

U.S. Out of the Near East!

Washington Post



Reuters



Syria: Imperialists Fuel Bloodbath

FEBRUARY 22—For four years, the U.S. imperialists and a host of lesser powers have been stirring the Syrian cauldron, inflicting untold bloodshed on the Syrian people. The result of this all-sided intervention and carnage: Much of Syria has been laid waste, its economy is in ruins, and more than half its population has been driven from their homes, either as displaced persons within the country or as refugees abroad.

The Western bourgeois press explains those refugees as caused solely by the undeniable crimes of the Bashar al-Assad regime and its barrel bombs dropped on civilian populations. What about U.S. bombing? Kobani was “liberated” from the control of the reactionary fundamentalist Islamic State (ISIS) by being leveled. Likewise, in Iraq, Ramadi was retaken from ISIS by an Iraqi army that heretofore had proven itself to be a hollow shell. The secret of that remarkable success? The city was first reduced to rubble by U.S. airstrikes.

The rebel forces in Syria have received arms and financing from countries intent on pursuing their own agendas at the expense of the Syrian people. The Sunni Arab regimes of Saudi Arabia and Qatar are determined to deliver a blow to the Assad regime, which is based on the Alawites, followers of an offshoot of Shi’ite Islam. Shi’ite Iran, the great bugbear of these Gulf states, is Assad’s principal backer, and in recent months Russia has provided air support to the Syrian army. Turkey wants to see Assad replaced by a compliant Sunni fundamentalist regime that would serve as a platform for projecting Turkish power and influence in the Near East. Since the start of the war, Turkey has opened its borders to the flow

Top left: Kobani devastated by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, October 2015. Top right: Syrian refugees seek to cross border into Turkey in February.

of jihadists into Syria and provided funds and military hardware to support them.

Meanwhile, the U.S. imperialists, backed up on occasion by their junior imperialist partners Britain and France, are mainly

but of the working masses of the world, is U.S. imperialism, as well as the other imperialist powers involved. The bloody mayhem that has been visited upon the Syrian people is the direct consequence of

Hands Off Libya!—Again!



February 19: Remains of purported ISIS training camp near Sabratha, Libya, after U.S. airstrike that killed over 40 people.

directing their bombs against ISIS, while providing support to “moderate” rebel forces. Most recently, the U.S. carried out airstrikes in Libya on February 19 to target an ISIS camp, killing over 40 people, including two Serbian hostages held by ISIS. Libya itself has been fractured by fighting between warring factions since the U.S.-backed overthrow and murder of Libya’s former bourgeois strongman, Muammar el-Qaddafi, in 2011.

As Marxists, our starting point is that the main enemy, not only of the Syrian people

imperialist domination of the Near East. We have no side in the Syrian civil war, which is reactionary on all sides. But we do have a side *against* U.S. imperialism.

Any defeat or setback inflicted upon the imperialists in the Near East is in the interests of working people internationally, not least in the U.S., where workers have been ground down by years of economic crisis and a “recovery” from which they have not benefited. Thus, while we are die-hard opponents of everything the reactionary cutthroats of ISIS stand for, we are for the military defense of ISIS when it aims its fire against the imperialist armed forces and their proxies in the region. These include the Syrian Kurdish nationalists as well as the Baghdad government, the Shi’ite militias in Iraq and the Kurdish *pesh merga* in northern Iraq, who have all acted as the ground troops of the U.S. military intervention in the area.

Any blow that helps to impede the imperialists’ designs in the Near East can only aid the proletariat and oppressed of the region. The peoples of the Near East will not know peace, prosperity or justice until bourgeois rule is overthrown through a series of socialist revolutions. Only in a socialist federation of the Near East will there be a full and equal place for all the myriad peoples of the area—Sunnis, Shi’ites and Christians as well as the Kurdish, Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jewish nations.

Syrian Hellhole

The focus of recent fighting in Syria is a crucial strip of land linking Aleppo, once the country’s largest city and industrial hub, to the border with Turkey. Here various forces backed by regional and international rivals are clashing in what could well be a turning point in the war.

continued on page 10

FROM THE ARCHIVES OF SPARTACIST

BLACK AND RED

see page 2



FROM THE ARCHIVES OF SPARTACIST

“BLACK AND RED— Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom”

Spartacist No. 10, May-June 1967

Expressing our understanding that the struggle of black people for their freedom is a motive force for socialist revolution in the United States, the First National Conference of the Spartacist League adopted the document reprinted below. Held almost 50 years ago, in September 1966, the conference approved two documents—the “Declaration of Principles of the Spartacist League” as well

PART ONE

as “Black and Red” in draft form—as our founding documents. After a process of further amendment, the final version of “Black and Red” was published in 1967. While it should be read critically, in its essentials it has stood the test of time.

The document grew out of the experience of our founding cadres in struggle—not least, political struggle inside the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The SWP had been for decades the organization upholding the revolutionary program of Trotskyism in this country. But by the early 1960s it had abandoned the struggle to build a proletarian party to lead a fight for socialist revolution, preferring to tail non-working-class forces. Having become uncritical followers of Fidel Castro in Cuba, the SWP abandoned the fight for Marxist leadership in the black struggle, the domestic reflection of the same abdication. The 1963 SWP convention codified the wholesale embrace of black nationalist ideology, accompanied by a policy of abstention from the Southern civil rights struggle. In the name of black “self-determination,” the SWP’s *Militant* soon became an unpaid public relations organ for all manner of black “leaders,” from Martin Luther King Jr. to the anti-Jewish Elijah Muhammad and “cultural nationalists,” who blamed the oppression of black people on everyone but the ruling class.

Our political forebears, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), opposed this opportunist course inside the SWP until their expulsions, which began in 1963. The RT argued that the party had to intervene in the South, participating in organizations of militant youth, taking part in the arguments over strategy and program. An emerging left wing was disenchanted with the leadership of the

preachers, opening up a crucial opportunity for the crystallization of a black Trotskyist cadre. This opportunity was squandered, deliberately, by the SWP.

When “Black and Red” was written in 1966, our comrades—not only veterans of the RT struggle but also comrades recruited out of the New Left—had gained considerable experience in civil rights organizations and protests. We had organized pickets in solidarity with youth integrating Southern lunch counters, as well as rent strikes, rallies protesting police brutality, united-front defense campaigns for arrested militants, etc. These experiences informed the document in addressing the debates animating black activists, including importantly non-violence as a principle vs. the right of organized self-defense.

In the SWP, our founding comrades had been won to the viewpoint developed in the 1950s by veteran Trotskyist Richard S. Fraser. Comrade Fraser’s program of *revolutionary integrationism*—the fight for the liberation of black people in an egalitarian socialist society—was based on scrupulous study of the black struggle throughout this country’s history. From the time of slavery, black people have been an integral part of American society. Now long after slavery was abolished in blood and fire by the Civil War, black



NYC hospital workers protest budget cuts, July 1975. Militant black workers are living link between social power of labor and besieged ghetto masses.

WV Photo

people in their mass remain forcibly segregated at the bottom of society. Historically, black people’s struggles have been directed at winning equality in America rather than aspiring to separation. Recognizing the revolutionary challenge posed by the black struggle, comrade Fraser argued that the SWP had to make special efforts to recruit black working people, including by forming transitional organizations, a concept that goes back to the revolutionary Communist International.

The 1960s were shaped not only by the mass civil rights protests but also by the growing protests against the imperialist Vietnam War, which was escalated by both Democratic and Republican administrations in Washington. The ghetto upheavals were elemental explosions against cop terror that also expressed massive anger at intractable poverty and devastation in the inner cities. At the same time, many youth being drawn into struggle were inspired more by Malcolm X, sharing his enthusiasm for anti-colonial revolutions abroad and admiring his savage indictment of Democratic Party pol-

iticians, than by King’s program of reliance on the federal government.

The demands we put forward in “Black and Red” center on a fight for political independence of the workers and oppressed from the capitalist government. They hammer on the need to overcome the division between the organized working class and the black struggle. A labor leadership that does not actively combat racial oppression is toothless in the face of the bosses’ divide-and-rule schemes, which hold down the wages and conditions of all workers. The union misleaders of the 1960s, mostly open reactionaries, were a big reason black (and other) radicals of the time saw no future in a fight for proletarian revolution. But a movement based on marginal social layers and not linked to the power of labor proved to be tragically vulnerable to the state’s campaign of violence and murder targeting those J. Edgar Hoover labeled “black revolutionaries.”

The SL at the time of our founding conference numbered only a few dozen members. We were confident in the appeal of our program, but within a few years the black separatist mood the document discusses had hardened to the point of sealing off our integrated organization from all but the most exceptional individuals. In time, the ruling class was able to re-establish social peace through a combination of means: cop terror and state repression aimed at beheading black organizations like the Panthers and funding for government poverty programs. The latter mostly lasted only as long as a threat to the stability of the capitalist order was perceived, while creating a layer of petty administrators directly dependent on the government. Black nationalist ideology was unable to generate a program for struggle. Hence the “black power” slogan would translate into the emergence of a layer of black mayors and other Democratic Party politicians, as we anticipated (a course also followed later by many Panthers).

Today, there is much less class and social struggle than at the time we wrote

continued on page 6



WV Photo

November 2014: Protest in St. Louis, Missouri, after grand jury let off cop who killed black youth Michael Brown.

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon

EDITOR: Michael Davisson

EDITOR, YOUNG SPARTACUS PAGES: Conor Kristofersen

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller

EDITORIAL BOARD: Elizabeth Johnson (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Blandine Hauser (letters editor), Bruce André, Ray Bishop, John Blake, Bonnie Brodie, Jon Brule, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, George Foster, Walter Jennings, Michael Joyce, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Alan Wilde, Laura Zamora

The Spartacist League is the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).

Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 318, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. Email address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Workers Vanguard*, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

The closing date for news in this issue is February 23.

No. 1084

26 February 2016

Albert Woodfox Free at Last

On February 19, his 69th birthday, Albert Woodfox finally walked out of a Louisiana prison a free man after spending nearly 44 years in solitary confinement—the longest such stint of any U.S. prisoner. The Spartacist League and Partisan Defense Committee salute this courageous man, and we join his many supporters in hailing his release from prison.

Woodfox entered the infamous Angola prison in 1971 and later founded a Black Panther Party chapter with fellow prisoners Herman Wallace and Robert King, who became known as the Angola Three. They were directly targeted by their jailers for organizing work stoppages and protests denouncing prison conditions. Shortly after his release, in a *Guardian* (20 February) interview Woodfox described the vendetta against the Angola Three: “Our political activities marked us and that’s why they locked us up in solitary confinement, where I remained until yesterday.”

When an Angola prison guard was fatally stabbed in 1972, Woodfox and

February 19:
Albert Woodfox
walks out
of prison in
Louisiana after
45 years.



Travis Spradling/The Advocate

Wallace were convicted of murder without a shred of physical evidence. King was later framed up for the killing of a fellow inmate. The Angola Three fought their convictions for decades. King was

released in 2001 and Wallace was finally freed in 2013, only to die of liver cancer three days after his release. It is an absolute outrage that Woodfox and his comrades were robbed of decades of their

lives for their political activities.

Woodfox’s conviction had been overturned twice, but his jailers were hell-bent on seeing him die in prison despite his clear innocence. The state was preparing to try him for the murder a third time. On the day of his release, Woodfox, whose serious health concerns were exacerbated by his incarceration, pleaded no contest to lesser charges of manslaughter and aggravated burglary. He was sentenced to 45 years and released for time served—mostly “served” in a six-by-nine-foot box.

The capitalist state’s treatment of Woodfox was always intended to be a chilling example for all those who stand up against the horrible conditions in prison hellholes. Woodfox maintained his strength and dignity in the face of horrific torment. In his *Guardian* interview, Woodfox stated: “I promised myself that I would not let them break me, not let them drive me insane.” A free man now, Woodfox plans to spend time with family, get much-needed medical care and speak out for others still languishing in solitary confinement. ■

Down With Anti-Drug Witchhunt!

Let Jenrry Mejía Play!

On February 12, New York Mets pitcher Jenrry Mejía became the first player banned for life under Major League Baseball’s draconian drug policy. This was the third time Mejía tested positive for a banned performance-enhancing drug (PED), though he denied any knowledge of using prohibited anabolic steroids, as he did following his two prior suspensions. Mejía announced he will appeal—a challenge that can only be filed after a mandatory one-year waiting period and can at best result in a reduced two-year ban. So, even if he were to somehow prevail, Mejía would still be barred at least until 2018. More likely, the 26-year-old Mejía will have lost his livelihood forever. As such he will join the legions of predominantly black and Latino athletes—from the colleges, minor leagues and the major league level—who after a brief moment in the sun were thrown on the scrap heap.

