

Democrats, Republicans—Dump 'Em All! For a Multiracial Revolutionary Workers Party!

Reuters



Cole/L.A. Times



Fear, Loathing and the Primaries

In his 1917 book, *The State and Revolution*, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin succinctly described the fraud of bourgeois democracy: “To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism.” As revolutionary Marxists, we oppose on principle a vote to Republicans, Democrats and any other bourgeois candidates. At the same time, this year’s primaries show the anger and despair that has been building at the bottom of U.S. society for decades.

There is widespread hatred for the political establishments of both parties, who are correctly seen as the bought-and-paid-for agents of the financial con men on Wall Street and the profit-bloated corporations that are responsible for the ruin of millions. But thanks above all to the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy, the anger among working people has found no expression in class struggle against the rulers. As a result, the discontents of the ruled are finding expression in support for bourgeois “anti-establishment” candidates. The flagrantly racist, billionaire real estate mogul Donald Trump is, to date, dominating the Republican primaries. The self-declared “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders is giving the second coming of the Clinton dynasty a run for her money to an extent greater than anyone predicted.

Sanders is the only candidate in this electoral circus to offer bread to the masses with his calls for free tuition, Medicare for all and a \$15-an-hour minimum wage. This has struck a chord particularly among white petty-bourgeois youth, as well as with a layer of white workers who have seen their unions destroyed, wages plummet, benefits looted and decent-paying jobs all but disappear. Sanders’s promises are nothing but hot air. Such concessions will only be wrung from the bourgeoisie through class struggle. Despite being red-baited, Sanders is no socialist, but a capitalist politician. Nevertheless, it is a gauge



Top: Candidates from capitalist parties spar over chance to be chief executive of racist U.S. imperialism. Above: Protesters confront reactionary Trump supporters in Chicago, March 11.

of the mounting anger in this society, where socialism has long been reviled as an attack on “the American way of life,” that he is garnering support from a layer of white workers.

Sanders’s claims to be leading “a political revolution against the billionaire class” have been tolerated by the Democratic Party establishment. He has long served the interests of the ruling class, particularly with his support for the bloody wars, occupations and other military adventures of U.S. imperialism that have devastated countries around the globe (see “Bernie Sanders: Imperialist Running Dog,” WV No. 1083, 12 February). Not only is Sanders running for the top ticket of a party that, as much as the Republicans, represents the interests of the bourgeoisie; he is helping refurbish the image of the Democrats as the “party of the people.” Moreover, he has made clear that in the

general election he would support whoever is the Democratic nominee, presumably Hillary Clinton. For her part, Clinton is overwhelmingly winning the black vote as fear of Republican victory, amplified by the fascists crawling between Trump’s toes, further drives black people into the Democrats, the onetime party of the Confederacy and Jim Crow.

On the Republican side, we now witness the spectacle of the party’s establishment pouring millions of dollars into ads attacking, not the Democrats, but their own party’s front-runner. Former Republican Party candidates are being trotted out to preach against Trump’s raving anti-immigrant racism and his revolting sexism. Coming from the mouths of those who told “illegal immigrants” to “self deport,” who reviled workers and the poor as “moochers” for wanting health care, food and housing, who have worked overtime to roll back every

gain of the civil rights movement and who have reveled in biblical scripture and railed against women needing abortions, gay people and other “deviants,” the hypocrisy is breathtaking.

Trump is simply saying openly what Republican Party leaders have been promoting for years. What bothers them is that he is not playing by the party establishment’s rule book. For them, inciting racist reaction serves as an ideological battering ram to further impoverish the working class and poor by slashing such social programs as continue to exist. Trump says that he will not attack Social Security and Medicare. This reactionary demagogue will say or do anything. His claim that he’ll bring back manufacturing to the U.S., invoking a particularly racist variant of “save American jobs” protectionism, has won him a hearing among the white working poor. For its part, the Republican Party leadership is worried that Trump is whipping up the jobless and impoverished masses at home and putting at risk the profits that U.S. imperialism garners from its “free trade” rape of the neocolonial world.

For the Republican leadership, Trump is adding insult to injury by trading on the campaign slogan of Ronald Reagan, the patron saint of the Republican Party: “Make America Great Again.” Reagan rode into the Oval Office by playing on and ramping up a white racist backlash against social programs seen as benefiting the black ghetto poor. The race card was played, as it always has been by America’s rulers, to further the brutal exploitation of the working class as a whole. Today, the devastation that was visited first on the black working class and poor is increasingly the reality for many white workers and poor.

In the 1990s, racist ideologue Charles Murray’s book *The Bell Curve* blamed the misery of ghetto poor on the “genetic inferiority” of black people. In 2012, his book *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010* blamed the destitution facing poor whites on their insufficient family and other values. Such class contempt was put most baldly by a recent article in the right-wing *National Review* (28 March) by one Kevin D. Williamson.

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Cuba and Marxist Theory

The development of a genuinely Marxist, i.e., Trotskyist, analysis of the Cuban Revolution and the nature of the state that developed out of it was a key question in the formation of the Spartacist League, which was founded nearly 50 years ago in September 1966. The forebears of the SL, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), waged a political struggle in the early 1960s within the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) against that party's abandonment of the fight to forge a proletarian party aimed at carrying out a socialist revolution.

The RT's fight began over the question of Cuba, when the SWP uncritically embraced non-proletarian class forces in the form of the petty-bourgeois guerrillas led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, which took power in Havana in 1959 and expropriated the capitalist class in the fall of 1960. The RT also fought the degeneration of the SWP on the domestic terrain, when, during the tumultuous struggles of the civil rights movement, the party leadership capitulated to black nationalism and abstained from the necessary struggle to recruit young black activists to Trotskyism. (The SL's seminal document on the fight against black oppression, "Black and Red," is reprinted in WV Nos. 1084 and 1085, 26 February and 11 March.) The SWP leadership bureaucratically expelled the RT for its political views in 1963.

In abandoning Trotskyism over Cuba,



Santa Clara, 1959: Fidel Castro's petty-bourgeois rebel forces drive toward Havana. Right: Cuban militiaman guards expropriated U.S. oil refinery, 1960.



