes, mass pickets, plant occupations—are what is needed to secure higher wages, organize the unorganized and otherwise reverse the one-sided class war that the American bourgeoisie has

been waging. The starting point must be the understanding that there is no common interest between workers and their capitalist exploiters. In the crucible of the struggles to revitalize the labor movement, a new, fighting leadership of the unions must be forged.

This task goes hand in hand with the fight to build a revolutionary internationalist workers party, a section of a reformed Fourth International—world party of socialist revolution. Such a party is needed to arm the workers with the political understanding of their capacity to liberate the working class and all the oppressed from the chains of capitalist bondage. A revolutionary workers party would champion full citizenship rights for immigrants and take up the fight

Baltimore...

(continued from page 1)

neck, Gray screamed for his life. Cops dragged him to a van as bystanders demanded that they call an ambulance. The cop van drove around for over 30 minutes before he got medical attention. According to medical experts, Gray’s neck could only have been broken by “powerful blunt force.” Freddie Gray is not the first person to die after what the cops call a “rough ride” in one of their vans—in 2005, 43-year-old Dondi Johnson Sr. was subjected to similar torture. From 87-year-old grandmothers to pregnant women, church deacons and young boys on dirt bikes, few blacks and Latinos are safe from violent attack by the marauding Baltimore cops.

Black preachers and Democrats are trying to douse the justified anger of the

ghetto masses. The loud refrain from Obama on down is how these “criminals” have damaged the message of “legitimate” protesters, i.e., the preachers and others pleading for police reform. A comment on social media captured the hypocrisy: “I do not mourn broken windows. I mourn broken necks.” The NAACP and Urban League are talking of a “national crisis” because they are clearly worried that their empty reform schemes cannot keep the lid on the seething discontent.

Black people are being pushed beyond the limit—terrorized by cops and the courts, deprived of any kind of job, denied decent education and housing. U.S. capitalism has no use for a whole generation of black youth. All that awaits them is death—a slow death from disease, malnutrition, drugs and prison, or a fast one in the execution chambers or gunned down on the streets.

The true criminals are the thugs in blue who rampage with impunity, maiming and killing those whose crime is to be poor and black. Above them stand their bosses: the criminal U.S. rulers who have long been in the business of looting and pillaging at home and abroad. Riots are an expression of despair that can go in many directions. The outbreak of this elemental, spontaneous upheaval, while understandable, cannot end the hellish conditions of life of the black population. The rage of the dispossessed in the ghettos must be linked up with the millions of black, white and immigrant working people around the country whose jobs, wages and living conditions are under constant assault. The situation cries out for revolutionary leadership—a workers party—to organize the power of labor and unite behind it all the oppressed in a struggle to get rid of the whole rotten, racist capitalist system. ■

tions! Full citizenship rights for all who make it here!

As proletarian internationalists, we have consistently opposed the imperialist EU—and the euro—on principle. It was originally established as an adjunct of NATO, the imperialist military alliance created by the U.S. to “roll back Communism” and destroy the Soviet Union. From its beginnings it has been a mechanism by which the combined capitalist powers impose austerity on their own working classes. The dominant powers subordinate the weaker ones, such as Greece, Ireland and the former deformed workers states of Eastern Europe. The oppressive relationship fuels great-power chauvinism in the oppressor states and a nationalist reaction in the oppressed countries.

Across western Europe, many of the social programmes known as the “welfare state” were granted by the capitalist ruling classes in the aftermath of World War II as a response to the existence of the Soviet Union, a degenerated workers state which represented an alternative to capitalist exploitation and misery. In the wake of capitalist counterrevolution in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, which the various reformist left groups supported, they have dispensed with lip service to the notion of socialist revolution. As miserable as capitalism has proven itself to be, they have accepted that there is no alternative. Having offered “old” Labour nostrums about the social

welfare state, the reformists today limit their horizons simply to the fight against further austerity cuts—a “fight,” moreover, confined to the small change of parliamentary combinations. Class struggle has been deleted from their vocabulary. Workers Power, more candid than most, asserts in a 10 February article titled: “We Can’t Afford Another Tory Government” that the Tories can be stopped from winning another term. “To do this,” they say, “the unions are key.” And how so—“working class voters will not turn out in their millions unless we can force the union leaders to place clear demands on Labour.” This, then, is the task left to the unions, the defensive organisations of the working class: to sucker the millions of workers who have come to despise Labour back into the fold. And the task of the reformist left fringe? To provide the bureaucrats with the soothing language to do the trick.