As far as we’re concerned, if Mejía did knowingly use anabolic steroids, **he did nothing wrong**. Whether an individual uses drugs—for fun, bodybuilding or perceived enhancement of athletic ability—is a personal choice. We demand his immediate reinstatement and full restitution of back pay—with interest!

The anti-drug persecution of Mejía, a black man from the Dominican Republic, and scores upon scores of other athletes is part and parcel of the reactionary “war on drugs,” a transparent war on black people intended to regiment the population as a whole. Among the hundreds of thousands thrown into America’s dungeons for the odd toke or snort has been football stars Mercury Morris, Dexter Manley and Nate Newton, baseball’s Darryl Strawberry, Orlando Cepeda and Willie Wilson. Others who were spared prison hell, like NBA stars Mitchell Wiggins and Lewis Lloyd, were banned from pursuing their livelihood for life. The U.S. Justice Department spent ten years and millions of dollars trying to railroad Barry Bonds to prison on charges of lying to a federal grand jury about his unproven use of PEDs before finally giving up last year. The reward for the home run record holder was again to be denied entry to baseball’s Hall of Fame.

The campaign against PEDs in baseball became red hot, as Bonds and other black



Gruppuso/USA Today

Pitcher Jenrry
Mejía in
April 2014.

and Latino athletes were challenging individual records dating back to the Jim Crow era. The rationale for prohibiting PEDs echoes that for eliminating affirmative action in education—in order to provide the mythical “level playing field.” In his 2004 State of the Union address, George W. Bush denounced the use of PEDs as sending the “wrong message—that there are short cuts to accomplishment,” a sentiment echoed later by Obama who declared, “I think it tarnishes an entire era to some degree. It’s unfortunate because I think there are a lot of ball players who played it straight.” Apparently the Commanders-in-Chief of U.S. imperialism, as well as the frequently less-than-sober sports press corps, have diligently researched this issue by watching reruns of the Flubber movies of the 1960s.

In fact, users of steroids probably work **harder** than their counterparts—because that’s how the substances work. Anabolic steroids affect muscle mass by increasing the production of proteins. They increase strength by allowing an athlete to train harder and reduce physical recovery time. Over the course of a season, steroids like the Stanozolol that Mejía is accused of using may allow athletes to recover from minor injuries, muscle and ligament strains more rapidly—something Mejía, who underwent two elbow surgeries before the age of 24, could well appreciate.

Rather than attempt to utilize these for the benefit of the athletes’ health—as well as performance—the anti-drug witchhunters launched a scare campaign (recalling the “reefer madness” and “crack baby” hysteria of bygone years) about the supposed dangers of steroids: “roid rage,” depression and suicide. However, many of the known side effects are reversible within weeks of

stopping use. If PEDs are administered under medical supervision they can be perfectly safe.

Pretensions of concern for the physical and mental well-being of the athletes would be laughable were it not increasingly tragic. Barely a day goes by without news reports on the extensive early dementia, depression and suicides of retired football players. Last September, PBS’s *Frontline* reported on a joint Department of Veterans Affairs and Boston University study of autopsies of football players, which found evidence of chronic traumatic encephalopathy in **96 percent** of those who had played in the NFL. This degenerative brain disease is caused by the constant pounding they are subjected to. The team owners and the National Football League lords spent decades in cover-up and denial, putting their vast profits ahead of the players’ well-being.

Since no athlete dares admit using steroids, there is little monitoring and study by doctors and nobody knows the long-term effects. As we noted in a fuller analysis of sports and drugs:

“A rational society would both embrace the potentialities of improving human athletic performance, particularly the broader uses of anabolic steroids in muscle and tendon repair that would benefit a broad range of society, while at the same time conducting an objective scientific study of the potential medical dangers. But capitalism is not rational, and American capitalism, maintained on a bedrock of black oppression with all its commensurate racist ideology, is even less so.”

—“Baseball, Racism and Steroids: Down With the Witchhunt! Decriminalize Drugs!” WV No. 946, 6 November 2009 ■



Spartacist League Forums

Finish the Civil War! For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

Abolitionist Politics in the Fight to End Slavery

Speaker: Don Cane, Spartacist League Central Committee

NEW YORK CITY

Saturday, February 27, 3 p.m.

322 West 48th Street
Manhattan

(Between 8th and 9th Aves.—
Take A, C or E to 42nd Street)

For information: (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net

CHICAGO

Saturday, March 5, 2 p.m.

Chicago Public Library
Roosevelt Branch
1101 W. Taylor Street
(UIC-Halsted Blue Line)

For information: (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net

Black History and the Class Struggle

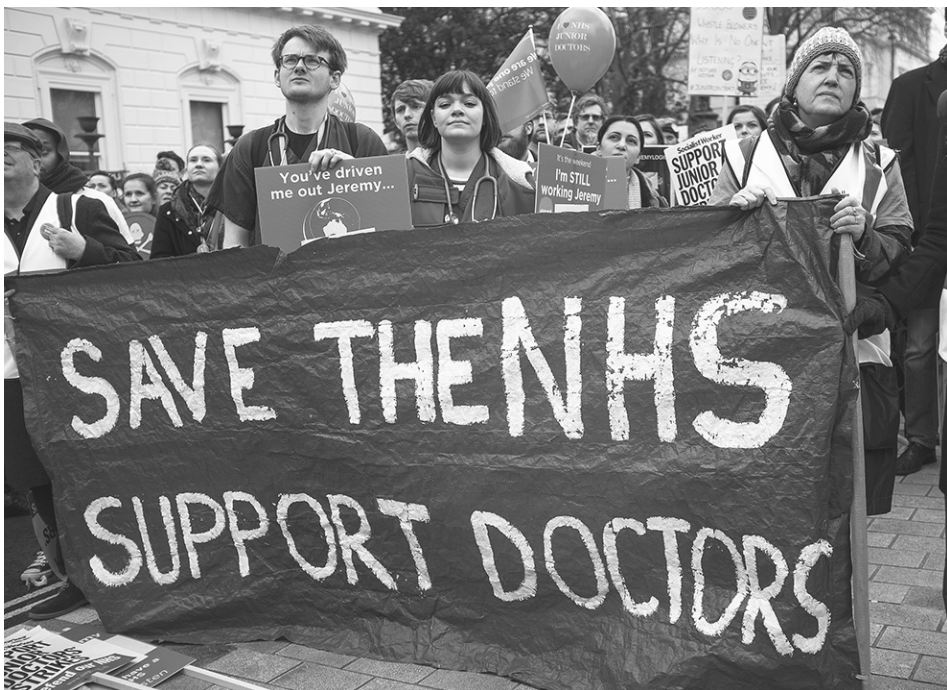
Victory to the Junior Doctors!

Britain's National Health Service on the Chopping Block

LONDON, February 18—Junior-ranking doctors at the National Health Service (NHS) in England are resisting government attacks on their wages and working conditions. The enormous popularity of their struggle speaks to the discontent and frustration among Britain's working people and minorities. Fully two-thirds of those surveyed supported the 24-hour strikes staged by junior doctors in January and February. Millions lust to see that public schoolboy smirk wiped from the face of Conservative prime minister David Cameron. [Britain's "public" schools are elite private schools.] Since the Tory [Conservative] government's re-election last May, an incessant flood of attacks has targeted everything from elementary trade union rights to council [public] housing to education. Now the Cameron government is intent on smashing its boot into what remains of the nationalised health system. That most revered—and rightly so—of the gains of Britain's working people in the past century has already been crippled by decades of attacks under both Labour and Tory governments.

Beginning in 2012, the previous Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government under Cameron moved to tear up the junior doctors' contract under the pretext of improving weekend hospital coverage and providing 24/7 care. Under the new contract the government unveiled last summer, these doctors would no longer receive extra pay for working evenings and daytime Saturday shifts. With a miserly base salary beginning at less than £23,000 [\$33,000] per year, these doctors—who may remain "junior" for a decade or more—rely on overtime for much of their income.

While the government has trumpeted its offer of an 11 per cent increase in base salary, it is estimated that the new contract would slash junior doctors' overall pay by some 26 per cent. Moreover, the end to extra pay for most overtime work would encourage desperate NHS hospitals to impose even longer shifts. There are severe staff shortages across the NHS, and the government has no plans for more hiring. Instead, they propose to work



Junior doctors' protest in London, February 6.

Workers Hammer

Quality Health Care for All, Free at the Point of Service!

doctors and other staff into the ground. "Tired Doctors Make Mistakes," reads a common junior doctors' placard that resonates with all those who rely on their care.

On 11 February, the morning after the second 24-hour walkout, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt detonated his "nuclear option," unilaterally imposing the new contract. With the arrogance and ham-fistedness characteristic of this government, Hunt touted the "support" of 20 NHS executives, many of whom immediately denied any advance knowledge of or agreement with his move. An online petition demanding that Parliament consider a motion of no confidence in the health secretary garnered more than 100,000 signatures in one day. Even Tory MPs [Members of Parliament] voiced consternation over the government's handling of the issue. Dr. Hannah Mitchell, the daughter of a sitting Tory MP, described Hunt as "either dishonest or stupid" in a letter to the *Guardian* (12 February).

Vowing to consider further strike action, a spokesman for the British Medical Association (BMA), which represents the doctors, declared of the government: "If it succeeds with its bullying approach of imposing a contract on junior doctors that has been roundly rejected by the profession it will no doubt seek to do the same for other NHS staff." No doubt, indeed. But a few 24-hour walkouts by junior doctors, who constitute a handful of the more than one million NHS employees, cannot by themselves reverse the capitalist government's vicious onslaught on the NHS. Meanwhile, many demoralised junior doctors are talking of leaving medicine altogether, or moving to Wales or Scotland (which have different contracts) or abroad.

Three of the country's biggest unions—Unite, Unison and the GMB—which represent hundreds of thousands of NHS workers, have the clout to bring the NHS, and

much of Britain's economy, to a standstill. But the union tops have not lifted a finger to mobilise their members in solidarity with the junior doctors. Their response to Hunt's provocation was worse than pathetic. Unison general secretary Dave Prentis bemoaned the fact that unions will lose "faith" in the government's intentions "if ministers just choose to impose what they want." The Unite union, headed by Len McCluskey, offered to look "into the legal consequences of imposition" and, predicting a "mass exodus" from the NHS, to "assist junior doctors in the weeks and months to come as their employment circumstances change."

The government's vendetta against the junior doctors—and their determined resistance—have placed the future of the NHS at centre stage. A new study by the King's Fund think tank states, "This is shaping up to be a make or break year for the NHS" (*Guardian*, 18 February). It could not be clearer that piecemeal privatisation and massive underfunding are wrecking the health service. The Tories are determined to escalate that process until nothing remains of the NHS but a logo. Scarcely a day goes by without some newly reported catastrophe—from the failure to meet the most minimal targets for accident and emergency care to a mental health system that can leave children waiting more than four months for an appointment.

A solid strike throughout the health-care system—private as well as public—in defence of the junior doctors and of free medical care for all would electrify the proletariat and galvanise the many millions who are fed up with having their housing, healthcare, education and livelihoods hang by a thread. It is necessary to fight for a new leadership of the unions—one which does not sacrifice its members' wages and jobs in a futile attempt to patch up a bankrupt system but instead pursues a class-struggle fight against capital-

ist misery. Tied to this is the forging of a revolutionary workers party that will champion the cause of all the oppressed.

The War Against the NHS

Following the passage of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act, which signalled a fundamental shift towards private-sector healthcare, the Spartacist League/Britain noted:

"For the British bourgeoisie, the NHS presents an unwelcome overhead—not to mention the easy profits privatisation offers the financial speculators in the City. The interest of the capitalist class in the health of the population comes down to maintaining a workforce fit enough to exploit and soldiers to fight their wars and imperialist adventures. In times of social upheaval, the capitalists may shell out enough to placate the population, but they will always attempt to take those concessions back."

—"Mobilise Union Power to Defend the NHS," *Workers Hammer* No. 222, Spring 2013; reprinted in WV No. 1023, 3 May 2013

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and others on the left lionise the postwar Labour government headed by Clement Attlee as "socialist" because of the nationalisations it carried out. Most of these amounted to giant bailouts of bankrupt industries, for which the state assumed direct responsibility after generously compensating the former owners. But the establishment of the NHS in 1948 was a genuine and far-reaching gain. No longer did working-class families have to worry about paying for the doctor to treat a sick child, or to fear for the needless death of a mother due to infection after childbirth. Many received dental care and glasses for the first time in their lives. This reform was not the result of the kind hearts of the British ruling class. Rather, it was a byproduct of their fear of revolution, as the Soviet workers state, albeit bureaucratically degenerated under Stalinist rule, emerged triumphant from World War II and a wave of working-class militancy swept Europe.