Tames/NY Times

the SWP embraced the political revisionism that had swept the Fourth International a decade previously. The leader of the Fourth International after World War II, Michel Pablo, concluded from the Stalinist-led overturn of capitalism in several countries in East and Central Europe and later in China, North Korea and North Vietnam that Stalinist parties

could be "roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation." This amounted to a rejection of Trotsky's understanding that the Stalinist bureaucracy was an obstacle to the necessary international extension of socialist revolution. While standing for the unconditional military defense of the USSR, Trotskyists fought for proletarian political revolution to sweep away the Stalinist bureaucracy and to re-establish organs of workers democracy and a revolutionary internationalist regime. This Trotskyist program also applied to the deformed workers states, which were qualitatively similar to the Soviet Union.

Pablo's conclusion was to jettison the construction of revolutionary Trotskyist parties, leading to the destruction of the Fourth International in 1951-53. The SWP and its leader, James Cannon, fought against Pabloite revisionism, but belatedly and partially. In 1953, the SWP and other anti-Pabloite forces internationally, including notably the Socialist Labour League of Gerry Healy in Britain, split from Pablo and formed the International Committee (see "Genesis of Pabloism," *Spartacist* No. 21, Fall 1972).

With the unfolding of the Cuban Revolution, the SWP carried out a "reunification" with Pablo's protégés in 1963, claiming that peasant-based guerrilla warfare would be the means to overthrow capitalism. In fact, the ability of a petty-bourgeois guerrilla group to seize power and establish a deformed workers state by expropriating the capitalist class, as happened in Cuba, was a consequence of exceptional historical circumstances.

These circumstances were described by SL founding co-leader James Robertson in remarks to the April 1966 conference of the International Committee, which the Spartacist tendency had been in political solidarity with since 1961:

"Two decisive elements have been common to the whole series of upheavals under Stalinist-type leaderships, as in Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, Vietnam: (1) a civil war of the *peasant-guerrilla variety*, which first wrenches the peasant movement from the immediate control of imperialism and substitutes a petty-bourgeois leadership; and then, if victorious, seizes the urban centers and on its own momentum smashes capitalist property relations, nationalizing industry under the newly consolidating Bonapartist leadership; (2) *the absence of the working class* as a contender for social power, in particular, the absence of its revolutionary vanguard: this permits an exceptionally independent role for the petty-bourgeois sections of society which are thus denied the polarization which occurred in the October Revolution, in which the most militant petty-bourgeois sections were drawn into the wake of the revolutionary working class."

Space for such a transformation was pro-

vided by the Soviet Union's existence as a military and economic counterweight to the capitalist-imperialist powers. With the restoration of capitalism in the USSR in 1991-92, that historic window was closed.

On paper, Healy's International Committee appeared to uphold the Trotskyist program of permanent revolution and the construction of proletarian vanguard parties, even though Healy insisted that Cuba was still a capitalist state. In the course of the 1966 conference at which comrade Robertson delivered the remarks quoted above, it became clear that Healy was a bureaucrat and megalomaniac. Unwilling to tolerate the slightest dissent within his supposed international, he expelled the Spartacist delegation from the conference. We decisively broke with Healy's tendency (represented in the U.S. by his lapdog Tim Wohlforth) the following year when it embraced the Maoist "Cultural Revolution"—an unusually degrading and violent falling out between sections of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy—and adopted a totally classless concept of an "Arab Revolution" consisting of despotic Arab nationalist regimes.

We reprint below the 1973 addition to the preface of *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8, "Cuba and Marxist Theory." That bulletin, first published in 1966, contains a selection of documents illustrating the development of the SL's line on Cuba as well as comrade Robertson's remarks on Cuba at the International Committee conference.

Preface to Marxist Bulletin No. 8, August 1973

With the passage of time, a slow drift in the appreciation of old events occurs in the Marxist movement, leading at certain points to sharp departures from what had been previously taken for granted. Sometimes what is in essence a higher and more comprehensive synthesis is arrived at with only incidental loss of particular detail known in an earlier period; and sometimes an essential grasp of reality is dissipated. Which predominates depends on considerations larger than and sometimes remote from the event under consideration.

Haston/Vern Thesis

Certainly the massive enthusing over Fidel Castro by those with pretensions to revolutionary Marxism has been today largely dispelled, or more generally, displaced. But the explanations, rationalizations and substitutes of all the centrist, revisionist and reformist currents have been no

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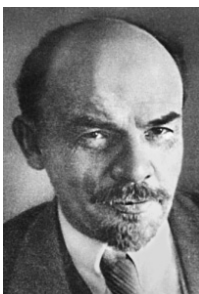
The Paris Commune and Its Lessons

The international socialist movement has historically celebrated March 18 as the anniversary of the 1871 Paris Commune, when the city's working class seized power and established the first expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Leon Trotsky's balance sheet of the heroic Paris workers uprising, which was crushed in a bloody massacre in May 1871, points to the key element that was absent in the Commune but decisive in the

victory of the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia: a communist vanguard party.



TROTSKY



LENIN

The workers' party—the real one—is not a machine for parliamentary manoeuvres, it is the accumulated and organized experience of the proletariat. It is only with the aid of the party, which rests upon the whole history of its past, which foresees theoretically the paths of development, all its stages, and which extracts from it the necessary formula of action, that the proletariat frees itself from the need of always recommencing its history: its hesitations, its lack of decision, its mistakes.

The proletariat of Paris did not have such a party. The bourgeois socialists with whom the Commune swarmed, raised their eyes to heaven, waited for a miracle or else a prophetic word, hesitated, and during that time the masses groped about and lost their heads because of the indecision of some and the fantasy of others. The result was that the revolution broke out in their very midst, too late, and Paris was encircled. Six months elapsed before the proletariat had re-established in its memory the lessons of past revolutions, of battles of yore, of the reiterated betrayals of democracy—and it seized power.

These six months proved to be an irreparable loss. If the centralized party of revolutionary action had been found at the head of the proletariat of France in September 1870, the whole history of France and with it the whole history of humanity would have taken another direction.

—Leon Trotsky, "Lessons of the Paris Commune" (February 1921), reprinted in *New International* (March 1935)

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Britain Out of the European Union!

