

As de Blasio Launches “Affordable Housing” Scam Real Estate Barons Devour New York



WV Photo



Office of the Mayor



WV Photo

While homeless people have to sleep on subway platforms, ultra-luxury condos at 56 Leonard Street in lower Manhattan (right) sell for as much as \$47 million. Center: Mayor Bill de Blasio (second from right) with real estate mogul Bruce Ratner (to his right) breaking ground on new Pacific Park development at Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards, December 2014.

Two years after New York City's liberal Democrat Bill de Blasio rode his mantra of a “tale of two cities” into City Hall, low wages, rotten schools and racist cop terror are as much a daily fact of life as under his predecessor, billionaire Michael Bloomberg. Nothing looms as large on the index of misery as housing—for the tens of thousands without any; for the pre-

dominantly black and Latino families in the dilapidated, rat-infested projects; for those terrorized by landlords into abandoning apartments that have been home for decades; for nearly everyone else seeking a roof over their heads without mortgaging their first-born child.

With rents rising as fast as ugly glass towers, the most visible sign of the

housing crisis is the swelling number of homeless. In the financial capital of U.S. imperialism, the official homeless population (those in shelters) reached a record 60,000 this summer—enough to overfill Yankee Stadium. Untold more sleep in the parks, streets, subways and, if lucky enough, their cars. It has long been a truism that thousands of workers are a

missing paycheck away from the streets. Today, the ranks of the homeless include many holding one or more regular jobs. Among them are some 300 full-timers on the NYC payroll.

Enter the “affordable housing” plan de Blasio rolled out this summer. A *New York Times* editorial (11 August) lauding the *continued on page 10*

Homeless Hell in the City of Angels

Opulent mansions and legions of the poor: for this stark contrast Los Angeles has been called “the capital of the Third World.” Now the City of Angels has become the homeless capital of America, a city of shanties. In the past two years, the number of people living in tents, makeshift camps and their own vehicles has shot up by 85 percent in L.A. County. According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, as of January there were over 44,000 homeless people in the county and 26,000 in the city itself. Once

mostly confined to downtown's infamous Skid Row, today homeless people are found everywhere, from Pasadena to the Westside, from freeway medians to community college campuses.

In the 1970s, black Democratic mayor Tom Bradley purposely concentrated the homeless on Skid Row. Downtown was a ghost town after dark, shunned by office workers and the rich alike, inhabited only by those living in single-room-occupancy hotels or in cardboard boxes on the streets. But now, with construction cranes crowding the downtown skyline, a flood of new expensive apartments and restaurants has replaced cheap hotel rooms, motels and single-room apartments—once the last refuge of the poor. Meanwhile, skyrocketing rents

are driving residents out of previously working-class areas like Highland Park and Boyle Heights. Growing numbers of working people find their wages too low to afford a place to live.

In addition to those newly evicted, thousands discharged from L.A. county jails, state prisons and foster homes with no prospects end up on the streets, including up to 20 percent of those released by court order in response to California's grotesque prison overcrowding. L.A. hospitals have become notorious for “patient dumping”—dropping mentally ill and indigent patients on Skid Row, still in their hospital gowns. Large numbers of homeless people suffer from untreated addiction and/or HIV; 30 to 40 percent are seriously mentally ill or dis-

abled. In the filthy conditions, infectious disease is rampant; since 2007, tuberculosis has infected dozens, claiming the lives of at least eleven people. Flesh-eating, drug-resistant “Skid Row staph” infections are widespread.

The 54 blocks that make up Skid Row are home to several thousand people, the largest concentration of unsheltered people in the country. The fact that most of them are black brutally illustrates the racist reality of American capitalism. In L.A. County as a whole, **50 percent** of the homeless are black, although black people make up only **9 percent** of the population.

It is a damning indictment of capitalism that huge numbers of people, disproportionately blacks and Latinos, struggle for the basic necessities of life—food, housing, sanitation, employment, health care—in one of the richest cities in the country. The situation cries out for a public works program to build affordable, quality, integrated housing, schools, clinics and libraries, as well as efficient public transportation across the entire city. Union-run minority recruitment and job-training programs are desperately needed to give jobs to

continued on page 5



“Karl Marx” by V.I. Lenin

We print below the concluding section of Lenin’s outline of Marx’s life and ideas—from dialectical materialism to surplus value to socialism. The first five installments were published in WV Nos. 1073-1077 (4 and 18 September and 2, 16 and 30 October).

PART SIX

Tactics of the Class Struggle of the Proletariat

After examining, as early as 1844-45, one of the main shortcomings in the earlier materialism, namely, its inability to understand the conditions or appreciate the importance of practical revolutionary activity, Marx, along with his theoretical work, devoted unremitting attention, throughout his lifetime, to the tactical problems of the proletariat’s class struggle. An immense amount of material bearing on this is contained in *all* the works of Marx, particularly in the four volumes of his correspondence with Engels, published in 1913. This material is still far from having been brought together, collected, examined and studied. We shall therefore have to confine ourselves here to the most

Armed workers man barricades of the Paris Commune, the world’s first proletarian dictatorship, 1871.

general and brief remarks, emphasising that Marx justly considered that, without *this* aspect, materialism is incomplete, one-sided, and lifeless. The fundamental task of proletarian tactics was defined by Marx in strict conformity with all the postulates of his materialist-dialectical *Welt-*

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anschauung [worldview]. Only an objective consideration of the sum total of the relations between absolutely all the classes in a given society, and consequently a consideration of the objective stage of development reached by that society and of the relations between it and other societies, can serve as a basis for the correct tactics of an advanced class. At the same time, all classes and all countries are regarded, not statically, but dynamically, i.e., not in a state of immobility, but in motion (whose laws are determined by the economic conditions of existence of each class). Motion, in its turn, is regarded from the standpoint, not only of the past, but also of the future, and that not in the vulgar sense it is understood in by the “evolutionists,” who see only slow changes, but dialectically: “...in developments of such magnitude twenty years are no more than a day,” Marx wrote to Engels, “though later on there may come days in which twenty years are embodied” (*Briefwechsel*, Vol. 3, p. 127). At each stage of development, at each moment, proletarian tactics must take account of this objectively inevitable dialectics of human history, on the one hand, utilising the periods of political stagnation or of sluggish, so-called “peaceful” development in order to develop the class-consciousness, strength and militancy of the advanced class, and, on the other hand, directing all the work of this utilisation towards the “ultimate aim” of that class’s advance, towards creating in it the ability to find practical solutions for great tasks in the great days, in which “twenty years are embodied.” Two of Marx’s arguments are of special importance in this connection: one of these is contained in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and concerns the economic struggle and economic organisations of the proletariat; the other is contained in the *Communist Manifesto* and concerns the political tasks of the proletariat. The former runs as follows: “Large-scale industry concentrates in one place a crowd of people unknown to one another. Competition divides their interests. But the maintenance of wages, this common interest which they have against their boss, unites them in a common thought of resistance—combination.... Combinations, at first isolated, constitute themselves into groups... and in face of always united capital, the maintenance of the association becomes more necessary to them [i.e., the workers—*Lenin*] than that of wages.... In this struggle—a veritable civil war—all the elements necessary for a coming battle unite and develop. Once it has reached this point, association takes on a political character.” Here we have the programme and tactics of the economic struggle and of the trade union movement for several decades to come, for all the lengthy period in which

the proletariat will prepare its forces for the “coming battle.” All this should be compared with numerous references by Marx and Engels to the example of the British labour movement, showing how industrial “prosperity” leads to attempts “to buy the proletariat” (*Briefwechsel*, Vol. 1, p. 136), to divert them from the struggle; how this prosperity in general “demoralises the workers” (Vol. 2, p. 218); how the British proletariat becomes “bourgeoisified”—“this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat alongside the bourgeoisie” (Vol. 2, p. 290); how its “revolutionary energy” oozes away (Vol. 3, p. 124); how it will be necessary to wait a more or less lengthy space of time before “the British workers will free themselves from their apparent bourgeois infection” (Vol. 3, p. 127); how the British labour movement “lacks the mettle of the Chartists” (1866; Vol. 3, p. 305); how the British workers’ leaders are becoming a type midway between “a radical bourgeois and a worker” (in reference to [George] Holyoak[e], Vol. 4, p. 209); how, owing to Britain’s monopoly, and as long as that monopoly lasts, “the British workingman will not budge” (Vol. 4, p. 433). The tactics of the economic struggle, in connection with the general course (*and outcome*) of the working-class movement, are considered here from a remarkably broad, comprehensive, dialectical, and genuinely revolutionary standpoint.

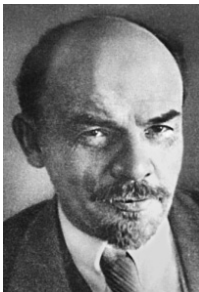
The *Communist Manifesto* advanced a fundamental Marxist principle on the tactics of the political struggle: “The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.” That was why, in 1848, Marx supported the party of the “agrarian revolution” in Poland, “that party which brought about the Cracow insurrection in 1846.” In Germany, Marx, in 1848 and 1849, supported the extreme revolutionary democrats, and subsequently never retracted what he had then said about tactics. He regarded the German bourgeoisie as an element which was “inclined from the very beginning to betray the people” (only an alliance with the peasantry could have enabled the bourgeoisie to completely achieve its aims) “and compromise with the crowned representatives of the old society.” Here is Marx’s summing-up of the German bourgeoisie’s class position in the period of the bourgeois-democratic revolution—an analysis which, incidentally, is a sample of a materialism that examines society in motion, and, moreover, not only from

For New October Revolutions!

The workers of Russia rose to power under the leadership of V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party on 7 November 1917 (October 25 in the old Russian calendar) with the perspective that the Russian Revolution would be the opening shot of world socialist revolution. In a 1942 speech, American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon described the significance of the October Revolution, which demonstrated in practice how the proletariat, led by a Leninist vanguard party, can seize state power and sweep away the capitalist system. Fatally undermined by nearly seven decades of Stalinist betrayal, the Soviet Union was ultimately destroyed through capitalist counterrevolution in 1991-92. The International Communist League aims for new October Revolutions throughout the world.



TROTSKY



LENIN

November 7, 1917. The death sentence on the old order of capitalism and the beginning of the new order of world socialism were both proclaimed on that day. And whatever vicissitudes, whatever setbacks, betrayals or defeats may overtake the proletariat on the road to that final goal; however sharp and deep may be the zigzags in the line which charts the course of the struggle through which humanity shall pass from capitalism to socialism; whatever may befall: the starting point in the line of development will always be traced to that great day which we commemorate tonight—November 7, 1917....

Marx and Engels lifted the conception of socialism from utopia to science. The Russian Revolution developed scientific socialism from theory into action, and proved several things that before had been abstract generalizations and predictions. The Russian Revolution proved in action that certain things were true beyond all further doubt. The first of these things proved by the revolution was that it is possible for the workers to take power. It is possible for the workers to forge out of their ranks a party that is capable of leading the struggle to victory. And the workers in all countries will everlastingly remember that. Nothing can erase from history that example. Victory of the proletariat is possible—the Russian Revolution in action, in blood and fire, proved that it is so.

—James P. Cannon, “The 25th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution” (November 1942)

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Once Again on ISIS and U.S. Imperialism

14 September 2015

To the editor:

In its reply to Loren S.'s letter of May 29, *Workers Vanguard* describes Islamic State as anti-imperialist, declaring: "We take a military side with ISIS when it targets the imperialists and forces acting as their proxies."