So long as capitalist rule remains, even the most profound reform is reversible under the dictates of the profit system. As the postwar peace turned into a Cold War against the Soviet Union, the capitalists' priorities shifted. Inroads into the NHS began only four years after its founding, as charges for prescriptions and glasses were introduced to help finance Britain's involvement in the counterrevolutionary U.S.-led war against the North Korean deformed workers state and the insurgent workers and peasants of South Korea.

In 1990, "Iron Lady" Margaret Thatcher, whose hatred for the Soviet Union was rivalled only by her hatred for the trade unions, introduced an "internal market" into the NHS, planting the seeds of disintegration. A few years later, the New Labour government of Tony Blair vastly expanded the role of "private finance initiatives" (PFIs), supposedly to provide funds for building new hospitals and schools. The NHS trusts, which manage healthcare provision, were gradually transformed into "foundation trusts," which borrowed on the financial market, entered joint enterprises with private companies and set their own terms of employment. Blair also created the "Extended Choice Network," allowing handsomely remunerated private centres to treat NHS patients. Then came

continued on page 11

WORKERS HAMMER

Class war in the Labour Party

Tories and Blairites turn the screw on Corbyn

Down with anti-Muslim repression!

US, Britain, France out of the Near East!

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

£3/1 year—Britain, Ireland (Europe outside Britain and Ireland: £5; Other: £7)
US\$10/1 year

Order from/make checks payable to:

Spartacist Publications
PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY, Britain
Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Down With Anti-Labor Offensive!

South Korea

Amid a sluggish economy and the sharpest drop in exports since 2009, the right-wing South Korean government of President Park Geun-hye has launched a major offensive to roll back hard-fought gains of the militant union movement. A series of so-called “labor reform” laws and “guidelines” aims to squeeze from the workers more profits for the *chaebol*—the big conglomerates like Samsung and Hyundai that dominate the South Korean economy—and their imperialist financiers. A campaign of repression is targeting in particular the militant Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), one of two major union federations. The KCTU has waged several strikes against the proposed legislation and organized mass rallies in Seoul last November 14 and December 5. In retaliation, Park’s cops raided KCTU offices and jailed its president, Han Sang-gyun, after besieging a Buddhist temple where he had taken refuge.

The proposed laws would greatly expand the use of “irregular”—temporary, part-time and contract—labor. Such workers, who already comprise at least one-third of the workforce, do not receive the benefits that full-time permanent employees do, are paid a fraction of the wages and can easily be fired. In February 2015, company plans to convert regular to irregular employees prompted one tire factory worker to burn himself to death in protest.

A new labor guideline announced by the government last month allows companies to lay off workers for poor “job performance.” This supposed reform tears up the existing seniority-based system and makes it easier to implement speedup and purge those workers who resist. Another allows companies to unilaterally change employment rules and drastically cut wages of older workers by instituting what is called the peak-wage system. More guidelines to come will permit restructuring, layoffs and outsourcing without union consent. Park has embraced the U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement that has decimated the country’s farmers and reinforced South Korea as a bulwark of the U.S. alliance against China (see “U.S.-South Korea Trade Pact Targets China, Korean Workers,” WV No. 1008, 14 September 2012). Now she is pushing membership in Washington’s anti-China Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which will deepen imperialist domination of South Korea.

The KCTU emerged from the Great Labor Struggle of 1987. Mass industrial unions were forged through that struggle in the teeth of a brutal police state and over the opposition of the anti-Communist Korean Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU). Mass



Seoul, January 30: Protest by South Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) against anti-labor “reforms.” Inset: KCTU leader Han Sang-gyun being arrested, December 2015.

strikes—banned under the dictatorship installed by South Korea’s U.S. overlords—led to pitched battles with police and won key economic gains and union recognition. This class-struggle explosion caused the capitalist rulers to abandon direct military dictatorship and set up a thin facade of parliamentary democracy.

Park seeks to turn the clock back to the 1970s, when she was acting first lady to her father, the late dictator Park Chung-hee. In addition to demanding more coercive state powers through “anti-terrorist” and anti-Communist legislation, she is campaigning to replace current school history textbooks with state-issued ones that will no doubt whitewash her father’s brutal reign. When more than 21,000 teachers condemned Park’s textbook plan last October, the government threatened to fire 22 members of the Korea Teachers and Education Workers’ Union (KTU). Some 16,000 then endorsed a second statement denouncing the plan. A court recently upheld an earlier edict by Park declaring the KTU illegal, a decision the union is appealing. *Drop the ban on the KTU!*

At least 80,000 workers, students, teachers and others turned out on November 14 to protest both the anti-labor drive and Park’s push to rewrite history. The state responded with typically brutal repression. Demonstrators were blasted by water cannons and tear-gassed. The cops injured dozens, including a 69-year-old farmer who was sent into a coma. On December 5, 30,000 demonstrated in Seoul against the crackdown and the anti-labor campaign. Since then, there have been other actions, including protest strikes by tens of thousands. Park’s imposition of the new guidelines in January prompted the KFTU to withdraw from talks with the govern-

ment and employers and announce a turn to “full conflict mode.”

Following the November 14 rally, police raided the offices of eight unions and seized computer files and documents. Later, 14 members of the Korean Federation of Construction Industry Trade Unions were arrested. In January, prosecutors filed charges against KCTU president Han for organizing “illegal” rallies, and outrageously for “inflicting injuries to 90 police officers and damaging 52 police buses” (*Korea Herald*, 5 January) when the cops assaulted the November protest. Prosecutors declined for the moment to file the far more serious charge of “sedition,” but they left open the possibility of filing that charge in the future. *Free Han Sang-gyun and all the arrested protesters and unionists! Drop all the charges!*

Trade unions in Japan and Australia have expressed solidarity with their South Korean brothers and sisters, including by sending delegations to the country and visiting jailed unionists. It is crucial that the working class internationally, especially in the imperialist centers of Japan and the U.S., bring their collective power to bear in defense of the Korean labor movement. The U.S. proletariat has a special obligation to do so. The American ruling class was the godfather of every bloodstained South Korean dictator and continues to maintain some 28,000 troops in the country. These troops are aimed not only at China and North Korea, deformed workers states where capitalist rule was overthrown, but also at the South Korean proletariat. We demand the removal of *all U.S. bases and troops* from South Korea, as part of the struggle to mobilize the U.S. working class against its “own” rulers.

The South Korean police state is a direct result of the division of the Korean nation along class lines, frozen since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. In that conflict, the U.S. imperialists attempted to drown in blood the social revolution that had brought the Stalinist Kim Il Sung regime to power in the North. Korean workers and peasants, aided by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, repulsed this counterrevolutionary attack. The Korean bourgeoisie, with the U.S. and Japanese imperialists behind them, looks to restore capitalist exploitation to North Korea. It also uses anti-Communism as a club against the South Korean workers movement. When the current government’s justice minister declared that an announced indefinite KCTU strike against the anti-labor laws would be “illegal,” he ominously cited “a situation when the public’s safety is under threat by North Korea’s nuclear test and terrorism” (*Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 25 January). Anti-Communism is also wielded against opposition parties. In 2014, Park had a left-nationalist party, the Unified

Progressive Party, disbanded for supposedly pro-North Korean activities. Its five National Assembly members were stripped of their seats, and a central leader, Lee Seok-ki, was framed up and sentenced to nine years in prison.

As Marxists, we stand for the unconditional military defense of the North Korean deformed workers state—as well as the deformed workers states of China, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam—against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution. At the same time, we fight for proletarian political revolutions to oust the parasitic, nationalist Stalinist bureaucracies. Our defense of the workers states includes supporting North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons and effective delivery systems as a necessary defense and deterrent against the imperialists.

Despite the numerous hard-fought battles and exemplary courage of the South Korean workers, the KCTU has lost considerable ground since the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98, when the IMF dictated an austerity drive on behalf of the imperialists as a condition for bailing out the *chaebol*. The KCTU leaders had backed the election of the bourgeois liberal Kim Dae-jung, whose government repaid them by crushing a massive labor upsurge in order to enforce the IMF’s diktat.

Kim’s political descendants are the New Politics Alliance for Democracy (now called the Minjoo Party). Yet it is to these enemies of the workers that the KCTU’s Han appealed in a statement preceding his arrest in December, asking them: “Is it so difficult to decide if you are going to side with the chaebols and capital or side with the workers?” Despite posing as friends of workers, Minjoo is a capitalist party that represents the interests of the bourgeoisie no less than does Park’s Saenuri party.

South Korea demonstrates that even the most militant union struggle alone cannot free the workers from their exploiters. The KCTU is hobbled by the populist-nationalist politics of its leadership, which seeks alliances with a supposedly progressive or patriotic wing of the bourgeoisie such as Kim Dae-jung or Minjoo. As with Kim, the results prove that this is a dead end. Such alliances and the nationalist ideology behind them prevent the workers’ heroic struggles from being directed against capitalist class rule. For this purpose the working class needs a party that remains completely independent of the capitalists and leads the way to socialist revolution. Such a Leninist-Trotskyist party would be based on proletarian internationalism and would be a section of a reformed Fourth International. It would seek to link revolutionary struggle in South Korea to political revolution in the North and in China, and crucially to the overthrow of capitalist rule in the imperialist heartlands of Japan and the U.S. ■

Available in Korean

SPARTACIST

원칙들에 대한 선언과 강령의 몇 가지 요소들

국제공산주의동맹 (제4 인터내셔널주의자)

1. 세계 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

2. 노동조합의 중요성

3. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

4. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

5. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

6. 노동조합의 중요성

7. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

8. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

9. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

10. 노동조합의 중요성

11. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

12. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

13. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

14. 노동조합의 중요성

15. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

16. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

17. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

18. 노동조합의 중요성

19. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

20. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

21. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

22. 노동조합의 중요성

23. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

24. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

25. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

26. 노동조합의 중요성

27. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

28. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

29. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

30. 노동조합의 중요성

31. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

32. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

33. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

34. 노동조합의 중요성

35. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

36. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

37. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

38. 노동조합의 중요성

39. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

40. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

41. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

42. 노동조합의 중요성

43. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

44. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

45. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

46. 노동조합의 중요성

47. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

48. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

49. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

50. 노동조합의 중요성

51. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

52. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

53. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

54. 노동조합의 중요성

55. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

56. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

57. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

58. 노동조합의 중요성

59. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

60. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

61. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

62. 노동조합의 중요성

63. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

64. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

65. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

66. 노동조합의 중요성

67. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

68. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

69. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

70. 노동조합의 중요성

71. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

72. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

73. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

74. 노동조합의 중요성

75. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

76. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

77. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

78. 노동조합의 중요성

79. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

80. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

81. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

82. 노동조합의 중요성

83. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

84. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

85. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

86. 노동조합의 중요성

87. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

88. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

89. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

90. 노동조합의 중요성

91. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

92. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

93. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

94. 노동조합의 중요성

95. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

96. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

97. 사회주의 혁명의 필요성

98. 노동조합의 중요성

99. 무장 투쟁의 필요성

100. 국제공산주의동맹의 필요성

ICL 원칙선언에 대한 서문

Declaration of Principles and Some Elements of Program
International Communist League
(Fourth Internationalist)
Korean \$1, English \$2
(Also available in 13 other languages)
Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Publishing Company
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Visit the ICL website for Korean-language articles, including:

북한에 대한 제국주의 도발들을 타도하라!

Down With Imperialist Provocations Against North Korea!

Reprinted from
Workers Vanguard No. 970
3 December 2010

우리는 러시아 혁명의 당이다

We Are the Party of the Russian Revolution

Reprinted from
Workers Vanguard Nos. 924, 925, 926
November-December 2008

www.icl-fi.org/korean

Black and Red...

(continued from page 2)

“Black and Red.” The unions have continually lost members in the face of relentless attacks; real wages and working conditions have declined; industry has increasingly fled from traditional industrial centers to the South and overseas; multi-tier contracts have become the norm. The present wave of liberal activism against cops killing black people underscores how little life has changed for most of black America. As a result of the civil rights movement, the legal and political structure of the South was brought into alignment with the bourgeois-democratic norms prevailing in the rest of the country. But by every measure—from income and family assets to education and life expectancy to police violence and incarceration—black people remain profoundly oppressed in capitalist society. The fight to win black workers and youth to the program of revolutionary Marxism remains at the center of our perspective today.