EU: Enemy of Workers and Immigrants



Left: Thessaloniki, November 2015: Greek Communist Party's trade-union formation PAME during general strike. Banner reads: "We have bled enough! We have paid enough! We will not be 21st century slaves." Right: During August 2015 protest at port city of Calais, French police confront African migrants blocked from entering Britain.

The following article is reprinted from Workers Hammer No. 234 (Spring 2016), newspaper of our comrades of the Spartacist League/Britain.

Standing on the revolutionary, proletarian and internationalist principles of Marxism, the Spartacist League/Britain welcomes the opportunity to call for a resounding "leave" vote in the upcoming referendum on continued British membership of the European Union (EU). Writing of its predecessor, the Common Market, more than 40 years ago, we declared: "unity under capitalism is not only a myth, which will be shattered in the first serious economic downturn, but must necessarily be directed against the working class, as each national capitalist class

WORKERS HAMMER

attempts to become 'competitive' through a policy of 'rationalization'" ("Labor and the Common Market," *Workers Vanguard* No. 15, January 1973).

Who can deny that this has been the case in the decades since, particularly in the wake of the global financial crash in 2007-08? Plunging living standards for working people, massive and rising rates of unemployment, cuts in the most basic social benefits for the elderly, the disabled and the poor, engorging the City of London fat cats—this is the face of this union of imperialist profit-gouging. Under the EU, the monetarist, union-bashing policies—now termed "neoliberalism"—introduced in the 1980s by Reagan in the U.S. and Thatcher in Britain were extended to the imperialist countries on the continent. The "economic miracle" that has made Germany, once again, the dominant imperialist power in Europe, came on the backs of the German proletariat, not least through the wage- and benefit-slashing Hartz IV "reforms" introduced by Social Democratic (SPD) chancellor Gerhard Schröder more than a decade ago.

The devastating effects of EU-imposed austerity on weaker capitalist economies, collectively termed with contempt as the "PIGS"—Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain—are all too well known. The need to replenish the coffers of the Frankfurt, Paris and London banks following the financial meltdown of 2007-08 led to the degradation and impoverishment of the Greek masses and the ongoing destruction of the very fabric of Greek society. So much for the cruel lie that imperialist-

For Workers Unity Across European Borders!

dominated unity and a common currency, the euro, would usher in an era of prosperity! As our comrades of the Trotskyist Group of Greece stated in a 17 July 2015 call for the urgent formation of workers committees of action: "The EU and its currency the euro have been a tragic trap of suffering for the great bulk of the Greek people. The EU and euro must be repudiated.... Break with the Capitalists and their Banks!" (translated in *Workers Hammer* No. 232, Autumn 2015). [See also WV No. 1072, 7 August 2015.]

Joining the myth of EU prosperity on the rubbish heap of spent illusions is the myth of "open borders." The Schengen Agreement was sold on the promise of passport-free travel within Europe. In fact, it was the foundation stone for racist Fortress Europe. Every week brings new evidence of this. As refugees from imperialist economic depredation and terror-bombing in the Near East, Afghanistan, Africa and elsewhere began arriving in huge numbers on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, border fences and checkpoints began cropping up across Europe.

Tories in Turmoil

The defining principle of the EU has always been the free movement of capital, not the free movement of people. Yet it is anti-immigrant chauvinism, particularly against workers from the East European countries coming to Britain, which has dominated the debate over Brexit [British exit from the EU]. It was in order to stem growing support from within the Conservative Party and its electoral base for Nigel Farage's virulently chauvinist and anti-immigrant UK Independence Party (UKIP) that Tory prime minister David Cameron called the 23 June referendum in the first place, much to the chagrin of his American senior partners and a sizeable chunk of the British ruling establishment. In the upshot, the Conservative Party is more deeply divided than ever, as evidenced by the resignation from the Cabinet of outspoken Brexit advocate Iain Duncan Smith. Duncan Smith's claim that he quit in protest over cuts in disability benefits rings hollow coming from the

man who introduced the "bedroom tax" [on allegedly unoccupied bedrooms of people on housing benefits] and has presided over savage "welfare reforms."

Both pro- and anti-EU camps in the Tory Party whip up anti-immigrant chauvinism. UKIP and Cameron's Conservative opponents want tighter border controls free of EU interference, while Cameron evokes the spectre of "migrant jungles" in the Southeast of England should Britain leave. Meanwhile, French economy minister Emmanuel Macron declares that France will "roll out a red carpet" for City financiers who choose to move to Paris. This says a lot about how the EU's lofty "freedom of movement" is meant to work, providing a haven for parasitic financiers but a hell for desperate migrants. The organised working class must mobilise in defence of immigrants against racist reaction, demanding: **Full citizenship rights for all who make it to Britain! No deportations!**

For years, Jeremy Corbyn opposed Labour's longstanding support to the EU. Now Labour under Corbyn links arms with Cameron to call for a "remain" vote. Corbyn emphasises his vision of a "social Europe" and opposes the restrictions on immigrants' benefits negotiated by Cameron in February. Especially because of the latter, Corbyn is reviled by the [Labour right-wing] Blairite rogues' gallery—Neil Kinnock, Margaret Beckett, Hilary Benn, David Blunkett, Jack Straw—in the cross-party "Britain Stronger in Europe" campaign. However, the bottom line, as the pro-EU *Guardian* (16 February) observed, is that Labour under Corbyn may be instrumental in winning a "remain" vote. Noting that "Corbyn is by instinct more Eurosceptic than his party," the *Guardian* editorial comments that it is to Corbyn's "credit and to Labour's benefit" that he decided to support the pro-EU line. This is about the only thing the *Guardian* has praised Corbyn for since his leadership election campaign.

The Irish capitalist rulers have enforced crippling EU-dictated austerity on the working class. In Scotland the bourgeois-nationalist SNP is committed to main-

taining Scotland's membership of the EU and of NATO. These junior imperialists-in-waiting are also committed to the British monarchy, the cornerstone of the reactionary "United Kingdom," which lays claim to Northern Ireland, and is based on English domination over Scotland and Wales. As Marxists, we call for the right of self-determination for Scotland and Wales and fight for a voluntary federation of workers republics in the British Isles.