This is completely at odds with the facts. Islamic State is a wholly owned subsidiary of Saudi Arabia and the other Arab Gulf states. While it grew out of the communalist slaughters triggered by the U.S. invasion of Iraq, this is half the story. As Saudi Arabia has adopted a higher and higher ideological profile in the wake of the U.S.-sponsored jihad against the Soviet-backed government of Afghanistan, it has increasingly turned its ire against its great rivals, the Shi'ites of Iran, Iraq, and Hezbollah. The Wahhabists are not the only ones guilty of sectarianism, but there is no question as to who has been the more aggressive. Even prior to 9/11 and the Iraq invasion, Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan told Sir Richard Dearlove, head of the British Secret Intelligence Service, or MI6: "The time is not far off in the Middle East, Richard, when it will be literally 'God help the Shia.' More than a billion Sunnis have simply had enough of them." The genocidal implications of that statement should be clear.

As communalist passions have erupted, the Saudis and their fellow petro-states have thus poured money and weapons into the Sunni side, transforming the mujahideen into a powerful international force. By August 2012, the Defense Intelligence Agency reported that Al Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood, and similar groups were the driving force behind the anti-Assad revolt, that they were seeking to establish a "Salafist principality" in eastern Syria as part of a general anti-Shi'ite jihad, and that their western backers, the Gulf states, and Turkey were all comfortable with such an outcome. Last October, Vice President Joe Biden told an audience at Harvard's Kennedy School that "the Saudis, the emirates, etc...were so determined to take down Assad and essentially

have a proxy Sunni-Shia war...[that] they poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of tons of military weapons into...Al Nusra and Al Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world," groups that eventually morphed into ISIS. According to *The New York Times*, U.S. policy is not to bomb IS when it is battling Syrian government troops, an indication that, despite Obama's fulminations, it still regards Islamic State as useful proxy against Assad.

The Assad dictatorship has many sins to answer for. But what we are now witnessing in the Middle East is a combined assault by the U.S., Turkey, the Saudis, and other members of the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] on a Third World nationalist state that has long been in the crosshairs of U.S. imperialism. So unless WV is willing to describe Qatar, the UAE, and other such petro-states as anti-imperialist, it's hard to see how it can use the same term with regard to IS.

Daniel Lazare

WV replies:

Daniel Lazare engages in more than a little journalistic three-card monte to support his charge that WV describes the quite gruesome forces that constitute ISIS as anti-imperialist. In fact the word "anti-imperialist" was nowhere used in our response to Loren S. to describe the Islamic State. We made our position crystal clear in the very next sentence to the one from which Lazare draws his quote: "At the same time, we are in staunch political opposition to ISIS, whose blood-thirsty methods and retrograde outlook are truly repugnant."

We do stand with ISIS when it targets the forces of U.S. imperialism and its proxies in the region. (Its military conflicts with the U.S. go unmentioned in Lazare's letter.) As we have stressed since the U.S. began air strikes against ISIS last year, any setback for the U.S. and its proxies would impede imperialist designs for the region and be in the interests of the exploited and the oppressed.

That statement no more means that ISIS is anti-imperialist than President Obama's now-abandoned promise to withdraw U.S. military forces from the region made him a champion of world peace.

It should be noted that Lazare, a sometimes cogent critic of U.S. foreign policy, has written elsewhere about the conflagration in the Near East and the incoherence of Washington's policies. Not so in his letter to WV in which ISIS absurdly becomes a part of the imperialist-led crusade against Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad. Lazare only perceives the financing that has been channeled to ISIS from the Arabian Peninsula and the fact that the U.S. does not bomb ISIS forces on the infrequent occasions that they directly engage Syrian government troops. Left unmentioned are the 6,000-plus bombing raids carried out by the U.S. against ISIS, including the months-long bombing of Kobani. During that battle, ISIS was confronted by Kurdish nationalist forces there that signed on as ground troops and spotters for the U.S. imperialists.

The existing coalition against Assad, which Lazare claims is a Saudi-sponsored Sunni alliance, is in fact riddled with contradictions. ISIS forces have launched terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabian cities after its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, denounced the Saudi monarchy as "traitors to Islam." In response, the regime launched a police roundup of dozens of suspected ISIS supporters. Then there is the not small matter of Turkey's increasing airstrikes against Kurdish forces, no doubt the most effective anti-ISIS ground troops, after Ankara allowed the U.S. use of its air bases to conduct bombing raids last July.

Lazare's omissions and obfuscations are clearly not just in the service of propping up his phony charge that WV describes ISIS as "anti-imperialist." Lazare's unstated aim becomes clear in his recent articles on the Syrian conflict, in which he complains that the Obama administration has been taken hostage by hawks in Washington. Lazare goes on to offer the following: "Conceivably, Obama

could have reversed course and admitted that the Russians are of course right and that supporting Assad is preferable to the nightmare of seeing a black ISIS banner fluttering from the glorious Umayyad Mosque in Damascus" ("On Syria, Incoherence Squared," consortiumnews.com, 11 September). Alas, he opines, that would be a bridge too far for the president, who is too wedded to the concerns of Washington's main allies in the region, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Lazare would hope Russian president Putin's policy carries the day. As Marxists, our main opposition is to the imperialists. We also oppose all the other capitalist powers involved in the squalid civil war in Syria (including Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) and call for them to leave.

Lazare's differences with WV are fundamental. His quest is for a rational U.S. imperialist policy in the Near East. Our understanding is that it is in the nature of imperialism to subjugate, oppress and exploit the world's toiling masses. Whatever policy differences exist among the imperialist rulers and their servitors, such are all in the service of that fundamental nature. The reality is that, since its development over a century ago, capitalist imperialism has offered a variety of supposedly noble purposes to justify its slaughter of tens of millions of people. Today, U.S. imperialism, the foremost imperialist power, is the greatest enemy of the world's workers and oppressed.

Our perspective is diametrically opposed to Lazare. In defending ISIS from the blows of the imperialists, we recognize that any setback for Washington could also promote domestic opposition to U.S. imperialism within a war-weary populace that has been ground down by years of economic crisis. As we expressed in our reply to Loren S.'s letter, "We Marxists aim to turn the disillusionment and anger of working people in the U.S. into class struggle against the capitalist rulers at home. It is through such struggle that the proletariat will be won to the program of socialist revolution to destroy the imperialist beast from within." ■

the aspect of a motion that is *backward*: "Without faith in itself, without faith in the people, grumbling at those above, trembling before those below...intimidated by the world storm...no energy in any respect, plagiarism in every respect...without initiative...an execrable old man who saw himself doomed to guide and deflect the first youthful impulses of a robust people in his own senile interests..." (*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, 1848; see *Literarischer Nachlass*, Vol. 3, p. 212.) About twenty years later, Marx declared, in a letter to Engels (*Briefwechsel*, Vol. 3, p. 224), that the Revolution of 1848 had failed because the bourgeoisie had preferred peace with slavery to the mere prospect of a fight for freedom. When the revolutionary period of 1848-49 ended, Marx opposed any attempt to play at revolution (his struggle against [Karl] Schapper and [August] Willich), and insisted on the ability to work in the new phase, which in a quasi-"peaceful" way was preparing new revolutions. The spirit in which Marx wanted this work to be conducted is to be seen in his appraisal of the situation in Germany in 1856, the darkest period of reaction: "The whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasant War" (*Briefwechsel*, Vol. 2, p. 108). While the democratic (bourgeois) revolution in Germany was uncompleted, Marx focussed every attention, in the tactics of the socialist proletariat, on developing the democratic energy of the peasantry. He held that [Ferdinand] Lassalle's attitude was "objectively...a betrayal of the whole



Red Guard detachment of "Vulkan" factory, Petrograd, during Russian October Revolution, 1917.

Viktor Bulla

workers' movement to Prussia" (Vol. 3, p. 210), incidentally because Lassalle was tolerant of the Junkers [landowning aristocrats] and Prussian nationalism. "In a predominantly agricultural country," Engels wrote in 1865, in exchanging views with Marx on their forthcoming joint declaration in the press, "...it is dastardly to make an exclusive attack on the bourgeoisie in the name of the industrial proletariat but never to devote a word to the patriarchal exploitation of the rural proletariat under the lash of the great feudal aristocracy" (Vol. 3, p. 217). From 1864 to 1870, when the period of the consummation of the

bourgeois-democratic revolution in Germany was coming to an end, a period in which the Prussian and Austrian exploiting classes were struggling to complete that revolution in one way or another *from above*, Marx not only rebuked Lassalle, who was coquetting with [German chancellor Otto von] Bismarck, but also corrected [Wilhelm] Liebknecht, who had lapsed into "Austrophilism" and a defence of particularism; Marx demanded revolutionary tactics which would combat with equal ruthlessness both Bismarck and the Austrophiles, tactics which would not be adapted to the "victor"—the Prus-

sian Junker—but would immediately renew the revolutionary struggle against him *also in the conditions* created by the Prussian military victories (*Briefwechsel*, Vol. 3, pp. 134, 136, 147, 179, 204, 210, 215, 418, 437, 440-41). In the celebrated Address of the International of September 9, 1870, Marx warned the French proletariat against an untimely uprising, but when an uprising nevertheless took place (1871), Marx enthusiastically hailed the revolutionary initiative of the masses, who were "storming heaven" (Marx's letter to [Ludwig] Kugelmann). From the standpoint of Marx's dialectical materialism, the defeat of revolutionary action in that situation, as in many others, was a lesser evil, in the general course *and outcome* of the proletarian struggle, than the abandonment of a position already occupied, than surrender without battle. Such a surrender would have demoralised the proletariat and weakened its militancy. While fully appreciating the use of legal means of struggle during periods of political stagnation and the domination of bourgeois legality, Marx, in 1877 and 1878, following the passage of the Anti-Socialist Law, sharply condemned [Johann] Most's "revolutionary phrases"; no less sharply, if not more so, did he attack the opportunism that had for a time come over the official Social-Democratic Party, which did not at once display resoluteness, firmness, revolutionary spirit and a readiness to resort to an illegal struggle in response to the Anti-Socialist Law (*Briefwechsel*, Vol. 4, pp. 397, 404, 418, 422, 424; cf. also letters to [Friedrich] Sorge). ■

Drop All Charges Against Air France Workers! No Layoffs!

We print below a translation of an October 21 leaflet issued by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France. A number of Air France workers are facing criminal charges and company discipline after a strike rally on October 5 at Paris Charles de Gaulle (Roissy) airport during which two managers lost their shirts. Five strikers have been charged with “gang assault” and another eleven with “defacement of property.” The company is trying to fire a total of 18 workers. The Air France events have really touched a nerve in France. Some 5,000 workers and their supporters demonstrated in Paris on October 22 to demand that the charges and disciplinary measures be dropped. Union members have been protesting at the disciplinary hearings and are being mobilized for the start of the trials.

The government wasted no time in avenging the humiliation of Air France managers—representatives of French capitalism—who on October 5 fled with their shirts torn off as workers jeered. Prime Minister Manuel Valls had maintenance and cargo workers arrested at their homes at 6 a.m. in front of their families. Five have been charged and face up to three years in jail, with trials set for December 2.

The entire workforce across all job categories must mobilize to demand: **Drop all charges! Stop the disciplinary proceedings already targeting some 20 workers!** If the government and the Air France bosses succeed in their attacks on the Air France Five, it will directly pave the way for implementing 2,900 job cuts and layoffs. In the name of competitiveness vis-à-vis foreign and low-cost airlines, the bosses will try to wipe out all existing gains, setting a new precedent for attacking workers in other sectors.