* * *

I. INTRODUCTION

The struggle of the Negro people for freedom and equality has been the most dynamic struggle going on in the United States in the past ten years. It has taken place in the context of, and has been conditioned by, the general passivity of the organized labor movement. The militancy of the Negro people and the tempo of their struggle increased enormously in the fifties and early sixties, but the achievements have been minimal—limited entirely to token advancement of democratic rights. In fact, the fundamental conditions of life for the vast majority of Black people, particularly in the key areas of employment, wages, housing and education, have *worsened*. The Civil Rights movement, geared to the aspirations of the small Negro middle class, though professing to speak for all Negroes, has been stopped dead in its tracks in dealing with these fundamental needs, and in fact has functioned partly as a brake on the unorganized and leaderless pressures from below. In the absence of an alternative, revolutionary, leadership these pressures and frustrations explode from time to time in undirected, non-political outbursts that change nothing. Thus in the midst of dissipating militancy, disillusionment in struggle and seemingly vain aspirations among the black masses, the movement is at an impasse. A crisis of leadership is the essence of this impasse.

Economic Prospects

At present U.S. capitalism is attempting to maintain and increase its profits by placing the cost of the Viet Nam war on the working class. The prolonged and extensive expansion of the productive capacity of the U.S. following upon the Second World War was conditioned by the massive destruction engendered by the imperialist slaughter, and by the world-wide demand for goods which resulted. The period of rapid capitalist development since the war has been

marked by periodic mild recessions and interspersed by long periods of boom. Recently the curve of world capitalist development has begun to point downward. The rise in inventories, the drop in investments in capital goods production, and in industrial production, indicate that a world-wide economic downturn is at hand. While economic indicators pointed to a downturn in 1966, the boom was prolonged another year by the political decision to escalate the aggressive war against Viet Nam. A decision by the U.S. ruling class for another massive escalation could again serve to postpone the downturn. The upsurge of militant strike action testifies to the growing refusal of workers to submit to further erosion of their living standards by the inflationary pressures generated by the war on a booming economy, and to their readiness to fight for real gains. Black workers, bearing an even greater disproportionate share of the burden of the war, would be the most militant and ready for greater struggle.

On the other hand, if the war is ended or even continued at the present level of war spending, the economic downturn would prevail. While the black workers would be hit hardest by the ensuing unemployment, lay-offs would also rapidly accelerate among white workers. Again, this poses the perspective of a unity in struggle of black and white workers, and a leap in the level of consciousness of basic sectors of the working class.

Black Workers and Imperialism

Thus the struggle for Negro freedom takes place not only within the national arena, but within an international context. U.S. capitalism, which doubly exploits



Black U.S. Marines in Vietnam in 1968 with sign reading “Black Power Is Number One.”

the movement of African nationalism and will be liberated by the industrially backward countries are all revisionist concepts. The bankruptcy of revisionism has become apparent with the smashing of the so-called “Third World,” “Socialist” regimes and the tragic massacres of the masses in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The definitive victory of the world revolution will only be secured by a victory of the workers in the advanced capitalist countries. The U.S. working class now has “the most revolutionary of all revolutionary tasks,” the destruction of the bastion of world imperialism, the U.S. capitalist system. To the extent that the black work-

fundamental conflict with the continued political dominance of the Southern planters, freed slaves played an important part in the victory of the progressive forces and destruction of the slave system. Capitalist and slave alike stood to gain from the suppression of the planter aristocracy but beyond that had no further common interests. In fact, it was the Negroes themselves who, within the protective framework provided by the Reconstruction Acts and the military dictatorship of the occupying Union army, carried through the social revolution and destruction of the old planter class. However, the Compromise of 1877 and the formation of a powerful new bloc of Northern industrial capital and subordinate Southern Bourbons allowed the majority of ex-slaves to be forced back onto the land as tenant farmers or share-croppers.

Southern Populism

Nevertheless, nearly a quarter of the ex-slaves were able to acquire their own small farms. The white small farmers, who had also been “freed” by the destruction of the slave system, were driven in some cases to join hands with their black counterparts in the defense of their common interests against the new plantation masters. Yet this tentative union—the Southern Populist Movement—was doomed to failure. The small-farmer class itself could not be a real contender for political power in a capitalist society, while the dynamics of private farming inevitably brought about sharp competition among the farmers. This competition was exploited by the new political alliance of big planters, Southern capitalists and certain Northern financial interests, in particular, investors in Southern railroads, land, mining and timber. This bloc initiated a campaign of violent race hatred among their political opponents which succeeded in destroying the developing black-white unity. In the context of the new racism the Black people were disenfranchised, stripped of all legal rights, and permanently denied access to adequate education. Those setbacks were codified into a series of laws institutionalizing the rigid segregation which has been the dominant feature of the South ever since. It was the racism launched during this period which has since kept wages in the South at approximately half those of the rest of the country (and the wages of Negroes at half those of whites in the country as a whole), prevented effective union organization and perpetuated a crushing poverty on the land for black and white alike, though today the Southern economy has come entirely under the control of Northern capital.

By the First World War 90 per cent of all Negroes still lived in the South, though by this time nearly one million had made their way from the land into hundreds of Southern towns. Then, with the great expansion of demand for unskilled labor unleashed by the War, a vast migration of black workers into the North took place, and for the first time a sizeable portion of Black people became integrated into the mainstream of American capitalist



Civil rights protester attacked by police dog in Birmingham, Alabama, May 1963.

ers, the most militant in the U.S. working class, become infused with a revolutionary socialist perspective, and thereby become able to provide leadership to the class as a whole, they play a vital role in the success of the world revolution.

II. INTEGRATION OR SEPARATION?

From their arrival in this country, the Negro people have been *an integral part* of American class society while at the same time *forcibly segregated* at the bottom of this society. As chattel slaves they were the labor force on which the Southern planter aristocracy maintained its economic and political dominance until the Civil War. Various factors—the variety of African origins, the deliberate dispersal of slaves with common tribal backgrounds, the fact that most slaves brought from Africa were male—facilitated the total destruction of African languages, social institutions and cultural memories among the slaves and allowed the imposition of a new language and new habits to fit the needs of the economic system into which they were being integrated. In particular, an eclectic Christianity was early instilled to teach the slave to meekly accept his position. Escape from slavery, not return to Africa, was the goal of Negro efforts toward freedom during the pre-Civil War period. In the Civil War itself, when the political needs of the vigorous and growing capitalist class in the North came into

Marxist Bulletin

5

REVISED

WHAT STRATEGY FOR BLACK LIBERATION?

Trotskyism vs. Black Nationalism

Key documents and articles 1955-1978

\$1.50 (72 pages)

Black History is sent to all Workers Vanguard subscribers.

Order from/make checks payable to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

A Spartacist Pamphlet \$1.50

Black History and the Class Struggle

No. 24

150 Years Since the Emancipation Proclamation—Finish the Civil War!

For Black Liberation Through Socialist Revolution!

No. 24, June 2014 \$1.50 (64 pages)

Order from/make checks payable to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

6

WORKERS VANGUARD

society. This integration did not last. With the 1921 recession the new workers found themselves forced out of their jobs. This, along with the extremely harsh conditions of Northern ghetto life—instead of the “Promised Land” which many had expected—caused thousands in despair and frustration to turn to the “Garvey Movement” built on the thesis that the Negro would never receive justice in the white man’s land and calling for a separatist solution. This first important mass movement with nationalist aims folded later in the ’20’s due to internal contradictions, the imprisonment of its leader and the recovery in Negro employment in the boom years following the post-war depression. Far more significant during this decade in terms of American social reality was the successful organization of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

During the ’30’s once again black workers were forced out of the economy in large numbers—but this time not alone. Radical ideologies and the gains of mass struggle made a deep impact among workers of both races. The organization of the CIO—the culmination of the upsurge in labor struggle—was a joint venture and bound large numbers of the less skilled and unprotected black workers to the most advanced section of the proletariat. Yet the betrayals of the Communist Party during the war years helped wipe out Negro gains and served to discredit *all* radical movements, even though a significant number of Negro workers came into the Socialist Workers Party at this time. The subordination of the CIO to the bourgeois Democratic Party and Cold War ideology, its affiliation with the conservative AFL and its failure in the context of unexampled prosperity and labor passivity to come to the defense of the Negro freedom struggle have caused black militants to lose confidence in the organized labor movement or in the perspective of common struggle in the future. The SWP’s failure to take a clear position on integration vs. separation contributed to its loss of hundreds of black workers and of the opportunity to forge a significant black Trotskyist cadre.

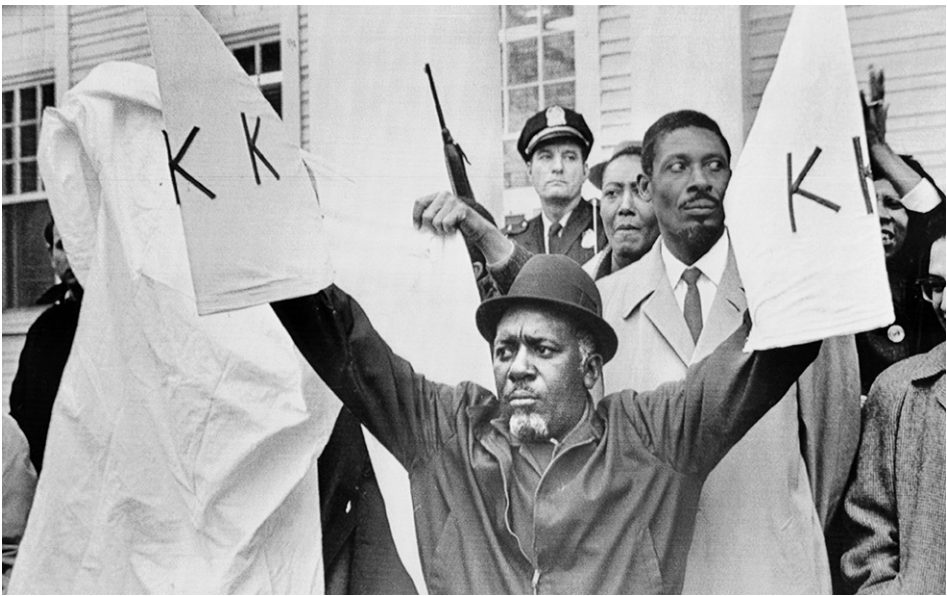
But the objective basis for future common struggle of black and white *workers* not only exists but, unlike the Populist Movement of black and white farmers, holds the promise of success, while struggle along nationalist lines is a delusion and an impossibility. The vast majority of Black people—both North and South—are today workers who, along with the rest of the American working class, must sell their labor power in order to secure the necessities of life to those who buy labor power in order to make profit. The buyers of labor power, the capitalists, are a small minority whose rule is maintained only by keeping the majority who labor for them divided and misled. The fundamental division created deliberately along racial lines has kept the Negro workers,

who entered American capitalism at the bottom, still at the bottom. Ultimately their road to freedom lies only through struggle with the rest of the working class to abolish capitalism and establish in its place an egalitarian, socialist society.

Yet the struggle of the Black people of this country for freedom, while part of the struggle of the working class as a whole, is more than that struggle. The Negro people are an oppressed race-color caste, in the main comprising the most exploited layer of the American working class. Because of the generations of exceptional oppression, degradation and humiliation, Black people as a group have special needs and problems necessitating additional and special forms of struggle. It is this part of

a decayed feudal economy or from external imperialism in order to develop freely, i.e., in order to exploit its “own” working class. But there is practically no black capitalist class in America. Instead, the so-called “Black Bourgeoisie” consists in reality of a small, weak, petty-bourgeoisie catering to service needs arising out of segregation, and of white collar workers—which latter are rapidly achieving a remarkable degree of integration into the white middle class, and thus have an identity of interests and outlook far removed from those of the majority of working-class Negroes.

The present mood among black ghetto youth, “nationalism,” could more correctly be termed “pseudo-nationalism” since the



Charles Sims of Deacons for Defense and Justice, which organized armed self-defense against Klan, Bogalusa, Louisiana, 1966.

the struggle which has begun today, and from which the most active and militant sections of Black people will gain a deep education and experience in the lessons of struggle. Because of their position as both the most oppressed and also the most conscious and experienced section, revolutionary black workers are slated to play an exceptional role in the coming American revolution.