The American Connection

British business is divided over the referendum, and the uncertainty about the outcome has caused a drop in the value of sterling. Many manufacturers, who tend to export to continental Europe, favour Britain remaining in the EU. However, what really matters to the British economy is not manufacturing, but finance. Yet opinion in the City of London is also divided. Hedge funds tend towards Brexit, to escape EU regulations, such as caps on bankers' bonuses. By contrast, the large investment banks favour remaining in the EU. The investment banks are the big fish in the City, and they are predominantly American as well as German and Swiss. While Britain boasts some large investment banks of its own, the City operates on what is known as the "Wimbledon model"—London hosts a world tournament, but is not expected to provide the big players.

The preponderance of financial parasitism in Britain was already evident in the late 19th century. Writing in 1916, Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin noted "the extraordinary growth of a class, or rather, of a stratum of rentiers, i.e., people who live by 'clipping coupons'" in Britain, whose income "is *five times greater* than the income obtained from the foreign trade of the biggest 'trading' country in the world" (*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*). The tendency that Lenin described became even more pronounced in the aftermath of World War II. And in the 1980s—not coincidentally, following the defeat of the 1984-85 miners strike—Margaret Thatcher oversaw the deregulation of the financial sector, leading to a vast expansion in the wealth of the City bankers.

Particularly since the end of World War II—and as dramatically demonstrated over the 1956 Suez crisis—British imperialism has been consigned to the role of junior partner to the United States. Economically, this is the role of the City in

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Britain...

(continued from page 3)

regard to Wall Street. At the military level, the “special relationship” means Britain’s armed forces join in virtually every U.S. military operation, including the devastation of Afghanistan, Iraq and other parts of the Near East. And within the EU, Britain acts in part as an advocate for U.S. interests.

Thus Washington can barely conceal its anger with the Cameron government for risking a British exit from the EU. In a February discussion in the U.S. Senate, Damon Wilson, former European affairs director under Republican George W. Bush, warned that a British exit would deprive the U.S. of “a critical voice in shaping not only EU policy, but the future of Europe.” Barack Obama is now scheduled to visit Britain in April for a “big, public reach-out” to boost the vote to keep Britain in the EU.

NATO, EU and Cold War

The EU’s forerunner, the Common Market, was set up as an economic adjunct of NATO, the U.S.-dominated military alliance directed against the Soviet Union. In the words of NATO’s first secretary general, Lord Ismay, its purpose was “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.” Today, bourgeois mythology claims that the EU, a product of the imperialist Cold War, has prevented a repeat of World War II. In the midst of a crisis over the euro, Angela Merkel declared: “Nobody should believe that another half century of peace in Europe is a given—it’s not” (*Telegraph*, 26 October 2011).

It was the Soviet Union that brought an end to the war in Europe, liberating the continent from the Nazi Third Reich, at the cost of 27 million Soviet lives. The victory of the Red Army also tore much of Central and Eastern Europe from capitalist exploitation. In this context, the capitalist rulers in Western Europe conceded systems of benefits known as the “welfare state.”

The product of the 1917 October Revolution, the Soviet Union remained a workers state—based on the expropriation of the capitalists and the collectivisation of the means of production—despite its degeneration under the rule of a bureaucratic caste headed by J.V. Stalin. Until the bitter end, we fought for unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union and the bureaucratically deformed workers states of Central and Eastern Europe which were modelled on it. This was linked to the perspective of proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracy and return the USSR to the internationalist road of Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolsheviks. Uniquely, we Trotskyists fought to preserve and extend the revolutionary gains of the working class, while every other tendency on the



Anti-racism demonstration in London, March 2015.

planet capitulated to the ideological pressure of anti-communism. The restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union in 1991-92 led to the immiseration of the working masses throughout the former Soviet republics and unleashed a flood tide of bloody internecine slaughter. In the absence of the Soviet Union as a counterweight, U.S. imperialism was emboldened to ride roughshod over the downtrodden and oppressed around the globe, from the Balkans to the Near East. Capitalist counterrevolution also encouraged the imperialist ruling classes of Europe to attack the social benefits associated with the postwar “welfare state.”

Following capitalist counterrevolution, which laid the basis for a resurgent, reunified Germany, NATO became primarily an instrument for the U.S. to express its military dominance in Europe. As we wrote at the time of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, which founded the EU:

“Two and a half years ago the postwar era came to an end when the disintegrating Soviet bureaucracy under Gorbachev abandoned East Germany, thereby reversing the Red Army’s victory over the Nazi Third Reich.... “West Germany was transformed from a Cold War ally of American imperialism into an aggressive Fourth Reich seeking mastery of Europe.” —“Euro-Chaos,” *Workers Vanguard* No. 560, 2 October 1992

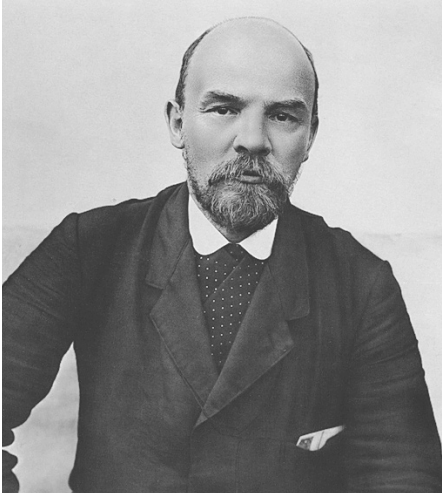
To curtail German imperialist ambitions, Washington insisted that Germany remain a member of NATO after its annexation of the former East German (DDR) deformed workers state. When reunified German imperialism precipitated the bloody break-up of the Yugoslav deformed workers state by engineering the secession of Croatia and Slovenia, the U.S. countered with a NATO military intervention in Bosnia. The U.S. also began the extension of NATO to Eastern Europe, including through sponsoring and funding various “colour revolutions” in formerly Soviet or Soviet-allied countries. These operations led to the fascist-infested coup in the Ukraine two years ago.

For its part, French imperialism supported German unification on the condition that Germany accept a common European currency intended to curb the power of the deutschmark. At the behest of the French Socialist Party’s Jacques Delors, the single currency was enshrined in the Maastricht Treaty which established the framework for the EU of today. Far from weakening German imperialism’s power, the euro has strengthened it, including against its French rival.