The Air France Five are all employed in the industrial divisions of the company. They were targeted not so much for their alleged participation in the events of October 5, but as part of an attempt to re-establish the division between ground workers and flight crews, who, for once, had united against the threat of layoffs faced by both flight and ground personnel. This unity among workers across all job categories has highlighted the formidable power the workers hold. This power must be mobilized in strike action to scuttle the bosses’ “Transform” and “Perform” plans.

While Emmanuel Macron, the government minister responsible for dismantling social gains, called the workers “stupid” (having previously described the women who work in slaughterhouses in Brittany as “illiterate”), Valls labeled them



Le Bolchévik

Above: Workers demonstrate in Paris on October 22 in defense of Air France strikers arrested after managers including Xavier Broseta (right, without shirt) fled from furious workers at October 5 airport rally.



as “thugs,” implicitly evoking the racist image of dark-skinned delinquents in the *banlieues* [minority and working-class neighborhoods on the outskirts of big cities]. The widespread reliance on surveillance cameras to identify the alleged perpetrators also demonstrates the extent to which the strengthening of the police state in the name of the “war on terror” in reality serves to facilitate repression targeting the working class.

Down With Vigipirate!

That is why we have always opposed the “war on terror,” a political pretext for racist witchhunts against Muslims aimed at gaining acceptance for the use of police-state measures against everyone. In 2006, we vigorously protested the withdrawal by the police of security clearance for 72 baggage handlers at Roissy Airport—tantamount to firing them—simply because they were suspected of being devout Muslims and thus, according to the cops, potential “terrorists.” The influx of this layer of workers of North and West African origin from the 93rd district [a heavily working-class and immigrant region outside Paris] had helped reinvigorate the CGT [General Confederation of Labor] and other unions. As we explained at the time, this was the real reason for the anti-terrorist hysteria (*Le Bolchévik* No. 178, December 2006). We added:

“The obstacle is not lack of militancy: it is a political question which the trade-union bureaucrats are incapable of seriously addressing. The fight for the undocumented is acceptable to the ‘left-leaning’ bourgeois republicans courted by the reformists, as it is compatible with declarations about France being ‘the country of human rights’ and the ‘land of political asylum.’ But fighting against the oppression of workers and youth from the *banlieues*, most of whom have French citizenship, requires confronting racial

oppression, which is rooted in French capitalism and is aimed against a whole layer of the working class whose parents or grandparents came from North and sub-Saharan Africa.”

Exactly ten years after the revolt of the *banlieues* and several months after the racist anti-Muslim “I am Charlie” campaign, it is more important than ever to mobilize the working class in defense of its North African and African brothers and children. This is key for ensuring working-class unity against the bosses, especially at the Paris airports where the working class is multiethnic and multiracial.

This perspective cannot emerge spontaneously from the economic struggle of workers against the bosses. It requires the intervention of a revolutionary workers party placing itself at the head of the struggle against all forms of oppression targeting specific layers of the population, whether because of skin color, supposed

ethnic origin, gender or sexual orientation. **The workers movement must defend the banlieue youth! Down with Vigipirate and Sentinelle! Down with the racist “war on terror!”** This position represents a fundamental difference between ourselves and most of the left, notably the French Communist Party (PCF) and Lutte Ouvrière (LO). In 25 years, the latter has barely uttered a single word against Vigipirate! [Vigipirate and Sentinelle are police and military “anti-terrorism” mobilizations, the former to sow terror in minority neighborhoods and to patrol transportation hubs, the latter to guard places of worship, schools and other “sensitive” sites.]

It is necessary to fight racial discrimination in hiring and on the job, and to fight for the direct hiring of subcontracted, temporary and other workers without job security by the large companies where unions still exist. No to working 100 extra unpaid hours! For a reduction in working hours and the sharing of work among all, with no loss in pay! This poses the need to overthrow the whole capitalist system.

For Working-Class Unity! One Industry, One Union!

The airline industry in France is a sector in which the divisions among workers fostered by the bosses and their reformist agents have been pushed to the limit, in direct proportion to the social power these workers have. Not only are there racial divisions between white male pilots and dark-skinned workers, with flight attendants somewhere in between, but the unions are also divided according to political tendency (SUD, CGT, FO, etc.), and along craft lines (unions reserved for pilots or for flight attendants, sometimes within the same union federation, as in the case of SUD Aérien and Alter, “the pilot union”).

Among the flight crews, some have also been threatened for allegedly opening the door through which the Air France workers entered the October 5 meeting. While they have been spared prosecution for the time being, this is only in order to pit ground workers against flight crews, while browbeating the latter into accepting 100 extra hours of work per year, to the absolute detriment of passenger safety.

With the help of the trade-union bureaucracy, Air France has turned the fomenting of these divisions into an art form, trying to convince ground personnel that their misfortunes are due to the exorbitant privileges flight crews are supposedly clinging to. For their part, many flight personnel think they are strong because they have their own craft unions based upon their specific interests. In reality, this thinking opens them up to all kinds of maneu-



Getty

Frankfurt Airport, November 6: Lufthansa flight crew on strike. International workers solidarity is key to successful class struggle.

LE BOLCHEVIK

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Los Angeles...

(continued from page 1)

the unemployed at union wages. But satisfying human needs runs counter to the system of capitalism, where production and employment are determined by what is profitable. The truth is that the American rulers view the homeless as a financial burden, not worth the money to keep them alive. To reorganize society to serve the mass of humanity will require a new ruling class—the workers.

In September, Democratic mayor Eric Garcetti and several L.A. City Council members declared a state of emergency in response to the surge in homelessness, promising to allocate up to \$100 million to the problem. Months later, there's no plan and no money. "Every few years, elected officials declare a crisis in homelessness or housing and pledge to spend millions of dollars or to pass new laws to address the chronic shortage of affordable homes," the *Los Angeles Times* observed in a 28 October editorial, but "promised public funding dries up or gets diverted to new crises." The city currently allocates more than \$100 million a year for the homeless, but tellingly, much of that is spent on cop crackdowns.

This summer, two new city ordinances empowered the city to seize and destroy the belongings of homeless people that are left in parks or on sidewalks for over 24 hours. Another \$3.7 million went to pay sanitation workers to help the cops haul away all the possessions of homeless people. Rather than allowing its members to be used as cops' auxiliaries, SEIU Local 721, which organizes sanitation workers and has come under attack from the city administration, has an interest in defending the homeless.

Criminalized for having no place to live, the homeless are regularly harassed and arrested by the police, fined for sleeping on the sidewalk, jaywalking or dropping cigarette ash. In the past year alone, as protests over the killings of blacks and Latinos swept the country, L.A. cops killed several homeless men (see "LAPD Guns Down Homeless Man," WV No. 1064, 20 March).



WV Photo

Homeless encampment in downtown L.A., October.

Recent police terror has aimed at driving the homeless out of sight as Garcetti prepares his bid to host the 2024 Olympics. The Olympic plan includes developing a rail yard along the concrete-lined L.A. River for an Olympic Village to house 16,500 athletes. Real estate developers are drooling at the prospect—and the likelihood that they will be able to buy up the area at a discount afterward for upscale development.

L.A.'s real estate moguls—heirs of those who built their empires on land and water grabs in the late 19th century—created the city's housing crisis in their quest for profits. In the early 1950s, they defeated L.A.'s plans for public housing through a racist campaign against potential integration and "creeping socialism." The giant developers and landlords have benefited handsomely from government regulations passed in the '70s that tightly restricted the construction of housing and drove up prices. L.A. County's housing stock grew only 20 percent between 1980 and 2010, while the population increased by a third.

Over the past two decades, rising housing costs have led many black people to move from L.A. to the historically white, segregated suburbs. By 2006, thousands of black recipients of Section 8 housing subsidies had moved to Lancaster and Palm-

dale in Antelope Valley, about 70 miles north of the city, where they were met with a racist backlash. Aiming to drive black people out of town, armed sheriff's deputies, sometimes nine at a time, conducted surprise searches of Section 8 rentals, looking for petty violations such as marijuana possession. As a result, more than 350 families lost their housing vouchers and some became homeless. City officials' calls to "wage war" on Section 8 families they branded as "criminals" and "security threats" incited further racist attacks. In 2010, the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in Palmdale was firebombed, and black families' properties were defaced with racist graffiti. This July, the L.A. County Housing Authority and Antelope Valley officials were found guilty of racial discrimination against hundreds of Section 8 voucher holders, only five of whom have had their subsidies reinstated.

The soaring rents, low wages and high unemployment driving the explosion in homelessness threaten the whole of the working class. An effective fight to reverse the long decline in wages and living conditions must include struggling against the oppression of the black population. The capitalist class uses racism to keep the working class divided and drive down wages and living conditions for all workers.

Such a fight also requires defense of immigrant workers, regardless of their legal status, against deportation and discrimination. The strength of the working class lies in its ability to shut down profit at the point of production through unified struggle.

This is counter to the perspective of the labor tops in L.A., historically a viciously anti-union town. In the face of decades of attacks by city administrations, the union bureaucrats have refused to mobilize their ranks. Instead, they have pursued a losing strategy of lobbying the capitalist Democratic Party and appealing to the good conscience of the bosses. The City Council's vote to raise the minimum wage to \$15 (by 2020!) is falsely presented as proof of the success of their efforts. A higher minimum wage is good as far as it goes. But, by the union bureaucrats' own admission, \$15 an hour is not enough to survive on without public assistance. It's well below the \$33 an hour that the California Housing Partnership says is needed to afford an average L.A. apartment. Outrageously, Rusty Hicks, head of the AFL-CIO's Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, pushed for an exemption allowing unionized workers to be paid *less than* the new minimum wage! (See "How Low Can You Go," WV No. 1071, 10 July.)

Under capitalism, workers, minorities and the poor can be used, abused or thrown away like garbage in the capitalist drive to maximize profits. But the working class has the potential to do more than simply eke out a living in the bonds of wage slavery. Under the leadership of its own revolutionary party, the working class can sweep away all the barbarity of class society and begin to construct a new, socialist order. As we wrote in "LAPD Guns Down Homeless Man":

"In just one night, a revolutionary workers government would requisition living space from fancy hotels and the mansions of the rich—put the homeless in the Wilshire Grand Hotel, Beverly Hills and the Pacific Palisades! By ripping the productive forces out of the hands of the capitalist parasites and establishing a planned, centralized economy that serves the interests of society as a whole, the victorious working class will be able to provide a decent life for all." ■

vers by management to isolate them from other workers, thus allowing for them to be defeated separately instead of winning together.

The struggle against the threat of layoffs requires a struggle for working-class unity in a single industrial union, encompassing *all* Air France workers, along with baggage handlers and runway personnel at the Paris airports, as well as their co-workers at EasyJet, Lufthansa or Qatar Airways. Such a union cannot be forged through high-level negotiations between the bureaucratic apparatuses of the different unions, who line up separately at the feeding trough offered by the bosses. What is necessary is a struggle to oust all these bureaucrats and forge a class-struggle leadership in the unions!

An industrial union with such a leadership would be a powerful counterweight to the "company spirit" at Air France, where workers are supposed to be sincerely concerned about the health of the company—meaning its profitability for shareholders! It would also counter the propaganda condemning the government for giving priority to sales of weapons and Airbus aircraft to Persian Gulf countries in exchange for additional landing slots for airlines based in the Arabian Peninsula at the expense of Air France. This is a sort of protectionism that weakens the workers here by undermining the possibilities for international solidarity action by workers in other countries.