“Pseudo-Nationalism”

Black nationalism accepts present American class society and working-class divisions as unchanging and unchangeable, and from this static vantage point separation is seen as the only solution. Yet this solution is unrealizable in terms of the realities of American class society. True nationalism is, in essence, the struggle to establish an independent area for the development of a *separate political economy*. Historically it has come at those times and in those places, usually within a common geographical area among those with a common language and cultural heritage, when an emerging capitalist class must free itself from the shackles of

conditions fostering genuine nationalist sentiment do not exist. This mood arises from growing racial self-confidence and pride—a positive development as it is a precondition for real combativeness—coupled with bitterness at the failure of the struggle to gain significant results without support from the rest of the working class. It develops in the context of a generally correct criticism of the middle-class-oriented Civil Rights leadership while an alternate, proletarian leadership has not yet been created. The dominant feature of this pseudo-nationalism, like all variants of black nationalism, is its inability to generate a program of struggle—a further proof of its spurious nature. Such “nationalism” is divisive and interferes with the development of class consciousness and a program to sharpen class struggle.

Thus the Negro struggle in America is more directly related to the class struggle than any essentially national question could be. The falling rate of profit makes it impossible for the ruling class, even during a spurt of unequalled prosperity, to meet the demands of this super-exploited layer for improvements in the basic conditions of their lives. Hence *any* steps forward in this struggle immediately pose the class question and the need for class struggle in its sharpest form.

III. BROAD TASKS

Transitional Organization

The necessity for mass organizations of strata of working people with special needs and problems was recognized by the Leninist Comintern [Communist International], which worked out the tactics of the relationship of such transitional organizations to the revolutionary party and to the class struggle as a whole. These organizations are a *part* of the revolutionary movement, and their struggles advance the overall class struggle. They are neither *substitutes for* nor *opponents of* the vanguard party of the entire class, but are *linked to* the vanguard party through their most conscious cadres. Examples of transitional organizations are militant women’s organizations, revolutionary youth leagues, and radical trade-union caucuses. Such a transitional organization is necessary for Negro workers at a time when large sections of the working class are saturated with race hatred.

With its program of transitional strug-

gle around the felt needs of a section of the class, the organization mobilizes serious struggle by the largest possible number. Such an organization, while not itself “socialist,” leads those participating in its struggles to the realization that a fundamental overturn of the existing society is necessary.

In the Northern ghettos a great organizational vacuum exists. The objective basis of the traditional middle-class organizations such as CORE and the NAACP is growing ever narrower as more and more of the Negro middle class is able to flee the ghetto. (For example, over the past decade, 40,000 employed Negroes moved from Harlem into other, more “desirable” parts of the city or suburbs, where their incomes were sufficient to break some of the barriers of segregation. The Harlem CORE chapter recently has had only a few active members who actually reside in Harlem!) As the objective basis of these groups narrows, they grow subjectively ever less related to the needs and interests of the black masses. This is reflected in the move towards an increasingly consistent position by the middle-class groups that since the basic problems are economic, government intervention—secured by pressures on or within the Democratic Party—must be the primary aim of the Civil Rights movement. In 1964-65 this took the guise of “Liberal Coalition” politics as expounded most articulately by Bayard Rustin, and the delivery of the black vote to Johnson. This year’s guise are the more militant-sounding slogans of “Black Power” and “independent political action” as interpreted by certain Northern Civil Rights leaders to mean black judges, black cops and black Democrats or, as regards “independent” political action, to mean a black voting bloc which will supposedly “swing” its vote to whichever capitalist party promises the most to Negroes. The ultimate meaning of the latter is to build support for Bobby Kennedy’s projected presidential candidacy. As the old Civil Rights movement becomes more and more subordinated to the political arm of the very forces responsible for the oppression of the Negro people, it will serve increasingly to function *solely* as a brake on real struggle and a diversion from revolutionary alternatives.

Oppose Federal Infiltration

Furthermore, these reformist organizations have already become so exposed in their ineffectiveness, even in gaining token reforms, that the government has found it necessary to create its own reformist organizations in order that *some* alternative to proletarian organization and program will exist. The millions of dollars poured into HARYOU-ACT have succeeded in confusing or buying off a large number of potential youth leaders in Harlem through a combination of money and pseudo-radical nationalistic rhetoric. The so-called “anti-poverty” projects have also served to foster a certain amount of illusions among the ghetto masses. The witchhunt in Mobilization for Youth when some idealistic young people tried to use it as a vehicle for support to rent strikes, school boycotts and community actions against police brutality shows clearly the outcome of attempting to use government fronts as instruments of real struggle.

The vast black ghettos of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit and numerous other cities are wide open for the formation of a proletarian mass organization of struggle. Only the smallness of the black revolutionary cadre, together with the temporary aftermath of police terror during the “riots,” and in some cases sectarianism, have kept such organizations small. The Spartacist League will do all in its power to encourage and aid such organizations, and favors the unity in action of all working-class-oriented organizations in the ghetto.

Ghetto Defense

For the last three summers ghettos across the country have been rocked by elemental, spontaneous, non-political upheavals against the prevailing property

continued on page 8

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

Website: www.icl-fi.org • Email address: vanguard@tiac.net

National Office: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116, (212) 732-7860

Chicago.....

Box 6441, Main PO, Chicago, IL 60680, (312) 563-0441
chicagospartacist@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 2-5 p.m., and by appointment, 222 S. Morgan (Buzzer 23)

Los Angeles

Box 29574, Los Feliz Sta., Los Angeles, CA 90029, (213) 380-8239
slsycla@sbcglobal.net
Public Office: Sat. 2-5 p.m., 3806 Beverly Blvd., Room 215

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 318, Manhattan

Oakland.....

Box 29497, Oakland, CA 94604, (510) 839-0851
slbayarea@fastmail.net
Public Office: Sat. 1-4 p.m., 1904 Franklin (Buzzer #407)

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Montréal..... CP 83 Succ. Place-d'Armes, Montréal, QC H2Y 3E9, (514) 728-7578
trotskyiste.montreal@gmail.com

Toronto

Box 7198, Station A, Toronto, ON M5W 1X8, (416) 593-4138
spartcan@on.aibn.com

Vancouver

Box 2717, Main P.O., Vancouver, BC V6B 3X2, (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

26 FEBRUARY 2016

7

Black and Red...

(continued from page 7)

relations and against the forces of the state which protect these relations. In no case have they been genuine race riots. The risings have usually been provoked by the police, in the course of “normal” brutalities (Watts 1965) or in an effort to crush a movement which is exceeding the bounds set for it by bourgeois society (Harlem 1964). As the struggle against the police expands, the black street-fighters turn on the merchants and shopkeepers, the visible representatives of the oppressive class society, and smash whatever cannot be carried off. Yet despite the vast energies expended and the casualties suffered, these outbreaks have changed nothing. This is a reflection of the urgent need for organizations of real struggle, which can organize and direct these energies toward conscious political objectives. It is the duty of a revolutionary organization to intervene where possible to give these outbursts political direction.

The Northern ghettos will be organized only by revolutionary ghetto organizations. The beginning of such organization is possible now, while the form remains open. One form is the building of block and neighborhood councils based on tenants councils. Experience has shown that tenants councils must be introduced to the *whole* transitional program and tied to as broad an organizational base as possible if they are to achieve stability. Block and neighborhood councils of this sort would be able to speak for a whole area, put forward their demands, and call out the people in militant actions to back up those demands.

One of the most important functions of such representative popular organs would be the organization and direction of effective self-defense against police and racist violence. The potential for rapid growth by the American fascist movement adds to the seriousness of this task, given the sharp contradictions confronting U.S. capitalism in the next period. Ghetto action might take the form of block patrols of neighborhood men, preferably union members with past military training. The need for the immediate formation of such patrols is shown by the indiscriminate beatings and killings by police during the suppression of ghetto “riots.”

Such terror will be unleashed whenever the black people approach a breakthrough in changing the fundamental condition of their lives. Block patrols would also help prevent the day-to-day acts of terror against individual ghetto residents by racist cops and would serve to control the crime victimizing ghetto residents which the capitalist cops ignore or participate in. Such neighborhood patrols will become a part of that workers militia which will defend the future American proletarian revolution.

Independent Political Action

The struggle for black freedom demands the total break of the Negro people from the Democratic Party, the preferred political weapon of the forces which profit from the suppression and super-exploitation of the Negro people. The only alternative is a new party based on the needs of the poor and working people. The formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the South, initially with a mass base, indicated the potential and feeling which exist for independent political action. However, the MFDP, as its name indicated, was not independent but was simply a means whereby certain Southern and Northern civil rights leaders hoped to pursue their ambitions within the national Democratic Party at the expense of the interests of the Negro people. This situation has since been recognized by the most militant sections of the Southern movement, and the party has now lost its mass support.

The formation of the Black Panther Party in Lowndes County, Alabama, was a step forward inasmuch as it was consciously organized *in opposition to* the Democratic Party. Based on the share-



Harlem cop riots, 1964 (left). Spartacist-initiated rally in NYC garment district to mobilize labor in defense of Harlem residents (right).



New York Times/Redux

croppers and farmers of a single rural blackbelt county, its program is by these very factors limited to reforms realizable within the system such as improved schools and roads, development of farmer cooperatives, and purchase of land for dispossessed sharecroppers. In order to go beyond these albeit needed reforms and pose a real challenge to the Southern system and the basic structure of society, the idea of independent political action must be extended to the cities and developed among workers. The perspective of the Black Panther Party for a federation of county-wide parties must be replaced by a perspective for a South-wide Freedom Labor Party.

Only by the development of a working-class program and by explicitly opening

and without the existing unions in order to fight for their urgent needs. Union bureaucrats, with their public lip service to the Civil Rights movement, will be hard put to suppress “Civil Rights” caucuses within their unions or condemn Labor Civil Rights Committees as “dual unions.” Yet under conditions in which struggle reaches revolutionary heights, such committees would be precursors to factory committees. Should dual power be posed, these in turn would be vital elements in workers councils and, in victory, of workers power.

In addition to anti-discrimination demands, the “CR” caucuses should raise the following demands:

(1) *Organization of the Unorganized.* At the same time this demand is raised,



Supporters of Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party hold sit-down protest outside 1964 Democratic Party National Convention as part of attempt to unseat all-white official state delegation.

the door to support by white workers can real political independence be maintained, real gains won and the basis laid for eventual working-class political unity. This unity will come about when the exploited section of the white South is driven into opposition and is compelled to forego color prejudice in order to struggle along class lines against its real enemies—the owners of land and industry.

The creation of a South-wide Freedom Labor Party would serve as a tremendous impetus for similar action by Northern workers. The struggle for such a party would necessitate a rank-and-file revolt within the organized labor movement to overthrow the present labor bureaucracy. In the absence of a labor party, the Spartacist League supports all independent candidates whose programs are based on the needs of the ghettos.

Negroes as Workers

In this period when primary attention has been focused on the ghetto, the importance of Negro militants within the organized labor movement must not be overlooked; black unionists form an immediate, existing, organizational link with the white section of the working class. Militant Negro and other super-exploited minority workers together with their labor partisans must organize within

the black worker militants should themselves begin this organization.

(2) *Organization by the Unions of the Unemployed.* Again, this demand should be accompanied by the actual organization of unemployed workers by the black worker militants. The aim is to create links between the ghetto and the labor movement and to counteract the lumpenization process proceeding apace in the ghettos among the unemployed. Welfare

recipients should be organized around a program calling for full employment and their organizations should be associated with welfare worker unions.

(3) *For a Sliding Scale of Wages Controlled by Labor.* All workers are being hit hard by inflation caused by the war in Viet Nam. The bourgeoisie’s attempts to freeze wages to save profits must be countered by the demand that wages be scaled according to the purchasing power of the dollar, with the power of the sliding scale in the hands of workers’ committees, not bourgeois agencies.

(4) *Fight for the Shorter Work Week.* The rate of Negro unemployment is twice that of white workers, and the gap is increasing. Yet white workers also face the threat of unemployment due to automation. The struggle for *more* jobs for *all*, rather than competition between black and white workers for a few jobs here or there, can unite workers. At the same time, the demand for a shorter work week poses racial equality in union hiring without making the white worker fear for his job.

(5) *Oppose Government Intervention.* At all times we oppose using the Government to “integrate” unions, and rely solely on the working class for this task. Such ruling-class tactics as decertification of discriminatory unions are intended to destroy union independence, foster division among union members and worsen the position of all workers.

For Negroes the fight for full employment at decent wages is not just the key to better housing, schools, etc., but a fundamental and necessary defense. If Black people are forced out of any economic role and become lumpenized as a group they will be in a position to be used as a scapegoat and could be totally wiped out during a future social crisis—just as the Jews in Germany were—without affecting the economy. The fight must be fought *now* to maintain Negroes as part of the working class.