Nonetheless, interimperialist rivalries have largely remained muted since the fall of the USSR due to the disproportionate military strength of the U.S., which outstrips by many times over its main imperialist rivals, Germany and Japan. At the same time, U.S. military strength is greatly disproportionate to its economic strength.

Behind the facade of European-U.S. unity against Putin’s capitalist Russia, interimperialist rivalries are bubbling

away. London has been reluctant to alienate the wealthy Russian oligarchs for whom the City is an offshore banking centre and a playground. The French government was reluctant to cancel lucrative arms sales to the Putin regime. And German imperialism is dependent on Russia for trade and as a source of energy. A significant concern of the U.S. imperialists today is to prevent a German-Russian alliance. Germany’s military might pales in comparison to that of the U.S.—although given Germany’s industrial base, that could change in short order. But Germany’s economic prowess combined with Russia’s substantial military hardware,



B.D. Vigilev
Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin’s 1916 pamphlet provided Marxist analysis of imperialism.

much of it inherited from the former Soviet Union, could constitute a future counterweight to the U.S.

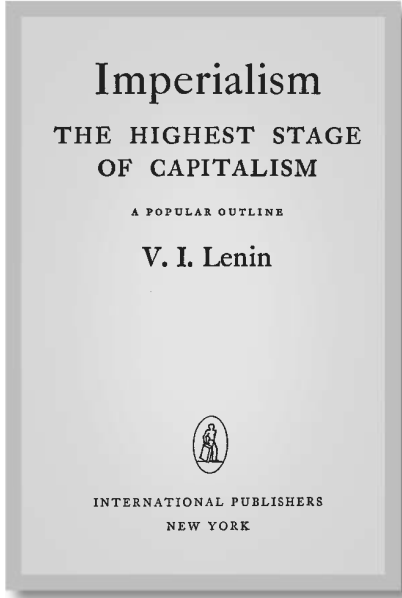
Kautsky’s “Ultra-Imperialism” in New Clothes

Amid the growing chaos besetting the EU, a British exit would deal a real blow to this imperialist-dominated conglomerate, further destabilising it and creating more favourable conditions for working-class struggle across Europe—including against a weakened and discredited Tory government in Britain. But the failure of Labour and the trade-union bureaucracy—like the social democrats and trade union misleaders throughout Europe—to mobilise against the EU has instead ceded the oppositional ground to openly anti-immigrant reactionaries and fascists.

In the early 1970s, when some 70 per cent of the British population opposed entry into the Common Market, the Labour left and the TUC did so as well, albeit from the standpoint of “little England” nationalism and “save British jobs” protectionism. Protectionism provides a cover for rejecting the class struggle in favour of class collaboration and promotes vile anti-foreigner chauvinism. To such wretched appeals to one’s “own” government, Marxists counterpose a class-struggle fight by the trade unions against factory closures and for jobs for all, with no loss in pay.

In any case, when Britain joined the Common Market after the 1975 referendum, there was not a peep from the TUC bureaucracy. Having betrayed the heroic 1984-85 miners strike, whose victory could have reversed the anti-union onslaught and inspired class struggle in Europe, the British trade-union tops then found a convenient excuse for dropping even formal opposition to the European capitalist club. Their “conversion” came at the hands of Jacques Delors, who taught the TUC how to sell the imperialist trade bloc’s “social dimension.” A statement adopted at the TUC’s most recent congress last September stated: “Over the years, Congress has consistently expressed support for a European Union that delivers economic prosperity based on social justice, civil and human rights, equality for all and rights at work.” The “social justice” and “rights” the EU supposedly enshrines—and which it certainly has *not* delivered—are a cheap, superficial cover for privatisation, welfare cuts and lay-offs, and the general policy of opening up public services to the market, while driving down workers’ pay and conditions throughout Europe.

While generally orbiting around the Labour Party, both the Socialist Party of Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers’ International (CWI) and the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of the late Tony Cliff have come out for a “leave” vote in the name of anti-austerity. Both groups point to the EU’s devastating attacks on the Greek population. But their opposition in words is belied by their political deeds. Both groups celebrated the first election victory of the pro-EU Syriza in January 2015. The Syriza government went on to implement the EU’s austerity dictates. Meanwhile, the Trade Unionist and



Socialist Coalition, which is dominated by the Socialist Party and supported by the SWP, opposes EU membership with the caveat that it will “fully respect the right of those in our coalition who don’t support this stand to campaign publically [sic] for their own position.”

One (barely) reformist group that has been on the frontlines in fighting *for* the EU is the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty (AWL). The AWL has launched a “Stay in and fight for a workers’ Europe” campaign, pushing a series of model motions aimed at mobilising trade-union branches, Labour Party and other organisations against an exit. An AWL statement headlined “European Union’s limited unity at risk” castigates Cameron’s referendum for further endangering the “fabric” of European unity (*Solidarity*, 27 January). The statement goes on to argue:

“Even under capitalism, voluntary European unity is better than high barriers between countries. It is progress compared to centuries of elite feuding, wars, and nationalism. At the social and economic level, Europe is the rational arena in which to develop the economies of the European countries, and begin to level up conditions for working-class people across Europe and further afield; to organise industrial and agricultural production to benefit the whole human race, as well as to protect the environment on which we all depend.”

This paean to European capitalist unity would shame even that renegade from

WORKERS HAMMER
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Britain out!

EU: enemy of workers and immigrants

For workers unity across European borders!

India: students charged with sedition.....p5

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Primaries...

(continued from page 1)

Titled “Chaos in the Family, Chaos in the State: The White Working Class’s Dysfunction,” the article raves:

“*Nothing happened to them.* There wasn’t some awful disaster. There wasn’t a war or a famine or a plague or a foreign occupation. Even the economic changes of the past few decades do very little to explain the dysfunction and negligence—and the incomprehensible *malice*—of poor white America....

“The truth about these dysfunctional, downscale communities is that they deserve to die. Economically, they are negative assets. Morally they are indefensible.”