The unions are indeed key to turning things around—not by coralling voting cattle for Labour but by engaging in some *hard class struggle*. Because they have their hands on the levers of production, the working class uniquely has the social power and interest to drive back the attacks on working people, immigrants and all the oppressed. The situation is pretty grim for the unions these days, but far from hopeless. Instead of a leadership that urges workers to bow to the bosses’ laws and stomps on any indication of the

will to struggle, the unions need a leadership that motivates and educates the proletariat on the necessity and inevitability of collective labour struggle against the exploiters, that advances a bold strategy to organise the unorganised—including migrant workers—and to revive the strength of the trade unions, that seeks to fight union-bashing privatisation schemes not in the courtroom but on the picket line, that does not limit itself to what the capitalists say is affordable but demands what the workers need. Such a leadership will be based on the understanding that there are no common interests between the working class and the capitalist class. It will be built in the crucible of struggle, including political struggle against the pro-capitalist union misleaders.

We seek to build a multiethnic revolutionary workers party, dedicated to the task of leading the working class to power. This requires socialist revolution to overthrow the entire capitalist order, shattering the bourgeois state and erecting a workers state—the dictatorship of the proletariat—to expropriate the capitalist bloodsuckers. Socialist revolutions in the major capitalist countries will lay the basis for rationally planned economies based on an international division of labour, leading to a qualitative development of the productive forces that opens the road to the elimination of poverty, oppression and war and the creation of a classless, egalitarian socialist society. ■

against black oppression, the cornerstone of American capitalism, linking labor’s cause to the struggles of all those ground down by capitalist rule.

In order to unite unionized and unorganized workers with the unemployed, a workers party would demand jobs for all and a shorter workweek with no loss in pay! Rising food and rent costs are eating away at pay—the workers need a sliding scale of wages to keep up with the cost of living. Quality medical care, including access to abortion and contraception, must be provided for all, free at the point of service, so that health care is not dependent on employment. These demands are not contingent on the bourgeoisie’s ability to provide them—they flow from the needs of working people. As revolutionary Marxist leader Leon Trotsky wrote in the Transitional Program (1938), such demands provide a bridge starting from “today’s conditions and from today’s consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat.”

Reformism vs. Revolution

The reformists of Socialist Alternative (SAlt) have become the poster boys of the left in the fight for raising the minimum wage. In imitation of the SEIU’s Fight for 15 campaign, SAlt launched its own initiative for a \$15 minimum wage, based not on class struggle but on getting state legislatures, city councils and mayors to mandate a higher wage. Rather than viewing the unions as potential organs to wage class struggle, SAlt presents them as lobbyists. In an article building for the April 15 protests, SAlt’s Ty Moore complains that “while many union leaders will demand McDonald’s and other employers pay \$15, few put this same demand on city, state, and federal politicians” (15Now.org, 28 March).

SALT’s claim to fame is its spokesman Kshama Sawant’s election to the Seattle city council in 2013, following a campaign focused on the \$15 minimum wage. Sawant and her co-thinkers have hyped the subsequent passage of a Seattle minimum wage ordinance as a “historic moment.” Beginning this month, big companies will have two years to phase in the \$15 minimum wage and small companies—defined as having fewer than 500 employees—will have six years. SALT’s perspective of relying on capitalist politicians to raise wages reflects its reformist view that “socialism” can be achieved through legislative reform of the capitalist system. SALT’s ultimate demand is to take into public ownership the largest corporations and run them under democratic control. Thus its newspaper’s “What We Stand For” column does not even mention the word revolution.

It will take a workers revolution to wrest control of the productive capacity of society from the capitalist exploiters. The capitalist state, a machine for the repression of working people and the oppressed, will be swept away and a workers state set up in its place. Socialism, a society of material abundance, cannot be achieved short of workers revolutions on an international scale that will allow the tremendous expansion of the productive forces of society, creating conditions for the disappearance of all social inequalities. ■

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WORKERS VANGUARD

Capitalism Means Wage Slavery

For Class Struggle Against Poverty Wages!

While profits are booming for the rapacious U.S. capitalists, wide swaths of the working population struggle daily to survive. More than 40 percent of wage-earners make less than \$15 an hour. One-quarter of the workforce depends on some form of public assistance, which itself has been slashed to the bone. One out of every five households with children is unable to put enough food on the table. The exorbitant cost of health care means that an accident or illness can plunge a family into crippling debt. People working two and three jobs to get by still cannot afford the spike in rents, driving many families into homelessness.

On April 15, rallies calling for a higher minimum wage took place across the country as part of the Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) Fight for 15 campaign. The protests had wide appeal, drawing in non-union employees from fast-food chains and other service sectors as well as unionized UPS, airport, hospital and hotel workers, many of whom also get rock-bottom wages. However, the SEIU tops' Fight for 15 campaign is based on the lie that the way to raise wages is to lobby capitalist Democrats, like those given pride of place at the rallies, and to appeal to the supposed good conscience of the employers. To begin to address the burning needs of working people requires a completely different approach: mobilizing the power of the multiracial working class against the capitalist exploiters.