The struggle for this program within the labor unions will entail a simultaneous fight for full union democracy and ultimately a struggle for leadership against the present labor lieutenants of capital. The most essential feature of this struggle will be the break of the labor movement from all its present ties to the capitalist state.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

- ☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail
- ☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)
- ☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)
- ☐ I would like to contribute \$_____ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Apt. # _____

Phone (_____) _____ Email _____

Make checks payable/mail to: Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Venezuela...

(continued from page 12)

notorious for receiving funding from Washington. The core of the white Venezuelan ruling class has always looked with disdain at the indigenous and black masses who backed Chávez, himself of *zambo* (mixed black and indigenous) heritage. Expressing this contempt, AD leader Henry Ramos Allup ordered that all pictures of Chávez be removed from the legislature, saying they should be dumped in the slums or given to the building’s janitors. Ramos is pushing for a referendum to oust Maduro, declaring that there is no need to wait until the 2019 elections (*Diario ABC*, 3 February). It captures something of this individual that even the former U.S. ambassador privately called him repellent, complaining about his constant requests for money and other favors (“Acción Democrática, A Hopeless Case,” wikileaks.org, 17 April 2006).

The growing influence of China in Latin America is also of concern to U.S. imperialism, and various American economists are blaming China for Venezuela’s crisis. Over the last decade, Venezuela has received about \$60 billion in loans and investments from China in exchange for often-deferred oil shipments. China is not capitalist but a bureaucratically deformed workers state. Thus, in sharp contrast to the U.S., its foreign investments are not primarily driven by the capitalist profit motive but by a drive to accrue resources for economic development.

Chávez was one in a long line of military officers in Latin America and beyond (e.g., Juan Perón in Argentina in the 1940s) who came to power on the basis of nationalist populism. The history of Venezuela and other Latin American countries has long been marked by two faces of capitalist rule, populist reform and U.S.-dictated



AFP

Supporters of President Nicolás Maduro rally in Caracas, January 15.

omy, Luis Salas, who had blamed the U.S. “strategy of economic destabilization” for Venezuela’s crisis. Maduro replaced him with Miguel Pérez, a former head of the Fedindustria business association who is widely seen as more “business-friendly.”

Chávez’s rule was part of a wave of left-talking bourgeois regimes in Latin America over the past decade and a half, including Lula da Silva in Brazil, Nestor and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Rafael Correa in Ecuador and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua. To be sure, these regimes were different from those of the neoliberal 1990s, which oversaw a yawning gap between the rich and the poor and a wave of privatizations and “free trade” agreements in the direct interests of U.S. imperialism. But all of the governments remained thoroughly in the framework of the capitalist-imperialist system. More recently, Latin America has

programme,” but “what is lacking is the necessary will” (marxist.com, 9 February 2015). Such prettification of a capitalist government politically disarms the working class and the oppressed masses, leaving them defenseless in the face of resurgent right-wing forces.

For all his populist rhetoric, Chávez was no less the *class opponent* of the victory of the workers and urban and rural poor than his neoliberal opponents, and the same applies to his successor Maduro. We have fought to break the illusion held by working people and the oppressed—both in Venezuela and internationally—that these bourgeois regimes could implement a fundamental social transformation. In contrast, our reformist political opponents have accommodated and deepened such illusions. As we wrote more than a decade ago: “History will reserve a harsh verdict for those ‘leftists’ who promote one or another left-talking capitalist *caudillo*” (“Venezuela: Populist Nationalism vs. Permanent Revolution,” WV No. 860, 9 December 2005).

With the Chávez regime aligning itself with Cuba, the IMT and other reformists falsely compared Venezuela to the Cuban Revolution. IMT spokesman Jorge Martin claimed that the “dynamic of action and reaction of the Venezuelan revolution reminds us in a very powerful way of the first five years of the Cuban revolution” (marxist.com, 1 March 2005).

But the class nature of Venezuela was and is completely different from that of Cuba, which is a bureaucratically deformed workers state. When Fidel Castro’s guerrillas marched into Havana in January 1959, the capitalist state apparatus headed by the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista was destroyed. Facing threats from the American imperialists, in 1960-61 the Castro regime carried out a social revolution from above, nationalizing all U.S.-owned and domestic capitalist property and eliminating the Cuban bourgeoisie as a social class on the island. This was in no small part possible due to the existence of the Soviet Union, which acted as a military counterweight to the U.S. and provided Cuba with essential economic support.

Trotskyists stand for the unconditional military defense of Cuba and the other remaining deformed workers states: China, Laos, North Korea and Vietnam. The Stalinist bureaucrats who rule these countries uphold the nationalist dogma of building “socialism in one country,” in sharp counterposition to the program of international socialist revolution that animated the 1917 Russian October Revolution led by Lenin and Trotsky. We fight for workers political revolutions to oust the bureaucratic rulers and establish regimes based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism. Our defense of the deformed workers states is part of our fight for new October Revolutions throughout the world.

For Permanent Revolution

The way for Venezuela’s workers and oppressed to free themselves from imperialist domination, poverty and oppression can be found in Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution. Latin

America, a victim of colonial and neocolonial plunder, is a region of uneven and combined development, where the most modern industries coexist alongside the deepest poverty and rural backwardness. The weak national bourgeoisies are tied by a thousand threads to the imperialist economic and political order. They are too dependent on foreign capital and too hostile to and fearful of the proletariat to resolve any of the fundamental social problems.

The vital task is to forge revolutionary internationalist workers parties that break the working class from all variants of bourgeois nationalism and champion the cause of all the oppressed: black and indigenous people, peasants, women, the poor. Latin America has numerous concentrations of workers with potential social power, from the oil workers of Venezuela to auto workers in Mexico and Brazil to the miners of Chile, Peru and elsewhere. Due to its centrality in capitalist production, the working class has the strategic power to overthrow capitalist class rule through socialist revolution.

A social revolution that brings the working class to power in Venezuela with the support of the rural masses would undertake such urgent democratic tasks as giving land to the peasants. It would also repudiate the country’s foreign debt and expropriate the bourgeoisie as a class in order to establish a collectivized, planned economy in which production is based on social need rather than profit. The U.S. and other imperialist powers would certainly move to crush such a revolutionary regime. Key to the survival of a workers revolution in Venezuela would be its international extension to the rest of Latin America and to the U.S. itself.

As part of a socialist federation of Latin America, a Venezuelan workers and peasants government could begin to address the need for massive programs to build infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, highways and public transportation and lift the productive capacities of the society. But the conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the socialist revolution; it only opens it by changing the direction of social development. Short of the international extension of the revolution to the advanced, industrialized imperialist centers, that social development will be arrested and ultimately reversed.

Proletarian revolutionary internationalism is at the core of Trotsky’s perspective. The struggles of the proletariat in the semicolonial countries are necessarily intertwined with the fight for power by workers in the heartlands of world imperialism—not least in the United States with its millions-strong proletariat, including powerful black and Latino components. The International Communist League fights to build national sections of a reformed Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution, which will organize and educate the working class in the spirit of uncompromising hostility to the depredations of imperialism and to any and all faces of capitalist rule. ■



AFP

Caracas, April 2002: Venezuelan army commander General Efraín Vásquez Velasco (center) during short-lived CIA-sponsored coup against then-president Hugo Chávez.

austerity enforced by brutal repression of working people. These alternating policy prescriptions available to the national bourgeoisie are sometimes embodied in the same leader embracing one and then the other. An example is former Venezuelan president Carlos Andrés Pérez, who in his first term in the 1970s nationalized the oil industry (with compensation). High oil prices provided resources that he partly invested in social programs, education and health care. But in his second term, 1989-93, he did the opposite: faced with a crash in the oil market he implemented sweeping cuts and privatizations at the behest of the IMF.

Marxists support social reforms favorable to the oppressed and defend nationalizations in dependent countries against imperialist encroachment. But these are not socialist measures. In fact, capitalist regimes typically use nationalizations to tie the working masses to their coattails. And, especially in underdeveloped countries like Venezuela, reforms in the interests of workers and the poor are always temporary and subject to reversal.

Tellingly, on February 15, Maduro dismissed his vice president for the econ-

experienced another shift to the right. Washington’s toady Mauricio Macri was recently elected president of Argentina, while the Brazilian government, led by the social-democratic Workers Party, has made a sharp turn to austerity and is increasingly unpopular.

Chávez’s “Socialist” Advisers

Among the array of reformist groups that have politically supported the Chávez and Maduro regimes, one of the most shameless is Alan Woods’s International Marxist Tendency (IMT), a self-proclaimed Trotskyist group whose U.S. publication is *Socialist Appeal*. Spitting on the fundamental tenets of Trotskyism, Woods spent a decade advising the bourgeois demagogue Chávez on how to run his government. Today, the IMT continues to provide a left cover for Maduro, while complaining of a “capitalist fifth column within the Bolivarian movement” (marxist.com, 7 December 2015).

In one of his salutes to Chávez, an article titled “The Transition to Socialism in Venezuela,” Woods claimed that the government in Venezuela “has the power to carry through a revolutionary socialist

International Communist League Pamphlet

**The Development and Extension of
Leon Trotsky's Theory
of Permanent Revolution**

See Page Three

**Rearming Bolshevism
A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923
and the Comintern.....30**

**International Communist League's Fifth International Conference:
Down With Executive Offices
of the Capitalist State!.....56**

AUSTRALIA - A\$2 BRITAIN - £1.50 CANADA - C\$2.50 IRELAND - £1.50 SOUTH AFRICA - R4 USA - US\$2

\$2 (56 pages)

Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Syria...

(continued from page 1)

From the south, the Syrian army has pushed to within 15 miles of the Turkish border, threatening to seal off what for years has been the main conduit of aid to rebel forces battling Assad. After suffering serious setbacks, the regime's military has been greatly strengthened by almost five months of escalating intervention by Russian warplanes, which have been bombing rebel positions and residential neighborhoods.

From the east, U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters in northern Syria, also benefiting from Russian airstrikes, have rapidly seized territory lining the Turkish border—sometimes battling other forces supported by the U.S. Kurdish advances have infuriated Turkey's rulers, who throughout the Syrian war have sought to prevent the consolidation of a semi-autonomous Kurdish zone in northern Syria. This is all the more vital to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan now that he is engaged in a brutal offensive against the nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) based in Turkey. Since February 13, Turkey has been shelling positions in Syria held by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its military wing, the People's Protection Committees (YPG), which are affiliated to the PKK.

The YPG declared its intention to seize the entire 68-mile-long stretch of border from the Euphrates River to the town of Azaz, essentially uniting the western and eastern border regions that it controls.



Reuters

President Obama with Saudi Arabia's King Salman in Riyadh, January 2015.

a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan. However, in Syria and Iraq the Kurdish nationalists have subordinated the fight for Kurdish self-determination to their alliance with U.S. imperialism. Any fight for Kurdish independence must take as its starting point opposition to U.S. imperialist intervention and to the nationalist parties that serve it.

In recent weeks, Ankara has called on the U.S. and its coalition partners to launch a ground invasion in northern Syria. So far, the U.S. has sidestepped the issue of a possible ground invasion

the airwaves with horror stories about the brutality of the Assad regime. In fact, in earlier years of the “war on terror,” the U.S. shipped suspects to Damascus for “interrogation”—i.e., torture. When the civil war escalated, the U.S. expected Assad's military would collapse. After all, the Alawites, who constitute the regime's main base of support and account for most of the officer corps, make up a mere 12 percent of the country's population. Yet the Syrian regime, defying the imperialists' expectations, showed remarkable staying power. Meanwhile, the U.S. rulers, blinded by their great-power arrogance, could not fathom why rebel groups owned and operated by the CIA did not strike a chord among the Syrian people.

It soon dawned on important figures in U.S. ruling circles that Barack Obama's goal of “regime change” necessarily meant replacing Assad with Islamic fundamentalists. As reported by Seymour Hersh in the *London Review of Books* (January 7), the Pentagon, starting in the autumn of 2013, went so far as to secretly funnel military intelligence and tactical advice to the Assad regime to be used against the very rebels that the White House was backing. Today, rebel forces are reportedly worried that the Obama administration is preparing to abandon them as it seeks to negotiate, centrally with Russia, a “political transition” that would keep Assad in power, at least for a period of time.

However, even that “peace plan” is in trouble. An administration official recently opined that there may in fact be a military solution in Syria—“just not our solution” but that of Putin's Russia. Perhaps. Putin might also use his strengthened position in Syria to bargain for concessions on sanctions against Russia or on the growing NATO presence in the Baltics and elsewhere in East Europe. While the

U.S. is eager to curb Russia's influence in the Near East, it also feels compelled to cut some kind of deal with Putin on Syria.