The liberation of working people from the bondage of wage slavery will never happen without the proletariat taking up the cause of black freedom, which itself requires the shattering of this racist capitalist system through socialist revolution. In Volume I of *Capital* (1867), Karl Marx captured the great truth about American capitalist society when he wrote: “Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded.” Our purpose as Marxists today is to translate the boiling anger and discontents of the toiling masses into a conscious understanding that the working class needs its own party—not an electoral vehicle vying to be the administrators of the capitalist state but a party championing the cause of all the exploited and oppressed in the fight for workers rule.

Whom the Gods Would Destroy They First Make Mad

The insanity in the Republican Party is simply a manifestation of the dangerous irrationality of U.S. imperialism. Having achieved the 1991-92 counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union—which emerged from the world’s first and only successful proletarian revolution—America’s capitalist rulers acted as if they were the unrivaled masters of the world. Under Republican and Democratic administrations alike, they have thrown their military might around the world. But U.S. imperialism’s unending series of wars has done nothing to stem its declining economic might.

Declaring that “Trump needs to be stopped,” a former foreign policy adviser to the Bush administration railed, “He has upset our allies in Central America, Europe, East Asia and the Middle East.” Trump’s denunciation of George W. Bush’s invasion of Iraq has particularly riled up the neocons who were the architects of that war. An op-ed column reviling Trump in the *Washington Post* (25 February) by Robert Kagan concluded: “For this former Republican, and perhaps for others, the only choice will be to vote for Hillary Clinton.” Why not? Her credentials as a leading hawk for U.S. imperialism are solid gold.

Marxism, Karl Kautsky. Writing in 1914, on the eve of the first interimperialist world war, Kautsky posited the possibility of a “peaceful” capitalism on the basis of supranational monopolies: “Cannot the present imperialist policy be supplanted by a new, ultra-imperialist policy, which will introduce the joint exploitation of the world by internationally united finance capital in place of the mutual rivalries of national finance capitals? Such a new phase of capitalism is at any rate conceivable” (quoted in Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 1916). Lenin’s pamphlet elaborating a Marxist understanding of imperialism was a sustained polemic against Kautsky’s illusion-mongering.

Lenin demonstrated that imperialism is not an optional policy, but rather the ineluctable, final stage of capitalism, as free-market competition leads to the predominance of monopoly capitalism, and industrial capital is submerged into finance capital. A necessary corollary to the rise and dominance of finance capital was the growth of militarism, as the great powers vied for control of colonies and spheres of exploitation, ultimately through war, on the basis of a changing



U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Border Patrol agents searching migrants found crossing border in the Imperial Valley, California.

Many, including Republicans writing op-ed pieces in the *New York Times*, have asked, “Is Donald Trump a Fascist?” Others compare his candidacy to the end of the Weimar Republic and rise of Hitler’s Nazis. But the soil in which the Nazis grew was that of an imperialist power that had been defeated in World War I. Appealing to the discontents of an increasingly destitute petty bourgeoisie, the Nazis became a mass movement by the early 1930s. When the leadership of the millions-strong Communist and Socialist workers parties failed to make a bid to overturn the decayed capitalist order in Germany, the discredited bourgeoisie unleashed the Nazis in order to preserve their rule through crushing the workers movement, and in the process set the stage for the unspeakable barbarism of the Holocaust.

In contrast, the U.S. is not a defeated imperialist country but rather remains the “world’s only superpower,” whose military might is many times greater than that of its imperialist rivals combined. Nor does the American ruling class currently face a challenge from the working class at home. On the contrary, thanks to sellouts standing at the head of the now dwindling ranks of organized labor, the U.S. bourgeoisie has thus far prevailed in its decades-long war against labor.

Trump is not a fascist; his projected road to power is not outside the electoral framework. But there is nonetheless plenty to fear from the yahoos being whipped into a red-white-and-blue anti-immigrant frenzy at his rallies, which have spurred integrated protests against him throughout the country. Demonstrators protesting Trump’s rallies have been assaulted and black protesters subjected to cries of “go back to Africa.” The KKK and other fascist groups are crawling out of their holes, with former Klan grand wizard David Duke declaring, “Voting against Donald Trump at this

relationship of forces. Lenin concluded: “The only objective, i.e., real, social significance of Kautsky’s ‘theory’ is this: it is a most reactionary method of consoling the masses with hopes of permanent peace being possible under capitalism, by distracting their attention from the sharp antagonisms and acute problems of the present times, and directing it towards illusory prospects of an imaginary ‘ultra-imperialism’ of the future.”

The crises wracking the EU today again demonstrate the contradiction between the international world market created by capitalism and the nation-state through which capitalism emerged and developed. The nation-state has become an obstacle to the expansion of the productive forces. But this obstacle cannot be transcended through some kind of supranational capitalist institution. The very premise of capitalism is the competition among various capitalist combines—each ultimately dependent on the military power of its own capitalist state to protect its investments—for the highest rate of return, i.e., for the maximal exploitation of the working class at home and abroad. The more powerful countries will inevitably dominate the weaker countries and seek to get the greater share of the spoils. The

point, is really treason to your heritage.” In the 1980s, the official racism emanating from the Reagan White House similarly encouraged the Klan and Nazis. When they tried to stage their rallies for racist terror in major urban areas, we put out the call for mass labor/minority

**October 2015:
Family in tent city
outside Seattle
became homeless
after mother and
partner both lost
jobs.**



mobilizations to stop them. In Chicago, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and elsewhere they were stopped by thousands-strong protests based on the social power of the multiracial unions mobilized at the head of the black ghetto poor, immigrants and all the intended victims of fascist terror. In microcosm, these mobilizations demonstrated the role of the revolutionary workers party that we seek to build.