Air transportation is by definition an international activity. The true ally of the workers is not the "Air France" banner, but the pilots, baggage handlers and maintenance workers in other companies and other countries. *Workers of all countries, unite!* For Air France workers, solidarity with Lufthansa workers (whose latest strike against similar attacks earlier this year was simply banned by Germany's capitalist courts), or with Qatar Airways



Demotix

March in Paris to commemorate victims of racist cop terror, October 31. Banner reads: "Our neighborhoods are not shooting ranges."

workers (whom [Air France-KLM CEO Alexandre] de Juniac is only too happy to see imprisoned for the most minor offenses), would be the best preparation for a victorious strike at Air France.

Down With the European Union! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

Before [President François] Hollande and Valls, it was another "left" capitalist government, with a PCF minister of transportation (Jean-Claude Gayssot), which initiated the privatization of Air France at the end of the 1990s. The government is currently allowing market competition to penetrate France, not because it is following orders from Berlin, but because in the name of the [European Union's] "Brussels Directives," the bosses here seek to increase the overall pressure on all workers in this country. They want to extend

the anti-union regime of the low-cost airlines to everyone (e.g. the Transavia project at Air France) and thus increase the rate of capitalist profit.

The European Union (EU) is an unstable alliance of imperialist powers (of which France is second behind Germany) and of weaker countries. This alliance is directed against these countries' own working classes, against the U.S. and Japan, and against immigrants trying to enter "Fortress Europe." We have always opposed the European Union on an *internationalist* basis. The support of LO, the PCF and the New Anti-Capitalist Party for the EU and the euro merely reflects the current pro-EU position of their own bourgeoisie. It also gives the fascists of the National Front an opening to expand their influence among the most backward sectors of the working class by posing as the only major party that opposes the sin-

gle currency currently choking European economies. *Down with the capitalist EU and its financial instrument, the euro! For a Socialist United States of Europe!*

These days, airports are highly militarized areas. Any serious class struggle immediately comes up against the armed gangs of the capitalist government. In 1993, under [Socialist president François] Mitterrand, Air France workers defied the law and order of the government of [conservative Edouard] Balladur (the spiritual father of [right-wing president Nicolas] Sarkozy) and won on the battlefield by occupying the runways. A few strikebreakers may even have lost their shirts there. But the workers' victory was betrayed by the union bureaucrats, who subsequently handed everything back to the bosses at the negotiating table.

The profound irrationality of the capitalist system is especially glaring when it comes to the airline industry. To put an end to capitalist competition and the laws of profit requires nothing less than a socialist revolution to establish a workers government that will overthrow the entire capitalist system and expropriate the bourgeoisie. The extension of the revolution throughout Europe will enable a socialist reconstruction of society based on rational, international planning of production according to what is needed, including for transportation.

In order to score a decisive victory over the capitalists, their cops and judges, their media propagandists and their agents within the workers movement itself, the working class needs a revolutionary workers party. The Russian Revolution of October 1917, in which the workers conquered power for the first time, showed the way. Following the model of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik Party, we fight to build the French section of a reformed Fourth International, the party of world socialist revolution. ■

Greece: For Workers Struggle Against Austerity!

We print below the second part of a presentation, edited for publication, given by Spartacist League spokesman Diana Coleman at an October 10 forum in Oakland, California. Part One appeared in WV No. 1077 (30 October).

PART TWO

Syriza, which came to power in Greece for the first time following elections this January, had been formed some years earlier as a coalition including bourgeois and petty-bourgeois political forces—from environmentalists and bourgeois populists to anti-Soviet splits from the Communist Party of Greece. Syriza’s name translates as “Coalition of the Radical Left,” but don’t be fooled. From the start, it was actually a petty-bourgeois populist party with a pro-capitalist program. In government, Syriza became an outright bourgeois party.

In the January elections, there were real illusions in Syriza among Greek workers and the oppressed. Many thought Syriza would stand up to the European Union (EU) imperialists who were treating the country as practically a German colony. The enthusiasm was huge, including on the left. Numerous pseudo-socialist groups joined Syriza’s big “national unity” rallies in Athens and hailed its coming to power.

Indeed, many of these groups were already inside Syriza, serving as foot soldiers for this capitalist party. Other leftists, including assorted Maoists and pseudo-Trotskyists, were in Antarsya, a coalition that ran its own candidates in the election but sought to be the pressure on the streets that would push Syriza a little to the left. Here are a couple of examples of the left internationally cheering on Syriza. The former United Secretariat, centered on the French New Anti-Capitalist Party, called to elect Syriza under the headline, “On 25 January, A Turning Point for Greece and Europe!” (internationalviewpoint.org, 12 January). The Committee for a Workers International, whose U.S. affiliate is Socialist Alternative, claimed that a Syriza victory “will have a liberating effect on the working class, the movements and society in general” (socialistworld.net, 20 January).

In sharp contrast, our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece denounced Syriza in a leaflet distributed to workers on May Day:

“Syriza has always been committed to preserving the capitalist system and for continuing Greece’s membership in the EU and euro zone. This means submitting to the purpose of the EU, which is to maximize capitalist profit by driving down the working and living conditions

of workers and the oppressed throughout all of Europe, including in imperialist countries like Germany. It also means making working people pay for the debts racked up by the capitalists and their bloodsucking banks. It is not only the imperialists, *but also the Greek capitalist class* who have benefited from the EU’s destruction of labor rights and imposition of austerity.”

—reprinted as “Syriza Is Class Enemy of Workers!”
WV No. 1068, 15 May

After the elections, Syriza formed a coalition with the right-wing nationalist Independent Greeks (this coalition is gross, but not really surprising) and began imposing various austerity measures while trying to wheel and deal with the EU. But the European Union wasn’t into making deals. In late June, the “Troika”—the European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF)—demanded even more brutal attacks. Under pressure from the imperialists and the Greek capitalists—who claimed that Greece faced total ruin if it did not get yet another “bailout”—Syriza organized a referendum on the latest austerity package. Syriza called for a “no” vote, with the declared intent of utilizing the outcome to pressure the EU for more favorable conditions. In fact, according to multiple reports from Syriza insiders, the party’s leadership secretly expected, and hoped, that the referendum result would be “yes,” giving them an excuse to implement the austerity while pretending to have a popular mandate. You know, along the lines of,

“What can we do? We didn’t like the bailout terms, but the people have spoken.”

But it didn’t work that way. More than 60 percent of the voters, including millions of working people, responded with a decisive “NO!” Naturally, the TGG called for a “no” vote in the referendum, in which was posed a simple question: “yes” or “no” to the Troika’s austerity plan. Not



Reuters

Protest against capitalist austerity in Thessaloniki, Greece’s second city, September 5.



Demotix

German chancellor Angela Merkel with Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras at EU summit in Brussels, October 15.

complicated! To do otherwise than to vote “no” would have been a betrayal. The TGG statement on the referendum also called for opposition to the EU and no support to the Syriza government. It should be noted that many Greek people, although angered by the austerity, are reluctant or fearful of leaving the EU, in no small part due to the bourgeois propaganda offensive identifying such a step with even greater disaster.

What was in the austerity package (the Memorandum) that people voted down? Some details are necessary to get a proper picture. It hiked the regressive VAT (sales tax), further slashed pensions and ripped up union contracts. Many more will go hungry as a result of the 23 percent VAT. As for pensions, the bourgeois press is always talking about lavish retirement. What a lie! Pensions on average have *already* been cut by almost 45 percent since 2008, and now the rulers are going to cut them more! Today, about 45 percent of retirees receive pensions below what is considered the poverty line in a country in which 20 percent of the population is over 65, and by some estimates, half of the households rely on pensions to make ends meet. With youth unemployment so high, that’s not surprising.

More cuts mean more homelessness and starvation. A *Guardian* article (21 January) on Greece described: “Mamas and papas scavenging through the rubbish bins, the broken pavements and shuttered shops, the abandoned cars and derelict houses, the new poor who mutter to themselves on graffiti-stained streets.” Our comrades reported that in what used to be working-class areas of the port city of Piraeus they now see malnourished old people and a lot of fascist graffiti.

For Workers Action Committees!

Although German chancellor Angela Merkel rants about the Greek government’s supposed profligate spending, there is a whole other side to the matter: the money that German imperialism makes off exports, including arms sales, to Greece. The *Guardian* (19 April 2012) a couple years ago quoted Dimitris Papadimoulis, a Syriza member of parliament: “If there is one country that has benefited from the huge amounts Greece spends on defence it is Germany.” The *Guardian* went on, “No other area has contributed as heavily to the country’s debt mountain. If Athens had cut defence spending to levels similar to other EU states over the past decade, economists claim it would have saved around €150bn—more than its last bailout.”

Furthermore, a lot of the military hardware didn’t even work: “The former defence minister Akis Tsochadzopoulos was jailed pending trial on charges of accepting an €8m bribe from Ferrostaal, the German

company that helped oversee the scandal-marred sale of four Class 214 submarines to the Greek navy 12 years ago. To date, Athens has taken delivery of only one of the subs after the vessels were found to have technical glitches.” And more: “Speculation is rife that international aid was dependent on Greece following through on agreements to buy military hardware from Germany and France.” In other words, the German and French imperialists make the big money while the Greek capitalists, in pursuit of their own interests, get bribes that they stash in Swiss bank accounts. And through it all, the masses starve.

As part of the punishing “bailout” of Greece, the EU has demanded reorganization of the judiciary and government administration, dictating every aspect of economic, social welfare and labor policy. Public assets are to be placed in a trust fund administered by Greece’s imperialist creditors, with the aim of selling them off mainly to pay debts and recapitalize the banks. *Time* magazine (16 July) listed some of what is expected to be sold:

“REAL ESTATE: Greece has already begun selling off landmark buildings, including neoclassical Culture Ministry offices in Athens, and has leased two of the capital’s ancient sites to private companies. According to the IMF, Greece



AP

Greece’s then prime minister Antonis Samaras boarding new Class 214 submarine bought from Germany, at Skaramanga shipyards, near Athens, October 2014.



Left: Leaders of Greek Communist Party-led National Liberation Front sign treacherous Varkiza treaty, 12 February 1945, ending uprising in Athens and mandating disarmament (right) of People's Liberation Army.



Archives of Soc. Pontikopoulos

has over 70,000 unused properties that could be sold, but Greek officials insist significant treasures like the Acropolis won't be put on the market."

We'll see! *Time* continued:

"ISLANDS: Greece has anywhere from 1,200 to 6,000 islands, an estimated 227 of which are inhabited...; private islands are already selling for as little as \$3 million.

"PORTS: Plans to sell off stakes in the Port of Piraeus, Greece's largest harbor and its major shipping hub for over 2,500 years, are well under way.... The government is also likely to sell off stakes in 14 airports."

The fact that German banks will determine what Greek assets will be sold off to repay the debt to German (and French) banks demonstrates that there is an element of national oppression at work here.

The Greek masses voted against such measures in the July 5 referendum, but just one week later, Syriza totally capitulated. Party leader Alexis Tsipras announced the acceptance of even more draconian austerity than was rejected in the referendum—which is fairly hard to imagine. Shock and anger rippled throughout Greek society. The task of the hour was to unite the working masses in struggle against the attacks of the imperialists, their Greek lackeys and the Syriza government.