What explains the Assad regime's unexpected resilience? While most of the Syrian military, including a significant number of its generals, are—like the rebel forces—Sunni Muslim, defections by individuals were not accompanied by the predicted breaking away of chunks of the army. More generally, the inescapable fact is that for many in Syria the Islamic jihadists are scarcely viewed as an improvement over the Assad dictatorship.

In ISIS-controlled territory, as has been widely reported, those who are not Sunni are beheaded if they refuse to convert; untold numbers of women have been kidnapped and sold into forced marriages. Less widely reported by the servile media is the fact that *sharia* law has also been imposed by sections of the Free Syrian Army, the so-called “moderates” touted by Washington. Rebel groups have repeatedly perpetrated massacres in Alawite, Christian and other minority villages. Likewise, Sunni Arab and Turkmen villagers have been driven out by YPG forces.

Both candidates for the Democratic Party presidential nomination have positioned themselves to carry on U.S. imperialism's devastating policy in Syria. As secretary of state, Hillary Clinton was consistently on the more hawkish side within the Obama administration. She was a chief proponent of the air war against Libya and pushed hard for retaining a stronger military force in Iraq and for supplying arms to Syrian rebels. Robert Gates, who was defense secretary under both George W. Bush and Obama, recalled in *Duty: Memoir of a Secretary at War* (2014) how he and Clinton teamed up in 2009 to force the decision to escalate the war in Afghanistan and, the following year, to delay the drawdown of forces.

Clinton calls for the establishment of a no-fly zone in Syria, a position shared by Republican presidential hopefuls Marco Rubio and John Kasich. The Obama administration has not ruled out the idea, but a number of Congressional Democrats have voiced (understandable) fears that such a move would risk military conflict with Russia. Clinton countered that the U.S. needs to stand up to Russian “bullying.”

Democratic candidate Bernie Sanders, while calling the no-fly zone idea “very dangerous,” has also been a loyal supporter of the administration's bellicose policy in Syria and elsewhere (see “Bernie Sanders: Imperialist Running Dog,” WV No. 1083, 12 February). Both he and Clinton agree on “regime change” in Syria—the overthrow of Assad. Sanders simply proposes a different policy to advance U.S. imperialism's interests in the region, calling for “putting together a coalition of Arab countries who should be leading the effort” to defeat ISIS. This effectively means calling on Arab countries to provide the ground troops in



Reuters

YPG Kurdish nationalists shell what they claim are ISIS strongholds in Northern Syria, June 2015.

Turkey's prime minister threatened “a severe response” if that happened. He warned: “We will not let Azaz fall.”

Washington's alliance with the YPG has heightened tensions between the U.S. and Turkey. Addressing his U.S. ally, Erdogan asked: “Are you on our side or the side of the terrorist PYD and PKK organizations?” From Washington's point of view, the answer is both: On the one hand, Turkey is a key U.S./NATO ally, and Washington joins Ankara in labeling the PKK “terrorist.” On the other hand, the Syrian PYD/YPG fighters have served as the ground troops for the U.S. imperialist intervention, coordinating battlefield operations with U.S. military planners, operating with U.S. special ops forces and serving as spotters for U.S. bombing runs.

The close cooperation between the Kurdish nationalists and their supposed U.S. benefactors will not stop the latter from turning on them. Last July, in exchange for use of the Incirlik Air Base in Turkey to launch operations against ISIS, the U.S. gave the Ankara regime the green light to launch airstrikes in northern Iraq against the PKK. As we have warned, by selling their souls to the U.S. imperialists, the Kurdish nationalists have committed a crime for which the long-dispossessed Kurdish masses will pay the price.

The struggle for Kurdish self-determination—that is, to form a Kurdish state—is a just one, requiring the defeat of four capitalist states: Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran. We have long raised the call for

of Syria—the Obama administration has limited itself to sending special ops forces. Turkey has also reiterated its longstanding call for imposing a no-fly zone in northern Syria. This is a not-so-veiled threat against Russia, which has provided the crucial air support for the rapid advances by the Syrian army and the YPG. In November, Turkish forces shot down a Russian jet as it was carrying out raids in Syria's northern Latakia province, an area where rebel Turkmen militias have operated with artillery support from the Turkish military across the border. In response, Russian president Vladimir Putin denounced the Erdogan regime as “accomplices of terrorists.”

Our main opposition is to the imperialists, but we also oppose the other capitalist powers involved in Syria and call on them to leave. That includes not only Turkey and Saudi Arabia but also the Russian and Iranian forces, which were invited in by the Syrian government.

Imperialist Depredations and Aspiring Commanders-in-Chief

U.S. policy in Syria is as incoherent and bumbling as it is ruinous to the masses of the Near East. Behind this incoherence is the fact that Saudi Arabia and Turkey are among the U.S.'s key allies in the region. At the same time, Washington's main target is ISIS, which is tacitly backed by Riyadh and Ankara.

When the U.S., Turkey and the Gulf states began heavily supporting the Syrian rebels four years ago, Washington filled

Spartacus Youth Club Class Series

BAY AREA

Saturday, March 12, 3 p.m.

The Russian Revolution of 1917: How the Working Class Took Power

1904 Franklin St., Buzzer #407
Oakland

Information and readings: (510) 839-0851
sycbayarea@fastmail.net

NEW YORK CITY

Tuesday, March 1, 7 p.m.

The Russian Revolution of 1917: How the Working Class Took Power

CCNY, NAC, Room 1/211A
138th St. and Amsterdam Avenue
(Take #1 train to 137th St.-City College)
Information and readings: (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net

TORONTO

Wednesday, March 2, 6:30 p.m.

Communism vs. Feminism

U of T, OISE, Room 2198
252 Bloor St. West
(at St. George subway)

Information and readings: (416) 593-4138
spartacan@on.aibn.com

VANCOUVER

Thursday, March 17, 6:30 p.m.

Stalinism: Degeneration of the Russian Revolution and Collapse of the USSR

Britannia Community Centre
Learning Resource Centre Room
1661 Napier Street
(off Commercial Drive)

Information and readings: (604) 687-0353
trotskyist_vancouver@shawcable.com

For more information, visit the ICL website: www.icl-fi.org

Syria to support Washington’s objectives.

In fact, the country that would be “leading” Sanders’s “coalition” is Washington’s main Arab partner, Saudi Arabia, which claims adherence to the extreme, Wahabi variant of Sunni fundamentalism from which ISIS derives its theology. In Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to drive. Without the consent of a male guardian, they cannot go to university or (if under the age of 45) travel abroad, and they risk being stoned to death for adultery. As for beheadings, the Saudi kingdom does not take a backseat to ISIS. In recent years, hundreds of people have been beheaded in Saudi Arabia for offenses including blasphemy, apostasy, homosexuality and sorcery. In a country where public observance of any religion besides Islam is forbidden, foreign workers, with their own religious practices, are especially vulnerable to being convicted of witchcraft and sentenced to 1,000 lashes, long prison terms or beheading. (A special police agency, the Anti-Witchcraft Unit, is tasked with investigating alleged witches, neutralizing their paraphernalia and nullifying their spells.) The bodies of those beheaded are often crucified and publicly displayed for several days, their heads either sewn back onto their bodies or suspended above corpses in plastic bags.

Defeat U.S. Imperialism Through Socialist Revolution!

Next month will mark the 13th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which resulted in a pro-Iran regime in Baghdad and unleashed Sunni and Shi’ite fundamentalist militias that have carried out

pogroms against each other’s peoples. This set the stage for the current bloody unraveling of the region, in particular by sharply intensifying the conflict between the Sunni Gulf states and Shi’ite Iran. At home, the handmaiden to that war, the occupation of Afghanistan and the U.S.’s other military adventures has been the American rulers’ onslaught against working people, minorities and most everyone else.

The U.S. working class must be won to the understanding that its enemy is its “own” ruling class and that it needs to oppose imperialist aggression abroad. Many working people are understandably repelled by the medieval brutality

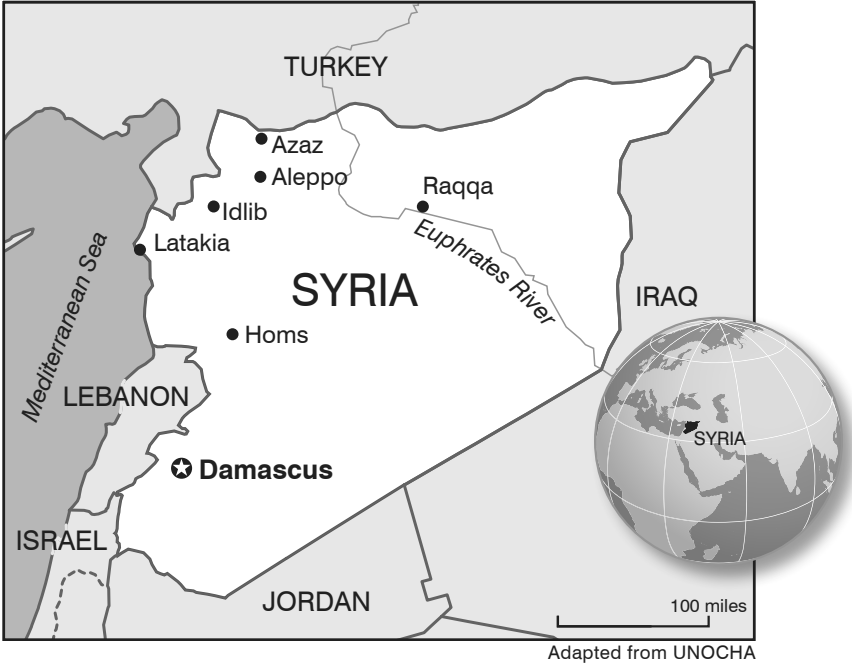
of groups like ISIS. But the gruesome crimes of ISIS pale in comparison to those of U.S. imperialism, responsible for the slaughter of tens of millions around the world. It is in the interest of American workers that U.S. imperialism suffer setbacks and defeats in its military aggressions and designs.

It is not ISIS, Al Qaeda or some other Islamist force that has taken income inequality here to virtually unprecedented heights. The same ruling class that wreaks death and destruction abroad gorges itself on profits while the workers it exploits have their jobs slashed and their health and pension benefits torn up. This same

ruling class unleashes its cops to kill black youth on America’s streets, holds nearly one-quarter of the world’s prison population in its dungeons, lets this country’s infrastructure rot and outright poisons cities like Flint.

What is desperately needed is class struggle against the capitalist rulers, which would both defend the interests of workers at home and hinder the ambitions of U.S. imperialism abroad. On at least a superficial level, many working people in the U.S. perceive that the hardships they endure here are somehow related to the exploitation and oppression carried out by their rulers abroad. Our aim is to win the most conscious layers of the working class to the understanding that what is necessary is the overturn of the U.S. capitalist order through socialist revolution, which is the only way out of this system predicated on exploitation, racist oppression and imperialist war.

We fight to build a workers party, the necessary instrument to lead the multi-racial proletariat in the struggle for power. Such a party—section of a reformed Fourth International—must be built in opposition to all capitalist parties and through political struggle against the misleaders of the trade unions, who chain the proletariat to its capitalist class enemy, not least by promoting the lie that the working class and the capitalist rulers share common interests. Only victorious workers revolutions on an international scale can end imperialist slaughter and ethnic bloodletting, opening the road to eliminating material scarcity and building an egalitarian socialist society.■



Britain...

(continued from page 4)

Cameron’s Health and Social Care Act, which created the clinical commissioning groups that control the lion’s share of the NHS budget, “a gateway for the outflow of billions in NHS funds to private firms,” as we wrote in our 2013 article.

Now the NHS is fragmented into a plethora of different organisations, some public and some private. As Neena Modi, president of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, noted in an article in the *Guardian* (9 February), “The private sector is said to have received 70% of contracts awarded over 2013-14, estimated at £20bn of the total NHS budget of £113bn.” Another £10 billion a year goes towards PFI repayments, and administrative costs of the “internal market” swallow up a further £5-10 billion of NHS funds. Among the private firms currently gouging the NHS are Richard Branson’s Virgin operation as well as the Hospital Corporation of America and Optum, a subsidiary of another U.S. healthcare giant, UnitedHealth Group. The CEO of NHS England is in fact a former executive of UnitedHealth.