Workers, Blacks: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

It is squarely the responsibility of the pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucracy that a significant layer of white working people supports a man once best known

purpose of the EU is to facilitate this. That this unstable imperialist alliance has lasted as long as it has is primarily the responsibility of the Labourites and social democrats and their accomplices in the trade-union bureaucracy. They have not only urged workers to politically support the EU but have also aided the imperialist bourgeoisies by refusing to wage the kind of class struggle that could have defeated the anti-union and austerity measures inflicted by the capitalists. The International Communist League fights to forge internationalist proletarian vanguard parties, modelled on Lenin’s Bolsheviks, to lead new October Revolutions in Britain and around the globe. What we wrote over 40 years ago in “Labor and the Common Market” stands up today in relation to the EU:

“Only unity on a *socialist* basis, accomplished by proletarian revolution and the expropriation of the giant monopolies, can institute rational worldwide economic development without exploitation. A socialist united states of Europe can only be created on the basis of the most vigorous struggle against the capitalist Common Market and all it stands for. And only under united control by the workers themselves can the productive capacity of Europe be put at the service of the entire world’s working peoples.”■

for the phrase, “you’re fired.” Trump is gaining that support by flying the AFL-CIO misleaders’ flag of “America first” protectionism. Under this flag, the labor fakers have continually surrendered gains won through the militant battles of the working class—black, white and immigrant.

In order to maximize their profits, the capitalists will always go where labor is cheapest. But the scapegoating of foreign workers for the loss of jobs in the U.S. is a reactionary response. Protectionism reinforces illusions in American capitalism. It undermines prospects of struggle by poisoning the working class’s consciousness and subverting solidarity with its potential class allies in China, Mexico and elsewhere. Such protectionism also imbues workers with the false notion that improving their material conditions is completely out of their hands and their ability to organize and fight, but rather lies with a bourgeois savior.

Both Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump play the same economic-nationalist card. But while Sanders appeals for “unity” in opposition to Trump’s xenophobic racism, Trump’s rallies are simply a stark reflection of the chauvinism that lies at the heart of calls to “save American jobs”

from foreign competition. If the unions are going to be instruments of struggle against the bosses, they must take up the fight for immigrant rights, demanding an end to deportations and raising the banner of full citizenship rights for all immigrants. The fight for such demands would advance common struggle between American workers and their working-class allies internationally.

Today, the discontent of many working people is being channeled into the campaigns of either Trump or Sanders. But the workers’ anger has also found expression in an impulse to struggle against the capitalists’ offensive—an impulse that has been repeatedly thwarted by the union misleaders. Last year, young auto workers, many of them black, were ready and willing to strike against the hated multi-tier system, which fosters divisions in the workforce. In this, they had considerable support from older workers, white and black, pointing to the potential for class unity across racial lines. But the United Auto Workers union tops crammed down their throats a sellout contract with the “Detroit Three” that in fact expanded the hated tier system.

In 2011, such a fighting spirit was also vividly manifest in Wisconsin, where Republican governor Scott Walker launched an offensive threatening the very existence of public unions. Thousands of workers occupied Wisconsin’s Capitol rotunda and mobilized in demonstrations that drew 100,000 people. Despite the workers’ militancy, the trade-union bureaucrats ensured that no strike action was taken, instead funneling the workers’ outrage into the losing strategy of recalling Walker.

The result? The devastation of an already declining union movement. In 2011, over 50 percent of public workers in Wisconsin were unionized; by 2015, the unionization rate had plummeted to 26 percent. Similar earlier attacks in Indiana resulted in the virtual disappearance of public-sector

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Primaries...

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unions there. And in 2015, Wisconsin joined Indiana, Michigan and 22 other states in becoming an anti-union “right to work” state. Wisconsin stands as a most glaring example of the bankruptcy of the union bureaucracy and its strategy of reliance on the Democrats. It is such defeats that clear the way for reactionaries like Trump to posture as defenders of working people’s interests.

Since the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Republican Party has had a strategy of appealing to white workers, with some success, on the basis of racist scapegoating, pushing the lie that these workers suffer because the liberal establishment has showered blacks and other minorities with benefits at their expense. The central enduring feature of American capitalism is the structural oppression of the black population as a race-color caste, the majority of which is forcibly segregated at the bottom of society. Obscuring the fundamental class division between the capitalists who own the means of production and the working class who must sell their labor power to survive, racism and white supremacy have served to bind white workers to their capitalist exploiters based on the illusion of a commonality of interest based on skin color.

In the Democratic primaries, black people are overwhelmingly voting for Hillary Clinton, viewing her as the best option to defeat the Republican ghouls in November. In fact, in her 2008 contest with Obama, Clinton openly played to anti-black racism by declaring that Obama couldn’t win the support of “hard-working Americans, white Americans.” Now she presents herself as the torchbearer of Obama’s legacy,



Left: Bill Clinton signs draconian 1994 crime bill, ramping up police powers, expanding racist death penalty and laying basis for more mass incarceration. Right: Chain gang in Estrella Jail, Phoenix, Arizona, in 2012.

while simultaneously cashing in on the popularity of her husband, Bill Clinton, with the black population.

During his time in office, Bill Clinton probably did more harm to black people than any American president since World War II. During the 1992 election campaign, he grotesquely flew back to Arkansas to oversee the execution of a brain-damaged black man, Ricky Ray Rector. In office, he eradicated “welfare as we know it” and vastly increased the powers of the state, including to round up and imprison black youth. In this, he was backed by Hillary Clinton, who described black ghetto youth as “superpredators.” At the same time, Bill Clinton was the first president who had black friends and who openly and comfortably engaged with black people. It is a bitter measure of the depth of racist reaction in America that Clinton’s token gestures have won him the support of many black people despite his gruesome deeds.

With the 2008 election of Barack Obama, black expectations were high. But while those are a faded memory, there remains among black people a deep sense of racial solidarity with Obama. This has been reinforced by nearly eight years of backlash from Congressional Republicans, amplified by the likes of the teabaggers and “birthers.” Nonetheless, the truth is that black people have gained nothing from his reign, during which black unem-

ployment spiked, wages flatlined and the median wealth crashed. Meanwhile, blacks continue to be gunned down with abandon by racist cops.

Contrary to the arguments of many black spokesmen, this state of affairs is not because Obama has been held hostage by the Republicans. Certainly their relentless attacks on Obama are overwhelmingly driven by racism. But the black man in the White House was from



decent living conditions for all. The power to carry out such a fight lies in the hands of the men and women—black, white and immigrant—whose labor keeps the wheels of production turning and produces the wealth that is robbed from them by the capitalist profiteers.