Seeking to act as a struck flint to ignite proletarian struggle, the TGG issued a call for workers action committees "composed of workers from different tendencies and their allies—youth, unemployed, immigrants, pensioners" to fight to repudiate the EU and euro and to cancel the debt; for workers defense guards against the fascist threat; for workers control of food distribution and prices; to expropriate the banks, utilities, transportation, ports and shipping industry, among other demands (see "Enough!" WV No. 1072, 7 August). On the other side stand the Golden Dawn fascists who, especially in the absence of such struggle, seek to take advantage of Syriza's sellout to its EU masters with appeals to the ruined petty bourgeoisie and masses of unemployed youth.

The TGG's call for workers action committees was an application of the tactic of the united front. Appealing for workers from different tendencies to join such committees was an attempt to use our small forces as a lever for broader, defensive struggle by the proletariat and its allies. If formed, such committees would be arenas for vital debates on the way forward involving the different parties that claim to represent the workers' interests. Such debates are key to forging a revolutionary workers party, the necessary instrument to

lead the working class to power.

Our call provoked real debate and interest, even though it was somewhat slow going into August when many people left Athens and other cities to go on vacation in the countryside. Some Greek Communist Party (KKE) members argued that they were already handing out free food in poor areas, i.e., interpreting the TGG call as an appeal for social work. In fact, our call for workers *control* of food distribution and prices goes far beyond social work; it runs up against the limits of what is "legal" under capitalist rule. As my mother always told me, "The best things in life are illegal, immoral or fattening." And when it comes to unions and class struggle, everything effective is usually illegal. Many of the demands we put forward cannot be met under capitalism—we want workers to learn in struggle that capitalism must go.

The KKE's Class Collaboration

I want to spend some time on the KKE, which supported the Stalinist bureaucracy who ran the Soviet workers state after usurping political power from the prole-

pened to their grandmother, etc., etc. And heaven help you if you bring the subject up at a family dinner—the war divided families and is an issue that arouses screaming and stomping out of rooms. Besides our article "Greece 1940s: A Revolution Betrayed" (*Spartacist* No. 64, Summer 2014), which provides a revolutionary Trotskyist analysis of the Greek Civil War, there is a worthwhile documentary available on YouTube titled *Greece: The Hidden War*. The video includes interviews of Greek KKEers, some of whom are critical of their leadership.

To this day, the KKE is a mass party that has the allegiance of a crucial core of the Greek working class. When I saw the KKE marching through Athens with the unions that they lead, tens of thousands of workers were in the streets, and they had marshals around the perimeter of the march. Impressive looking, but they don't use the evident power of these workers, refusing, for example, to mobilize the workers to stop the fascists.

As the TGG wrote in a leaflet explaining our critical support to the KKE in the

sie and *not* between the "people" and the "monopolies." The American variant is the "anti-monopoly coalition" pushed by the Communist Party USA and endorsed by most reformists. It's simply a disguised way of saying that you should unite with everyone who is to the left of Donald Trump and the piggish owners of Wal-Mart. Once leftists start talking about "the people," watch out—it's the open door to opportunism.

Macedonia: Litmus Test for Greek Left

The KKE is also profoundly nationalist, viewing as sacred the Greek borders, which were extended a hundred years ago through a series of wars. Echoing the Greek bourgeoisie, the KKE last year railed against "a conscious effort to promote Turkish national consciousness in the Muslim minority and a so-called 'Macedonian' national consciousness among a section of the Slavic-speakers." In 2013, the KKE newspaper ran an article calling to strengthen the war industries in the name of national defense.

I want to tell a story from my second trip to Greece, in 2010. There had been something like eight general strikes that year—two happened while I was there. Since general strikes in the U.S. are very rare (to put it mildly), I was eager to attend one of the strike marches and went to observe it at Syntagma Square, the plaza in front of the Greek parliament. At first, the demo proceeded as I expected. Mostly male, middle-aged trade unionists filed in to the square with banners showing they were electrical workers, postal workers and so on. Suddenly, a man was chasing another man, knocking him roughly to the ground and kicking him. Then, an older woman came running by with blood streaming down her head. There was a lot of running hither and thither. Cops on motorcycles and in riot gear with clubs out began to arrive en masse. The petty-bourgeois people who had been sitting in the nearby cafes began to throw money down on the tables and quickly leave the area.

I felt like I had been transported into that classic Costa-Gavras movie *Z*. Not able to get to the Metro station because there were so many cops blocking it, I just began to walk away from the demo. Parenthetically, according to later news reports, this incident apparently involved an attack on Pakistani immigrants, which some trade unionists stepped in to stop.

In any case, I found myself walking next to a guy in his late 20s or early 30s. He spoke English and told me that he was from Skopje, which is how Greeks refer to the existing country of Macedonia. Knowing that, I said, "Oh, Macedonia." He was greatly impressed and began telling me about the oppression of the Macedonian minority within the borders of Greece today. He spoke about how it was once illegal for Macedonians in Greece to speak their language and how his family had been forced from its home and lost its land. He also spoke about how the Greek government had moved Greeks into certain areas of Macedonia (that were incorporated into Greece a century ago) because they would be more loyal to the government. He told me that Macedonians were Slavs and that he could always tell the difference on sight between Greeks and Slavs (which I certainly couldn't).

continued on page 8



Trotskyist Group of Greece

Stalinist treachery today: At July 2 rally, KKE banner calls on working people to spoil ballots in referendum on EU austerity measures.

tariat beginning in 1923-24. The bureaucratic misrulers betrayed the liberating and internationalist goals that animated the October 1917 Russian Revolution, which was led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. Instead, they pushed the bankrupt idea that there could be socialism in a single, relatively backward country, combined with "peaceful coexistence" with the capitalist-imperialist world.

These class-collaborationist politics led to defeat of the Communist-led workers and peasants in the Greek Civil War of the 1940s. The KKE had established itself at the head of Greece's anti-Nazi resistance, which had the run of the country when the German forces withdrew. But like Stalinists elsewhere, the KKE leadership sought to subordinate workers' struggles to the "progressive" bourgeoisie, joining the capitalist government and, in February 1945, signing the Treaty of Varkiza that disarmed the resistance fighters and handed power back to the miserable Greek bourgeoisie.

Believe me, the Civil War still looms large in Greece today. If you go to a bar and begin talking about the war, people will start to lecture you about what hap-

pened to their grandmother, etc., etc. And heaven help you if you bring the subject up at a family dinner—the war divided families and is an issue that arouses screaming and stomping out of rooms. Besides our article "Greece 1940s: A Revolution Betrayed" (*Spartacist* No. 64, Summer 2014), which provides a revolutionary Trotskyist analysis of the Greek Civil War, there is a worthwhile documentary available on YouTube titled *Greece: The Hidden War*. The video includes interviews of Greek KKEers, some of whom are critical of their leadership.

Today, the KKE fights not for socialist revolution but for "people's power," which disappears the centrality of the proletariat, which uniquely has the social power to wage the necessary fight against capitalism. It obscures the fact that the central class division in capitalist society is between the proletariat and the bourgeois-

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Greece...

(continued from page 7)

Finally, he gave me a capsule summary of the Greek Civil War from the Macedonian point of view. He said that the Macedonians supported the KKE in the Civil War and that the Greek ruling class has never forgiven them and never will. I found the conversation interesting and, in a small way, a vindication of our position in defense of the national rights of Macedonians in Greece. At the end, he escorted me to the Metro station and we shook hands.

For the ICL, the fight against national chauvinism has always been key. As noted in the 2004 “Agreement for Common Work Between Greek Comrades and the ICL (FI)”: “A Trotskyist group in Greece must fight against Greek chauvinism and defend the rights of national minorities.” This understanding is central to our fight for a socialist federation of the Balkans as the only way to resolve the many national questions in the region.

The KKE’s Referendum Betrayal

Despite its name and some of its rhetoric, the KKE manifestly does not have the program and perspective needed to lead the workers to sweep away capitalism. There is a profound contradiction between its nationalist, reformist politics and its working-class base. Authentic Marxists seek to reach out to these workers with the objective of forging a revolutionary party through a process of common struggle, political debate, splits, fusions and regroupments.

During the 2012 elections and again in January this year, the TGG gave critical support to the KKE. Why? Because the Communist Party opposed forming a coalition with Syriza or any bourgeois party, while also opposing the EU. Our critical support allowed us to underline the need for class independence from all capitalist forces. And it also allowed us to gain a hearing for our views among the ranks of the KKE.

But in the referendum this July, the KKE committed an outrageous betrayal, calling on working people to throw away their votes by casting invalid ballots. The party leaders claimed a “no” vote would be an indirect vote for Syriza’s alternate austerity plan, but that was completely false. The ballot simply said “yes” or “no” to the EU Memorandum. The “no” vote was nothing other than a slap in the face to the EU and IMF imperialists. The KKE leaders’ refusal to champion a “no” vote stood in total contradiction to the KKE’s declared opposition to the EU. In fact, many KKE militants didn’t listen to their leaders and voted “no” anyway, which is a good thing.

The overwhelming “no” vote on the referendum and the Syriza leadership’s subsequent sellout served to destabilize the Greek government. Tsipras resigned as Prime Minister and called new elections for September 20. Syriza was re-elected, but with the lowest ever voter turnout.

The TGG wrote an Open Letter to the

KKE explaining that we weren’t going to give them critical support in the September election unless they repudiated their wretched position on the referendum. The letter stated: “We wonder comrades, have you considered that the victory of the ‘no’ vote weakened and irreparably exposed Syriza in the eyes of the masses who had in fact been deceived before the election? Is this fact not in the interests of the working class? Have you considered comrades that had the ‘yes’ camp won, Syriza and

Popular Unity. This latest bourgeois-populist front is trying to salvage the anti-austerity banner that Syriza so quickly trampled on. The future leaders of Popular Unity stayed inside the Syriza government until Tsipras stepped down, showing that they are devoted to maintaining capitalist stability and that their vote in parliament against the latest “bailout” terms was just for show. We, of course, opposed on principle any vote to Popular Unity, which did very poorly in the elec-



TGG leaflet (above) for July 5 referendum said: “Vote NO! Down With the EU! No Support to the Syriza Government!” Below: German Spartacists call for solidarity with workers across Europe and say, “Down With the EU and German Imperialism!” January 2013.



the EU would have had a *mandate* to devastate the working class not only in Greece but throughout Europe?” (icl-fi.org, 13 September). I consider this letter a very effective piece of propaganda.

While the KKE’s percentage of the vote did not change much, the high level of abstention meant it lost considerable electoral support—more than 35,000 votes—compared to January. As the only mass working-class alternative to Syriza, the KKE could have capitalized on the widespread disillusionment with the government. Instead, it reaped what it sowed with its referendum betrayal.

The September elections also saw the emergence of a split from Syriza called

tion, falling below the 3 percent threshold necessary for parliamentary deputies.

Having learned nothing at all, the reformist left groups that so recently hailed Syriza quickly turned to hailing Popular Unity. The International Socialist Organization (ISO) ran an interview with one of its Greek co-thinkers under the headline “The Struggle for Syriza’s Soul.” Typical! The Greek supporters of the ISO (the DEA) and other pseudo-socialist groups simply decamped from Syriza to join Popular Unity. To paraphrase a comment made by Trotsky in a different context, this isn’t just a betrayal; it’s a farce.

The EU is happy with the September election results. The *Guardian* (21 September) commented:

“EU officials reacted to the news with thinly disguised comfort. Tsipras, for so long the bad boy of European politics, had only reluctantly accepted the excoriating conditions attached to the financial assistance programme. Before what is expected to be an explosive winter, EU sources said it was better the leftist was in government, applying policies, than potentially rabble rousing on the streets. ‘There is a certain amount of relief in that,’ said one EU insider.”