The quality of care provided by these profit-hungry outfits can be gleaned from the experience of Circle, the pioneer in private sector involvement in the NHS. Last year, Circle pulled out of a £1 billion contract to run Hinchingbrooke Hospital in Cambridgeshire after a Care Quality Commission inspection gave the facility an “inadequate” rating. The hospital’s privatisation had been upheld as a model for the whole NHS. Circle was only three years into its ten-year contract.

At 7 per cent, Britain’s healthcare budget is a lower percentage of GDP than that of almost any other West European country. To match the average rate of spending of other European countries, the annual NHS budget would have to rise by £43 billion. Yet the government demands billions in “efficiency” cuts while insisting that NHS trusts will be further penalised if they refuse to implement the new contract for junior doctors.

According to the *Guardian* (13 February), one in five general practice surgeries [doctor’s offices] in London, covering nearly one million people, may close in the next three years because they cannot find replacements for retiring doctors. Mean-

while, the NHS is short of some 15,000 hospital nurses. Coincidentally, that is just about the number of nurses who would have been recruited from outside Europe in the last few years if tighter immigration controls had not been applied. Now the government is also slashing the domestic supply of new nurses by abolishing the NHS bursaries which currently allow student nurses to pay no university fees [tuition] and to receive means-tested subsidies ranging between £1000 and £4000 a year. To make up for the lack of available nurses, the NHS pays parasitic private agencies to provide contract workers.

Defence of the NHS cannot be divorced from other social questions. It is tied to the fight against all racial, sexual and national discrimination and for full citizenship rights for all immigrants, who are heavily represented in the workforce; for an end to university tuition fees and a full living stipend for all students; for cancellation of the PFI debt and the return of privatised hospitals and other health facilities to the public sector; to shut down the parasitic private agencies.

Instead of the division of the workforce among 13 different unions and professional associations, which sows disunity and is used to justify scabbing and passivity, what is needed is a single union made up of *all* healthcare workers, including [employment] agency workers—from doctors and nurses to lab technicians and cleaners. Such a union could lead a struggle for a massive infusion of funds into the public health service. This includes the fight to expand education and training and increase hiring, under union control, with special programmes to reach out to minorities and immigrants, so that there would be enough doctors, nurses, technicians and other medical staff to care for the whole population. A revolutionary workers party would fight for the expropriation of the private healthcare, insurance and drug companies and for quality healthcare for all free at the point of use, as part of the struggle for socialist revolution.

Workers Need Revolutionary Leadership

It speaks to the spinelessness of the don’t-rock-the-boat apparatchiks who currently head the trade unions that they have left it to a layer of petty-bourgeois professionals to play a vanguard role in defence of the NHS. The union misleaders are driven by a desire not to defend the work-

ers who pay their salaries but to police the working class and maintain class peace. They hide behind a respectful veneration of the bourgeoisie’s laws (and profits!), avoiding any infringement of the anti-union laws, which proscribe spontaneous or solidarity strike action. The capitalists and City [of London] speculators are certainly not so concerned about flouting the laws that supposedly regulate their activities! The union tops’ obeisance to the capitalist order goes a fair way to explain why working people find themselves in their current, parlous state—saddled with declining incomes and zero-hour contracts [with no guaranteed number of hours], working two or more jobs to make ends meet, etc.

In the absence of union struggle, the capitalists have gorged themselves on huge profits derived from the sweat and blood of the workers they exploit while reducing a large and growing part of the populace to penury. The “bedroom tax” on allegedly unoccupied bedrooms of people on housing benefits penalises especially those who can’t or won’t move out of the homes they’ve lived in for decades, e.g., the elderly and disabled. Now, the government proposes that families with a joint income of more than £30,000 (£40,000 in London) be forced to pay exorbitant market rents for council housing. This means that a London family could be penalised an estimated average of £12,000 per year!

Suicides, the leading cause of death among men aged 15-49, are steadily increasing. The lack of mental health facilities plays a role here. But so, surely, must the fact that many people—young and not-so-young—can no longer afford to set up their own households, that college-leavers are saddled with unbearable debts for much of their working lives, that young workers—and older workers who have been thrown out of work—can never expect a well-paid, full-time job.

Health means more than jabs [shots], pills and surgical knives: It means a decent place to live, plenty of good food to eat, safe working conditions, the promise of a future that is not just instability and despair. The inequities and manifold oppressions in capitalist society have their roots in a system based on production for bourgeois profit rather than for human need. To guarantee not only quality healthcare for all but all the other fundamental requirements of life demands the construction of a planned, collectivised

economy in which those who labour rule. The only future that will allow the all-sided development of humanity, no longer haunted by material want, is one based on an enormous leap in the productive capacity of society—a global classless, communist society guided by the principle: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs. Advances in science and technology beginning with the Industrial Revolution made it possible for Marx and Engels to envisage such a future; the prospect of deepening immiseration and bloody wars underlines how necessary it is to fight for it.

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, undermined by decades of Stalinist misrule, was seized on by capitalist ideologues to proclaim that socialism was contrary to human nature. Yet today Jeremy Corbyn, the first Labour leader in decades to speak positively of socialism, enjoys the support of millions of working people in this country who are fed up with how the profiteers have wrecked their lives. However, Corbyn’s “parliamentary socialism” is truly a pipe dream, a contradiction in terms. Parliament is a capitalist institution, a cover for the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. It is no more possible to achieve workers rule through Parliament than it is to defend the workers interests against the bosses while adhering to the bosses’ rules.

Workers need a revolutionary vanguard party, based on the teachings of Marx and Engels and on the experience of the Russian October Revolution of 1917. Led by the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky, the Revolution demonstrated that it is necessary for the workers to replace the capitalist state with a workers state based on elected workers councils (soviets) in order to open the road to socialism. Although isolated and burdened by the backwardness of an overwhelmingly rural and peasant society and years of economic devastation and social dislocation caused by war and imperialist rampage, the workers state nevertheless used such resources as were available to begin to provide free healthcare and education for all. The Spartacist League is dedicated to building a party of the Bolshevik type, composed of the most conscious and dedicated workers and pro-socialist intellectuals, as part of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International. The victory of the Fourth International on a global scale will bring about a truly humane epoch.■

WORKERS VANGUARD

No to U.S.-Backed Right-Wing Reaction! Venezuela in Crisis

Venezuela is in the throes of a deep economic crisis fueled in large part by the collapse of world oil prices. The economy contracted by 10 percent last year and is projected to shrink another 8 percent this year. More than 95 percent of state revenue comes from oil exports, while the country relies on imports for most food, medical supplies and other necessities.

There are shortages of many basic goods—for example, rice, beans, diapers and toilet paper—which, while subject to price controls, are strictly rationed. Venezuelans are assigned scheduled days to line up outside stores to try to obtain such goods, but it is common to wait for six or seven hours only to get nothing. Many items are siphoned off by speculators who resell them on the black market at much higher prices. Inflation has hit triple digits and could surpass 700 percent by the end of the year. While the official bank exchange rate for the national currency, the bolivar, is ten to the U.S. dollar, on the black market a dollar now costs more than 1,000 bolivars—about three days’ pay for a minimum-wage worker.

The U.S. imperialists are salivating at the prospect of ousting Venezuela’s long-ruling bourgeois-nationalist regime, which was run by Hugo Chávez from 1999 until his death in 2013 and is now led by his hand-picked successor, Nicolás Maduro. Chávez, a military officer turned populist strongman, used some of the country’s oil profits to institute social programs that benefited the poor and consolidated his support by denouncing Washington’s barbaric economic and military policies in Latin America and elsewhere.

The economic crisis that has engulfed the country has now been compounded by a political crisis. A U.S.-backed right-wing opposition coalition won December’s legislative elections and now threatens sweeping attacks on the workers and the poor. The country’s economic collapse and the gains of the reactionaries expose the bankruptcy of the nationalist populism of Chávez and Maduro. During Chávez’s presidency, a host of reformist leftists internationally hailed his policies as a model of supposed resistance to U.S. imperialism and even of “21st century socialism.” Though targeted by the U.S. rulers and hated by the dominant sectors of the local bourgeoisie, which are closely tied to Washington and Wall Street, Chávez, as we emphasized from the beginning, headed a *capitalist* government, as does Maduro today. Despite cheap “socialist” rhetoric and demagogic claims to be leading a “Bolivarian Revolution,” Chávez himself made clear over ten years ago that his “revolution” was “not in contradiction with private property.”

Chávez’s main concern upon taking office was to shore up the country’s faltering oil profits, long the lifeblood of Venezuelan capitalism. He moved to discipline the oil workers union and to increase the efficiency of the state-owned oil industry, while pressing the OPEC oil cartel to raise prices. Thanks to such efforts, and in the interest of political stability, he was initially supported by much of the Venezuelan ruling class.

As oil prices climbed, Chávez used some of the huge profits to finance his reforms. He tripled the education budget, instituted paid six-month maternity leave



Food shortages in Venezuela. National Guard polices lines outside supermarket, San Felix, August 2015. Inset: Grocery money, black-market equivalent of \$100.

Break with Bourgeois Populism! For a Revolutionary Workers Party!

for women and set up free health clinics staffed by well-trained Cuban doctors as well as food distribution programs for the poor. But far from representing a social revolution, such measures were aimed at binding the dispossessed masses more firmly to the Venezuelan capitalist state. Chávez’s policies also permitted a section of the local capitalists—the so-called *boliburguesía* (Bolivarian bourgeoisie)—to line its pockets.

We warned two years ago:

“Chávez was lucky: the price of oil rose from \$10.87 per barrel in 1998 to \$96.13 in 2013. However, the price of oil is notoriously unstable and the United States, the largest recipient of Venezuela’s oil, has cut its imports. The social welfare programs introduced by Chávez cannot be sustained in the long term under capitalism.”

—“Venezuela: U.S. Imperialism Fuels Right-Wing Protests,”
WV No. 1043, 4 April 2014

This projection has now come to pass. As oil prices have plunged to less than \$30 a barrel, the plight of Venezuela’s workers and the poor has worsened and social programs are unraveling. Some 26 percent of households were in poverty in 2008, a sharp drop from the early years of that decade. But by the end of 2014 the rate had climbed back to almost 50 percent. With many prices skyrocketing, gas was kept cheap enough to be affordable for the masses, but now the regime has hiked the price by 6,000 percent. On top of all this is the country’s looming debt crisis. Tens of billions of dollars are owed to American and other imperialist bankers, and

an installment of \$2.3 billion is due by February 26, mainly to hedge funds and other capitalist vultures.

The broad coalition that won the December legislative elections—an unstable alliance dominated by reactionary, pro-U.S. forces—managed to tap into discontent among the masses struggling to survive in the face of scarcity, corruption and crime. It is now seeking to use its control of the legislature to reverse Chávez’s reforms. A recently adopted bill would decrease and privatize the construction of housing for the poor, putting an end to a program that provided apartments for thousands of people formerly living in tin-roofed shacks with no electricity or running water. Vowing to resist such moves, last month Maduro declared a state of economic emergency.

The U.S. rulers have long seen Latin America as their own private backyard and have a bloody record of backing right-wing military dictators, overthrowing governments they don’t like and pillaging the resources of the region. In Venezuela, they have worked relentlessly with their local satraps to oust the regimes of Chávez and his successor. The U.S. imperialists backed an unsuccessful military coup in 2002, which was soon followed by the right-wing opposition organizing a lockout aimed at crippling the oil industry. Two years ago, Washington fueled street protests in affluent neighborhoods of Caracas and other cities demanding the *salida* (exit) of Maduro. Last year, the Obama administration slapped punitive sanctions on Venezuela and issued

an executive order declaring the country an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to U.S. national security. ***Down with the sanctions! U.S. imperialism: Hands off Venezuela!***

Nationalist Populism and American Imperialism

While the rise of the pro-U.S. right wing is ominous, the nationalist populism associated with Chávez and Maduro is an obstacle to any struggle against imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. Such a struggle requires the independent class mobilization of the proletariat standing at the head of all the oppressed. There can be no permanent amelioration of the plight of the urban and rural poor without replacing the capitalists’ state and their social order with the rule of the working class. A series of workers revolutions internationally is necessary to open the road to a global classless society in which all forms of exploitation and oppression have been eliminated. Radical-minded youth and workers must draw lessons from the current crisis. What is urgently needed is to break from *chavista* bourgeois populism and to forge a revolutionary workers party.

The anti-Maduro coalition is far from homogeneous. It includes forces ranging from frothing pro-U.S. reactionaries to disaffected former supporters of the regime. The dominant force in the new legislature, Democratic Action (AD), is one of the traditional Venezuelan bourgeois parties

continued on page 9