In the course of the two-year Fight for 15 campaign, the largely female and heavily black and Latino fast-food workers have demonstrated their courage and militancy. Rallying in front of their workplaces and taking to the streets, they have risked their jobs as well as arrest. The struggle of the fast-food workers has the potential to inspire broader layers of the working class to action. Food-service workers, easily replaced and dispersed among hundreds of thousands of establishments, cannot win this battle alone. It is necessary to mobilize food processing, warehouse and transportation workers, who have the potential to shut down the fast-food chains by stopping the delivery of food. **The unions must fight to organize the unorganized!**

In opposition to such a class-struggle perspective, the existing leadership of the unions promotes the so-called partnership of labor and capital, subordinating the needs of the working class to what is acceptable to the bourgeoisie. By chaining the unions to the class enemy, primarily through support to the Democratic Party, the trade-union bureaucracy has effectively done the dirty work of keeping class peace while yielding to the bosses' wage-slashing attacks. In the process, they have grievously undermined the strength of the labor movement—over the last four decades, unionization in manufacturing,

transportation and construction has been cut in half.

All the while, the trade-union tops have poured hundreds of millions of dollars and countless man-hours into Democratic election campaigns. In contrast to the Republicans, Democrats occasionally strike a pose as “friends of labor,” which can make them more effective in wresting concessions from workers and sticking it to the poor. For example, Bill Clinton rammed through Ronald Reagan's dream project of “ending welfare as we know it,” forcing people to work for their benefits. That measure also aimed at undercutting the unions. Barack Obama escalated his predecessor's attacks on public education and the teachers unions. At the April 15 rally in San Francisco, SEIU president Mary Kay Henry gushed over Hillary Clinton's purported solidarity with the working poor—Clinton's regard for workers and the poor can be seen in the carnage and destruction unleashed in Iraq,

Afghanistan, Libya and beyond when she was Secretary of State.

In bourgeois quarters, there is some sentiment for slightly raising the minimum wage. With an eye to the 2016 elections, Democrats have come out for miserly increases. The *Wall Street Journal* has reported that some retail and fast-food employers are raising wages slightly to reduce employee turnover. Liberal commentators and establishment ideologues alike complain that taxpayers are having to subsidize Wal-Mart and McDonald's workers who are on welfare because their wages are so low. Some more far-sighted elements of the U.S. bourgeoisie also worry that they are sitting on top of a tinder pile of discontent that could be ignited by the spark of social protest.

Even if the minimum hourly wage were increased to \$15, an amount higher than what Democrats are generally proposing, it would amount to only \$31,000 a year, assuming a 40-hour workweek. And

many employers try to avoid hiring full-time workers because they do not want to pay for benefits. Of course, any increase in the minimum wage would be welcome. But what is on offer is still poverty wages.

The drive to pauperize the working class is inherent to the capitalist system of wage slavery. The profits of the capitalist class, which owns industry and the banks, come from the exploitation of labor. On average, the wages that workers receive are equal to the amount necessary to maintain themselves and raise the next generation of toilers. Wages correspond to only a fraction of the value that labor creates during the workday. For example, a worker may produce eight hours' worth of value but be compensated for only three of them in his wages. The other five hours create “surplus value,” the source of profit for the capitalist.

The capitalist class is constantly driven by competition to ratchet up the rate of exploitation (the ratio of surplus value to wages) by lengthening the workday, reducing wages, speeding up production, etc. By withholding their labor and cutting off the flow of profits, workers have the power to wrest better wages and working conditions from the capitalists. The level of wages at any given time is determined by the balance of forces between the working class and the bourgeoisie.

To emancipate itself, the proletariat must sweep away the system of capitalist production for profit through socialist revolution. In the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels observed:

“The bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him instead of being fed by him.”

More than 150 years later, the indictment is even more damning of the obscenely wealthy U.S. bourgeoisie, the world's dominant imperialist power, which has unleashed untold misery on working people and the oppressed around the globe.

For a Fighting Workers Movement!

Even in auto manufacturing, which historically had high-paying union jobs, half of all production workers currently make under \$15 an hour. The anti-union assault on auto workers kicked into high gear when the U.S. auto giants ceased to be competitive with their German and Japanese imperialist rivals, who had rebuilt their industrial base in the two decades after World War II. With the aim of keeping U.S. auto manufacturing competitive, the United Auto Workers (UAW) bureaucracy has for many years presided over a sharp decline

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WV Photo

Above: April 15 rally of low-wage workers in New York City. Below: Workers on production line at Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee, 2013. About half of all auto workers make under \$15 an hour.



AP

Break with the Democrats! For a Workers Party!