This appraisal reminds me of the famous statement by New York City’s first black mayor, David Dinkins, who said of the workers and black people facing massive cuts to social programs, “They’ll take it from me.” The EU hopes the Greek workers and oppressed will take it from Tsipras.

But as the *Guardian* (20 September) also noted: “The turnout was low and the mood sullen.” Our comrades reported considerable frustration and disillusionment with all the existing parties, frustration that could be channeled in any number of directions. A common refrain

was, “Why bother voting when all the decisions are being made in Germany and Brussels [where the EU has its headquarters]?” There is, for now, an ebb in struggle, but new rounds of popular resistance will erupt once the latest EU-imposed starvation diktats begin to take hold.

For a Socialist United States of Europe!

Recent events have made completely clear that it is impossible for Greece to break the spiral of debt and imperialist pillage so long as it remains within the EU and its eurozone. Twice in the past century, in the interimperialist World Wars I and II, Germany’s capitalist rulers sought to “unite” Europe under their dominance through force of arms. They failed. Today the goal hasn’t changed, only the means: they seek dominance through economic levers, including by controlling the common European currency.

A debtor country can sometimes gain some breathing room and establish a modicum of economic competitiveness by repudiating its debt and devaluing its currency. But there is no such option under the euro. The European imperialists, echoed by the Greek capitalists, say: if you try to leave the eurozone, then Armageddon awaits. In fact, there are examples of debt default and currency devaluation that have not been disasters (Argentina and Iceland come to mind). Going this route did not free those countries from the ravages of the imperialist global order—which cannot happen within the framework of capitalism—but it did eventually allow for something of an economic recovery.

More importantly, Greece leaving the EU and the eurozone would create better conditions for the working class to struggle. Our opposition to these institutions is based on the interests of the international working class. If Greece left the EU, it would be a blow to the very existence of this reactionary bloc. It also could make it clearer to the Greek workers that their most immediate enemies are their own capitalist rulers, not Brussels or the German bankers.

As I said earlier, our perspective is that of the class struggle, including common class struggle of Greek, German and other European workers against their respective capitalist rulers and the EU. Since the destruction of the Soviet Union, the consciousness and level of struggle of the working class internationally has taken a big step backward. But this situation will not last forever. The workings of capitalism don’t just produce daily misery; they will spur further working-class combativity. Greece today is a weak point in the global capitalist order. The stakes there are high: the next round of grinding austerity could well push the fascists to the fore, as happened in Germany in the early 1930s. But if the working class takes the lead, breaking with all the parties of the capitalist class, its struggles could serve as a beacon for the proletariat worldwide. Socialism or barbarism are the choices, as Rosa Luxemburg so famously commented.

Sixty years ago, American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon noted that we are living in “a transition period of the history of humanity.” Cannon observed:

“It is a mere interlude in the long evolution of the human race, but it has encompassed all our lives, and the lives of many generations. In this historical interlude, mankind, losing even the memory of its communal solidarity of earlier millenniums, has descended into the underworld of competitive class society in order to forge there the weapons for its liberation from helpless dependence on nature, and to create the material conditions for its re-emergence in the communal solidarity of classless society in the future.”

—“Joseph Vanzler,” speech delivered in Los Angeles, 25 June 1956, printed in *Speeches for Socialism* (1971)

Only the struggles of a working class conscious of and confident in its historic tasks can give humanity such a future. From Greece to the U.S. and around the world, the goal of our organization is to re-implant the liberating ideals and the scientific program of communism among working people and the oppressed. We urge you to join us in this fight. ■

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Syriza: Class Enemy of Workers, Oppressed

No. 24, April 2015
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TPP...
(continued from page 12)

TPP will cost “American” jobs, the AFL-CIO bureaucrats oppose the pact because it doesn’t go far enough in creating a “strategic advantage over China” for U.S. capitalists. Against the China-bashing protectionism of the labor misleaders, which pits U.S. workers against their class brothers and sisters internationally, our opposition to the TPP is based on opposition to our “own” imperialist rulers and our unconditional defense of the Chinese deformed workers state.

U.S. Imperialism’s Loyal Labor Lieutenants

The AFL-CIO’s treatise, “The U.S.-China Economic Relationship: The TPP is Not the Answer,” blames China for “undercutting U.S. manufacturers and displacing millions of U.S. jobs” (aflcio.org, undated). In reality, the decline in U.S. manufacturing and the massacre of jobs,

Following World War II, the U.S. emerged as the dominant imperialist power in the world, its boasts of technological and productive superiority epitomized by the auto industry. By the 1960s, however, U.S. dominance was increasingly challenged by the rising economic might of West Germany and Japan. The industrial base in those countries, which had been destroyed in World War II, was replaced by new plants that were far more advanced. Faced with growing competition, the U.S. auto bosses responded with a concerted campaign to intensify the exploitation of labor through massive layoffs and giveback contracts. Beginning in the 1980s, production was increasingly moved from the unionized North and Midwest to the open shop South, as well as to Latin America and East Asia.

Obliging the bosses’ demands for concessions in the name of “saving jobs,” the UAW bureaucrats launched a chauvinist crusade to defend the Big Three against competing manufacturers. The racism at the heart of the UAW’s “buy American”



China’s first domestically produced passenger jet, the C919, rolls off assembly line, November 2. Despite continuing material scarcity, Chinese workers state has made tremendous strides in industrial development.

wages and social benefits are in the purest sense “made in the U.S.A.” By tying the interests of workers to the profitability of their exploiters, the capitalist class’s labor lieutenants in the trade-union bureaucracy paved the way for these defeats. Rather than mobilizing labor’s power in a fight against the decades-long onslaught against the unions, the labor misleaders argue that the workers must “sacrifice” in order to increase the competitive edge of U.S. capitalism against its rivals. One need look no further than the ravaged remains of the United Auto Workers (UAW), once the symbol of union power in this country, for the results of the bureaucrats’ class collaboration.

protectionism was demonstrated in the murder of a young Chinese American, Vincent Chin, who was bludgeoned to death in 1982 by a Chrysler foreman who thought he was Japanese and blamed him for “stealing American jobs.” Meanwhile, non-union auto plants expanded as Japanese, German and South Korean manufacturers set up shop in the low-wage, open shop U.S. South in order to get around protectionist import restrictions.

In response, the UAW leadership has agreed to more and more concessions. While decrying “cheap labor” abroad, they helped create a pool of cheap labor in the union itself with the introduction of two-tier wages. Today, the UAW tops

China-bashing AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka (far right) with president and CEO of U.S. Chamber of Commerce Thomas Donohue, February 2014.



propose to fight the domestic “outsourcing” of union jobs to non-union auto supply plants with a program of “insourcing.” To entice auto parts suppliers in the U.S. back under the Big Three umbrella, the bureaucrats are offering third-tier wages! Thus in the name of “defending union jobs” in the U.S., the trade-union misleaders operate as cutthroat labor contractors for the bosses.

This long string of betrayals is hardly peculiar to the UAW. The same processes have reduced the industrial unions in this country to a shadow of their former selves. The pro-capitalist labor bureaucracy looks for friends in the camp of the capitalist class enemy and sees enemies and competitors in the growing ranks of the proletariat in Latin America and Asia. In fact, workers in other countries are crucial allies in the fight against capitalist exploitation. If the unions are to be effective instruments of struggle against the bosses, they must break the chains forged by the labor traitors that have shackled the workers to their exploiters. That means ousting the red-white-and-blue bureaucrats and replacing them with a class-struggle leadership whose banner will be the red flag of proletarian internationalism. The struggle for such a leadership must be tied to forging the multi-racial revolutionary workers party that can lead the proletariat to victory in the “final conflict” to end the predatory rule of U.S. imperialism at home and abroad.

Defend the Gains of the Chinese Revolution!

The anti-Communist AFL-CIO misleaders have a long track record of dirty work on behalf of the U.S. rulers. At the outset of the Cold War, the predecessors of today’s labor sellouts purged the militants who led the CIO organizing battles. The AFL-CIO tops lent their services to the destruction of militant unions in Europe and Latin America, where they became known as the “AFL-CIA.” In the 1980s, the union bureaucracy channeled millions of CIA dollars to Polish Solidarność, a reactionary movement masquerading as a trade union that spearheaded the drive for capitalist restoration in East Europe. Cut of the same cloth is the AFL-CIO’s call for “free trade unions” in Vietnam, which, not surprisingly, is incorporated into the TPP.

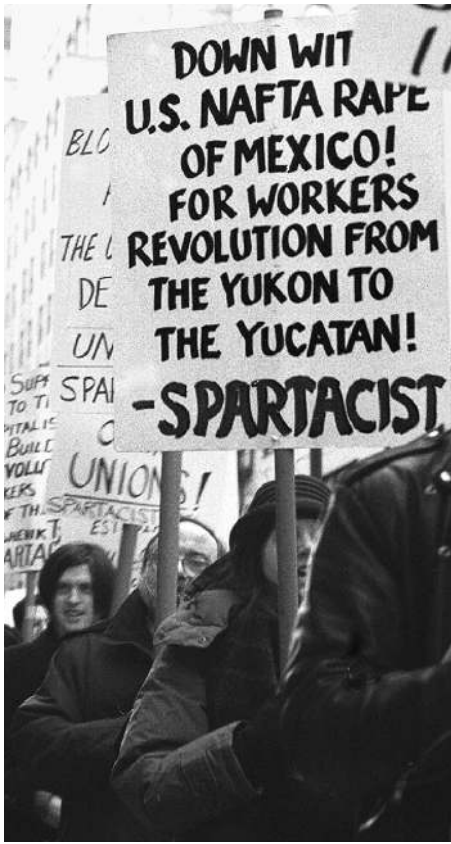
Similarly, the labor misleaders echo their imperialist masters’ complaints that the Chinese government subsidizes state-owned industries, controls its currency, limits competition from foreign imports and offers other countries beneficial trade and investment. Yet the things they decry as “unfair” reflect gains for the working class that were won through the 1949 Chinese Revolution which drove out the imperialists and overthrew capitalism.

The core of the Chinese economy is collectivized, not privately owned by individual capitalist exploiters. State-owned enterprises dominate strategic industrial sectors, with much of the surplus they create channeled into the banks and treasury of the workers state. State control over China’s currency, the yuan, has insulated the country from the volatile movements of money capital that have wreaked havoc around the world.

Testifying to the superiority of a collectivized economy over production for profit, China’s economy continued to grow while the capitalist world was plunged into economic meltdown following the 2007-08

collapse of Wall Street’s financial speculation. In the U.S., nine million jobs were destroyed, four million houses foreclosed on and pension funds were looted. Trillions of dollars went to bail out the banks, insurance companies and auto bosses. In contrast, China channeled massive investment into developing infrastructure and productive capacity.

The Chinese Revolution was a tremendous victory for the workers of the world. However, the workers state was deformed from birth by the rule of a nationalist bureaucracy modeled on the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. Like their Kremlin counterparts before them, the rulers in Beijing oppose the perspective of international proletarian revolution. Thus they promoted the pipe dream of building “socialism in one country” and the equally delusional notion of “peaceful co-existence” with the imperialist powers. Although the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy’s rule depends on the existence of the workers state it seeks to prosper and maintain its status through an accommo-



Spartacist supporters at February 2000 New York protest in defense of Mexican student strikers. Marxists oppose imperialist trade blocs.

dation to the imperialist order, much like the AFL-CIO bureaucracy in this country.

In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936), his analysis of the degeneration of the 1917 Russian Revolution, Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky observed of the bureaucracy in Soviet Russia:

“To the extent that, in contrast to a decaying capitalism, it develops the productive forces, it is preparing the economic basis of socialism. To the extent that, for the benefit of an upper stratum, it carries to more and more extreme expression bourgeois norms of distribution, it is preparing a capitalist restoration.”

Since the 1949 Revolution, China has gone from being a backward peasant country to a mostly urban one, lifting some 600 million people out of poverty and creating a powerful industrial proletariat. Nonetheless, China remains a country of extreme contradictions, with great backwardness and poverty, particularly in the countryside. In mainland China today,

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New York...

(continued from page 1)

effort proclaimed the “vital importance” of “saving a city of stable, integrated neighborhoods where people of ordinary means are permanently embedded.” This lofty vision has zero reality, as is clear from a look at NYC schools, which are among the most segregated in the country. The relief offered to hard-pressed working people by de Blasio’s housing scheme will prove just about as illusory.

The plan centers on “inclusionary zoning,” by which a portion of new housing is to be offered to low- and middle-income earners at below market rate. In fact, it’s a giant windfall for developers. Those who choose to build will be handsomely rewarded with tax breaks and other government subsidies. The developers previously raked it in under mogul-mayor Bloomberg’s own inclusionary zoning policy. And to what effect? Units deemed affordable made up less than 2 percent of housing growth between 2005 and 2013, less than population growth. In San Francisco, similar regulations have not stopped rents from even surpassing those in New York.

De Blasio has set a target of 25 to 30 percent of new housing in rezoned areas to have affordable rents. Affordable for whom? Not the poor, that’s for sure. Just 16,000 apartments for families making \$42,000 and less would be created—3 percent of the actual need according to the city’s own figures. True, some thousands of new apartments might be built with rents pegged for families squeaking by on \$50,000 or \$60,000 a year. At the same time, 100,000 market-rate apartments would be built in the same neighborhoods, displacing more working-class people—black, white, Latino and Asian—and accelerating the drive toward ever higher rents. De Blasio’s plan would thus accelerate the process of driving workers from their homes, not least families concentrated in the ghettos and barrios. And the bodegas and car repair shops they rely on will be chewed up as well.

The program is to be launched in Brooklyn’s East New York, Cypress Hills and Ocean Hill, where a mere 132 new units out of 6,000 are supposed to be set aside for people making less than \$25,000 a year. The ghetto and barrio poor, then, are to stay stuck in their hovels. And maybe not even there for much longer. De Blasio proposes to build luxury high-rises on New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) parking lots and other “high value” land within housing projects. The purpose, supposedly, is to raise money to



Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

install working light bulbs, fix leaky roofs, replace gas-leaking stoves and supply heat in the winter. Brooklyn’s Wyckoff Heights and the Upper East Side Holmes Towers in Manhattan have been selected for this scam because they are in already gentrified neighborhoods where two-bedroom units go for \$3,000 or more a month. Public housing residents rightly fear that they will be driven out.

Against those ostensible socialists who saw de Blasio’s election as a victory for workers and the oppressed, we told the truth: “The hopes he has aroused are bound to be cruelly dashed. Whatever posture he takes today and whatever palliatives he may dole out, de Blasio as mayor will be charged with managing the finance capital of U.S. imperialism on behalf of the Wall Street plutocrats and real estate barons who run the city” (“De Blasio: Liberal Populist Face of Capitalist Politics,” WV No. 1032, 18 October 2013). It is the labor misleaders’ support to the Democratic Party that is the chief political obstacle to the militant class struggle that workers must wage to wrest even the slightest improvements in their conditions.

As the local capitalist chief executive, de Blasio is overseeing a problem as old as the system of production for profit. Nearly 150 years ago, Karl Marx’s chief collaborator, Friedrich Engels, precisely described the housing problem as “a necessary product of the bourgeois social order...in which the great masses of the workers are exclusively dependent upon wages, that is to say, on the sum of foodstuffs necessary for their existence and for the propagation of their kind; in which improvements of



Demotix

Left: Pickers call for integration of all-white Stuyvesant Town housing development in Manhattan, July 1950. Above: Housing protest in Zuccotti Park, lower Manhattan, September.

the existing machinery continually throw masses of workers out of employment” (*The Housing Question*, 1872).

There is a simple way to overcome the housing crisis: make available the existing supply of livable quarters and build new places for people to live. But such a rational solution is held hostage to an economic system in which no ground is broken, no cement poured, no home occupied unless the pockets of the bankers, developers and landlords are stuffed. As Engels stressed, the housing shortage “can be abolished together with all its effects on health, etc., only if the whole social order from which it springs is fundamentally refashioned.”

Got a Million?

So, what does it cost to live in NYC these days? The erstwhile ghetto of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn is among the most rapidly gentrifying areas of the city. Over the past year alone, the median price of a residence there has leaped \$200,000 to nearly \$750,000, which is still \$100,000 less than in Harlem. Gentrification has even begun to spread to the South Bronx, long synonymous with urban decay. In a city where nearly 70 percent of residents rent, one-third pay more than half their income for that purpose. A minimum-wage worker spending half his income on rent would have to work 139 hours a week to afford the average apartment. Meanwhile, more than a quarter of a million households await space in a NYCHA project.

The current housing squeeze results from a confluence of factors. Government-engineered housing segregation and, in

recent years, the lifting of rent regulation have exacerbated the problem, particularly but not only for minorities. But the primary factor driving housing prices to astronomical heights is rich people gobbling up bigger chunks of Manhattan and other prime locations. There is nothing new here. Starting in the middle of the 19th century, workers and the poor were pushed out of the centers of the major cities of Europe. Paris, where the bourgeoisie ripped down the plebeian quarters that were hotbeds of revolution, served as the model. Moreover, as Engels noted, “The growth of the big modern cities gives the land in certain areas, particularly in those which are centrally situated, an artificial and often colossally increasing value.”

In NYC, the Astors had their Fifth Avenue mansions and working stiff had their tenements, and later some got subsidized housing. Today, the likes of the Astors are still there, while the people who actually make the city run are pushed farther and farther out, with transit workers, construction workers and others commuting from as far away as eastern Pennsylvania. With everybody but the filthy rich feeling the squeeze, Engels’ remark from his 1872 pamphlet resonates loudly today: “*This* housing shortage gets talked of so much only because it does not limit itself to the working class but has affected the petty bourgeoisie also.”

Towers of multimillion-dollar apartments continue to mushroom near Central Park, often as third or fourth homes for American and foreign big money. In lower Manhattan’s Tribeca, formerly a center of light industry, old warehouses

TPP...

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there is a nascent capitalist class which, along with the corruption that permeates the Communist Party regime, poses a threat of internal capitalist counterrevolution. On the other side, hundreds of millions of workers as well as poor peasants wage countless strikes, protests and riots, estimated at 500 every day, against the consequences of bureaucratic misrule.

This ferment points to the potential for a proletarian political revolution that will sweep away the Stalinist regime and replace it with the rule of workers and peasants councils (soviets). Such a government would put an end to bureaucratic corruption and arbitrariness, creating a centrally planned and managed economy under conditions of workers democracy. It would expropriate the new class of domestic capitalists and seek to renegotiate the terms of foreign investment in the interests of the working people. The elementary Marxist understanding is that the key prerequisite for a socialist society is the elimination of scarcity, requiring the development and expansion of industrial production and technology worldwide. Thus, a genuine communist leadership in China would fight to advance the cause of workers revolution internation-

ally, particularly in advanced capitalist countries like the U.S. and Japan.

Workers of the World Unite!

Since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, the U.S. imperialists have been riding high in the saddle as the “world’s only superpower.” Promoting the TPP, Defense Secretary Carter boasted: “I never forget that our military strength ultimately rests on the foundation of a vibrant, unmatched and growing economy.” But there’s the rub. The unrivaled military might of U.S. imperialism rests on a corroding manufacturing and industrial base. Instead of investing in expanding and modernizing industry or repairing the country’s crumbling infrastructure, in recent decades the ruling class has enriched itself through a succession of speculative investment binges.

In the early 2000s, to send a message to the world that America remained the top dog of the planet militarily, the U.S. imperialists toppled governments in Afghanistan and Iraq, creating a seething caldron of unrest in the region. In 2010, Hillary Clinton, then Obama’s secretary of state, announced a “pivot to Asia,” which would redirect U.S. forces from the Near East and Afghanistan toward the more strategic aim of destroying the Chinese deformed workers state.

Although the U.S. remains bogged down in a quagmire of its own creation in the Near East, the Obama administration has made a full-court press to get the TPP signed, sealed and delivered. Just as the workers must defend their unions against the bosses despite the bureaucratic traitors that have so undermined them, so too must they fight for the defense of the Chinese deformed workers state despite the treachery of its Stalinist rulers who likewise accommodate the imperialists.


The decades-long war against labor, the shredding of the social “safety net” for the poor and the aged, the increased immiseration of the black population—these are the domestic products of the drive by America’s rulers to reverse their declining economic weight in the world. By fighting for their own interests against the U.S. imperialist predators, workers in the U.S. also strike a blow for the liberation of the oppressed around the planet. The purpose of the International Communist League is to reforge Trotsky’s Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution, that will bring to the fore the principle of international working-class unity in the struggle for a socialist world. As the ICL’s “Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program” explains:

“The victory of the proletariat on a world scale would place unimagined material abundance at the service of human


needs, lay the basis for the elimination of classes and the eradication of social inequality based on sex and the very abolition of the social significance of race, nation and ethnicity. For the first time mankind will grasp the reins of history and control its own creation, society, resulting in an undreamed-of emancipation of human potential, and a monumental forward surge of civilization.”

—Spartacist (English-language edition) No. 54, Spring 1998 ■

A Spartacist Pamphlet



Imperialism the “Global Economy” and Labor Reformism



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have been converted to luxury lofts. It is such factors that drive home prices out of reach for everyone else, whatever zoning regulations or other tinkering is attempted. The cruel “magic” of the capitalist market is simply not subject to control by more benign spirits.

Buildings are kept empty because it is more profitable to hold onto them as investments to be sold when a neighborhood gentrifies. The neighborhoods hit hardest by gentrification also have the most vacant buildings. A study three years ago by the advocacy group Picture the Homeless estimated that the thousands of properties in the city that are kept vacant could house some 200,000 people. Blacks and Latinos make up more than 95 percent of the homeless families in the overcrowded, filthy city shelters, in neighborhoods far removed from their schools, medical providers and extended family. Thirty years ago, we raised the call: “Homeless should seize Trump City!” To that we would now add the Atlantic Yards of de Blasio crony Bruce Ratner.

There once were rent regulations that kept New York City somewhat affordable for those who qualified. Those measures essentially froze the rent of the original tenant and immediate family for apartments built before 1947 (rent control) and then limited rent increases for new tenants in those built before 1971 (rent stabilization). The city’s rulers had their reasons for adopting such policies. For example, a good deal of publicly subsidized housing was built after World War II to help relieve an acute shortage produced by the return of veterans.

At the same time that they decreed rent control, state lawmakers declared that the “objective of state policy” should be the “transition from regulation to a normal market of free bargaining between landlord and tenant.” This one-sided “bargaining” has since come to pass. The 1993 Rent Regulation Reform Act allowed the deregulation of rent-stabilized apartments, of which NYC still has one million. That number is falling quickly.

In many cases, landlords can free themselves from constraints and charge market rate once an apartment becomes vacant. If they fail to empty buildings by pricing or buying out renters, many of these bloodsuckers just make apartments uninhabitable. In a common example, Noelia Calero of Bushwick, Brooklyn, was told by her building’s new owners that they would paint and fix the bathroom, only to have the walls dividing her bathroom from the neighbor’s kitchen torn out, her walls and floor ripped open and toilet and bathroom sink removed. Her family was without running water for 18 months.

In another city of soaring rents, Seattle’s “socialist” councilwoman, Kshama Sawant, declares that rent control is “essential to address the existing power imbalance in which landlords and developers have all the control, just as a minimum wage is essential to defend workers from corporate executives who prefer to keep wages low” (*Socialist Alternative*, October 2015). We defend rent control and support increasing the minimum wage as measures that, however minimally, help working people and the poor to survive in this viciously class-divided, racist society. But contrary to the reformist Sawant, such measures are no more a solution to capitalist profiteering than a tourniquet is to a severed artery. The answer to the “power imbalance” between the exploiters and those they exploit and oppress is workers’ *class struggle* culminating in, as Engels wrote, “the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself.”

“Urban Renewal”:
Black Removal

Today’s NYC building boom recalls the redevelopment of the late 1940s-60s, which led to the saying, “Urban renewal means Negro removal.” Along with state and local government policies, federal housing and development programs bulldozed black and integrated neighborhoods. More than a quarter million people were driven from their homes but

only 150,000 units were built in the city. Pushed to designated corridors, black people were further compacted into overcrowded housing, while the scarcity of apartments drove up rents. The occupants of the public housing towers that were built were overwhelmingly black.

Robert Moses, the quintessential power broker behind such development projects, summarized his outlook years later by ranting, “How do you visualize the area that we cleared out for the Fordham [University] expansion downtown? They needed the space. Now I ask you, what was that neighborhood? It was a Puerto Rican slum.” Along with other members of the city planning commission, Moses opposed allowing black veterans returning from World War II to move into the newly built Stuyvesant Town development in Manhattan. One thing Moses did not



Apartment blocks in Moscow, 1970. Despite Stalinist misrule, Soviet workers state provided population with employment and decent housing.

build was a new stadium for the Brooklyn Dodgers, prompting a team that was beloved especially by the black population to decamp to Los Angeles.

The racial segregation that is built into the American capitalist system has long been reinforced by the government. The de Blasio administration is currently fighting a lawsuit by three black plaintiffs who are challenging a policy dating back to the 1980s that reserves half of city-funded, low-income apartments for people already resident in the community. That regulation all but barred them from moving into the neighborhoods of their choice, which are predominantly white.

During the Great Migration of black people from the South, cities and towns commonly adopted zoning codes designating neighborhoods as all-white and all-black; racist mobs worked to enforce the separation. The Home Owners Loan Corporation, created in 1933, and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), which opened a year later, introduced redlining: demarcating white neighborhoods where black people could not get mortgages and vice versa. Ninety-eight percent of FHA-insured loans between 1934 and 1962 went to white borrowers, spurring them to move to new, suburban single-family homes. With FHA and Veterans Administration guarantees, white working-class and middle-class families could buy homes in places like Levittown on Long Island with little or no down payment and with an extended payment schedule.

The government had an explicit policy of not insuring suburban mortgages for blacks. A 1938 FHA manual encouraged officials to avoid the mixing of “inharmoonious racial or nationality groups” and “the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they are intended.” After the war, banks often refused to approve loans for black soldiers attempting to use the GI Bill to buy homes. When a black family could afford a home in a white area without government assistance, the FHA would refuse to insure future mortgages in the neighborhood, even to whites, on

the grounds that integration would supposedly result in lower property values.

The 1968 Fair Housing Act, passed in the wake of the ghetto rebellions that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., directed the government to “affirmatively further” fair housing. This promise rang as hollow as the one a century earlier about giving freed slaves 40 acres and a mule. A proposal to use federal funds to compel metropolitan areas to desegregate was deleted from the bill. When Housing and Urban Development (HUD) secretary George Romney ordered the agency to reject grants for cities and states fostering segregation, President Nixon slapped him down. Successive Democratic and Republican administrations stayed that course. Since Nixon, HUD has only twice withheld money from communities violating the Fair Housing Act, all the while send-

These are but a pretense of putting a bit more equal in separate-but-equal.

In this country built on chattel slavery, separate never was and never will be equal. This basic understanding has driven the historic struggles of the black masses for full assimilation into American society with equal rights. Black oppression is integral to the maintenance of capitalist class rule, serving to divide the multiracial proletariat and weaken its struggles against the class enemy. The simple truth is that the American working class cannot advance its struggle against the capitalist exploiters without simultaneously taking up the fight against the racial oppression of black people.

The civil rights struggles of the 1950s and ’60s ran into a dead end because their leaders, exemplified by King, relied on the bourgeoisie, its courts and government in their attempts to achieve equality. The liberals’ betrayals of black aspirations were most clearly seen in the North, where demands for “open housing” and school integration ran up against entrenched black poverty and segregation. As we noted in “Revolutionary Marxists and the Fight for Black Freedom” (WV No. 930, 13 February 2009):

“The everyday conditions of life facing the mass of blacks—widespread and chronic unemployment, rat-infested slums, rampant police brutality—could not be eradicated by Congress passing another Civil Rights Act. What working-class and poor blacks hoped to achieve through the civil rights movement in the North would have required a radical restructuring of the American economy and a massive redistribution of wealth. And that the American ruling class was not going to do.”

Along with housing integration, busing programs to desegregate schools were defeated by racists in the streets and liberals in government. Now, decades later, the goal of integration is rarely even uttered by those claiming to fight for black rights.

Yet the need for quality, integrated housing and schools remains pressing. The decrepit, overcrowded housing and skyrocketing costs that have long defined conditions for the ghetto and barrio masses are increasingly the plight of working people more broadly. Any real struggle for livable homes must include the demand for *low-rent, quality, integrated public housing*. This demand must be linked to the struggle for jobs for all through a shorter workweek at no loss in pay, for public works programs to rebuild this country’s infrastructure, for massive pay hikes indexed to inflation.

These vital necessities demand an assault on the entire system of production for profit. The Spartacist League is dedicated to building the workers party necessary to lead the proletariat in the overthrow of the capitalist system. That party must advance the program of revolutionary integrationism: opposing every manifestation of racist discrimination and bigotry in order to arm the multiracial working class to carry out its duty to sweep away capitalist rule—the only road to black liberation. Workers’ rule will lay the ground for building an egalitarian socialist society, the only basis on which to achieve genuine equality. ■

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Trans-Pacific Partnership Down With U.S. Imperialism's Anti-China Trade Pact!



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No to Protectionism! Workers of the World Unite!

On October 5, representatives of 12 countries from across Asia and the Americas signed on to U.S. imperialism's Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). If it is ratified, the TPP will be the largest trade agreement in history, encompassing at least 40 percent of the world's gross domestic product and one-third of all global trade. Japan and the more minor imperialist countries Canada and Australia have been cut in on the deal—and competing European powers cut out—but it is the U.S. rulers who hold the whip hand. Under the banner of “free trade,” the TPP aims to drive up the exploitation of labor across the board while increasing imperialist domination of dependent countries. Above all, this agreement targets China, escalating the U.S. bourgeoisie's drive to promote capitalist counterrevolution there through economic pressure and military encirclement.

The TPP has been described as “NAFTA on steroids,” after the 1994 agreement that opened the door for the wholesale economic rape of Mexico by America's capitalist rulers and their Canadian junior partners. The TPP agreement would batter down measures protecting industry and agriculture in underdeveloped countries, eliminating 18,000 taxes and other controls on U.S. companies' goods and services. Secret tribunals, empowered to overturn the decisions of national courts, would be established to allow investors to sue any signatory country they claim undermines their “expected profits.” The bloodsuckers of America's Big Pharma drug monopolies would have their patent rights extended, ripping generic drugs out of the hands of millions of impoverished people whose lives depend on them, including for the treatment of HIV and tuberculosis.

The bourgeois rulers of Brunei, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru and other backward countries, lackeys of U.S. imperialism, signed the TPP in a bid to get their own shares of the wealth wrung from greater misery. The ruling Communist Party bureaucracy in the Vietnamese deformed workers state also agreed to the TPP's extortionate terms, acting as labor brokers in exchange for foreign investment. At the same time, the provisions of the TPP that directly target state-owned enterprises are centrally aimed at Vietnam.

The collectivized property forms central to Vietnam's economy are a gain of

Atlanta, October 5: Rogues' gallery of trade ministers from the U.S. and eleven other Pacific Rim countries after concluding negotiations on TPP.

the social revolution that overturned capitalism, when Communist-led guerrilla forces defeated first the French and then the U.S. imperialists and their Vietnamese puppet forces. By demanding “fair competition” for capitalist investment, the TPP aims to undermine the workers state's control of the economy.

China in the Crosshairs

The largest remaining country where capitalism has been overthrown, the Chinese deformed workers state is a strategic target of the imperialists. Washington pointedly excluded China from the agreement in an attempt to form an economic

ing TPP is as important to me as another aircraft carrier.”

In the first week of November, a U.S. aircraft carrier conducted operations near Chinese land reclamation and construction projects in the South China Sea's Spratly (Nansha) Islands. These islands are of strategic importance to China's military defense and its ability to protect critical shipping lanes. Threatening China's sovereignty, Carter announced that the U.S. would make regular patrols of the area. Behind such gunboat diplomacy lies the threat of embargo and war.

To the ire of the U.S., there has been a stampede of countries, including European

lending institutions. While outfits like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank dictate how countries they invest in should be governed and starve out those who don't obey, the AIIB will reportedly offer loans for much-needed infrastructure development at below-market interest rates with no strings attached. While the ruling Chinese bureaucracy is not motivated by international solidarity, neither are its international investments driven by the relentless pursuit of profit that motivates the imperialist plunder of less-developed countries.

To counter U.S. imperialism's efforts at containment, China is also developing a “new Silk Road.” Including multiple trading networks linking Asia and Western Europe, new Silk Road development includes pipelines, rail, air and sea routes as well as high-tech communications systems. These developments loomed large in the Obama administration's decision to fast-track TPP negotiations. Focusing on Asia in this year's State of the Union address, Obama argued: “As we speak, China wants to write the rules for the world's fastest growing region.... We should write those rules.”

The president's push for fast-track authority suffered a brief setback in June when Democratic Party members of Congress voted it down, looking to boost their electoral fortunes with the trade-union bureaucracy. There was much rejoicing at AFL-CIO headquarters. The federation's president Richard Trumka crowed that the vote “was a marvelous contrast to the corporate money and disillusionment that normally mark American politics today.” But this elation went up in smoke a few weeks later when the fast-track was voted up.

There is a burning need for internationalist proletarian opposition to the TPP, uniting the working masses around the globe in common class struggle. If the U.S. rulers succeed in the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Chinese workers state, it would mean opening China for untrammelled economic exploitation. This would be a disaster for the working class internationally, emboldening the imperialists to launch new attacks and drive down wages and working conditions not only in China, but around the world.

Raising a chauvinist hue and cry that the

continued on page 9



Department of Defense

Defense Secretary Ashton Carter leaving aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt after latest U.S. provocation in South China Sea, November 5.

bloc against that country and undercut its growing economic reach. The TPP is the economic analog to the U.S.'s increasingly flagrant military provocations against China. Last spring, U.S. defense secretary Ashton Carter declared: “Pass-

imperialist powers, to get in on the ground floor of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) that China initiated last October. Although it has yet to begin operations, the AIIB will challenge the loan sharks who run imperialist-dominated