Leon Trotsky’s 1938 Transitional Program, the founding document of the Fourth International, set forth a series of demands that addressed the catastro-

phe facing the working class amid the 1930s Great Depression. The aim of these demands was to arm workers with the understanding that the only answer was the conquest of power by the proletariat. To fight against the scourge of unemployment, it called for uniting the employed and the jobless in struggle for a shorter workweek at no loss in pay to spread the available work around as well as a sliding scale of wages rising with the cost of living. It demanded a massive program of public works at union wages. All must

have housing and other social facilities to provide decent living conditions, as well as access to medical care and education at no cost to them. Benefits for the unemployed must be extended until they have jobs, with all pensions completely guaranteed by the government. Only a struggle for such demands can address the dire conditions workers face today.

As Trotsky, who together with Lenin was a leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, argued:

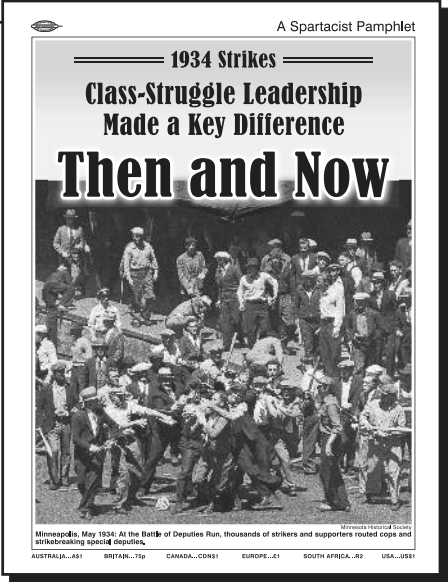
“Property owners and their lawyers will prove the ‘unrealizability’ of these demands. Smaller, especially ruined capitalists in addition will refer to their account ledgers. The workers categorically denounce such conclusions and references. The question is not one of a ‘normal’ collision between opposing material interests. The question is one of guarding the proletariat from decay, demoralization, and ruin. The question is one of life or death of the only creative and progressive class, and by that token of the future of mankind. If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. ‘Realizability’ or ‘unrealizability’ is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery.”

Renewed labor battles will lay the basis for reviving and extending the unions, ousting the current sellouts and replacing them with a new, class-struggle leadership. For the workers to prevail against their exploiters, they must be armed with a Marxist political program that links labor’s fight to the struggle to build a multiracial revolutionary workers party. Such a party would lead the struggle to sweep away the capitalist state through socialist revolution and to establish a workers state where those who labor rule. ■

Chicago Teachers One-Day Walkout



Over 10,000 teachers and supporters—including transit workers, nurses and SEIU union members, as well as parents and students—turned out for a one-day strike and rally on April 1. With the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) rank and file working without a contract since June 2015 and itching to fight, the union bureaucrats conducted this limited action in lieu of a real strike. The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) administration is now threatening the CTU with reprisals for the one-day action. Hands off the CTU! For a solid strike against the cutbacks demanded by the CPS, Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Governor Bruce Rauner!



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Cuba...

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material scarcity, its collectivized economy has provided housing, jobs and free medical care, including abortion, and education for all. Obama represents American *bourgeois* democracy—a form of the dictatorship of the tiny class of capitalists over the many they exploit and oppress. In imperialist countries like the U.S., it is based on the superprofits the ruling class accrues through plunder of the more backward parts of the planet. In Cuba, bourgeois democracy is a program for capitalist counterrevolution, which would propel the masses into the kind of vast inequality and miserable poverty that define life in its neocolonial Caribbean neighbors.

The U.S. Imperialist-in-Chief has won some popularity on the island—and at home—by moving to normalize relations with Cuba. Obama was applauded during his speech when he spoke of ending the starvation embargo. That embargo remains in place with slight modifications, along with the U.S. military detention-torture center at Guantánamo Bay (which Obama did not bother to mention). Down with the embargo! U.S. out of Guantánamo!

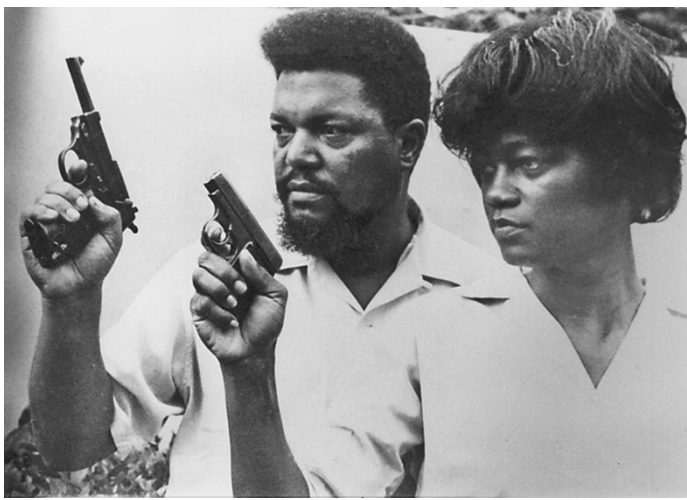
The audience went silent when Obama praised the exiles who consider Cuba their “true home”—i.e., the Miami-based rabble that fled from Castro’s rebel army along with the despised dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959, supplemented by those who left after the nationalization of private property in 1960-61. The Cuban exiles and their U.S. godfathers would do anything to get their hotels, plantations and rum distilleries back. A hero for the exile pack is Luis Posada Carriles, a Bay of Pigs veteran wanted in Cuba for engineering the 1976 bombing of a Cubana airliner, which killed 73 people, and for a 1997 hotel bombing. Posada Carriles, who lives freely in Miami along with his fellow *gusanos* (worms), represents the sort of reactionary terror in store for Communists and militant workers if capitalist counterrevolution were to succeed.

Up Against the Imperialist Beast

We Trotskyists stand for the unconditional military defense of Cuba and its revolutionary social gains against imperialism and capitalist counterrevolution. At the same time, we oppose the rule of the nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy, which has always excluded the working class from political power and promoted the fallacy of building “socialism” in a single country, in this case a resource-poor island 90 miles from U.S. imperialism’s shores. (On the development of our understanding of the Cuban Revolution, see page 2.) To eradicate poverty and all forms of oppression requires *material abundance*, which would end the struggle of each against all. That goal can be reached only after a series of socialist revolutions internationally, especially in the U.S. This will lay the basis for a global planned economy that will utilize and further develop the advanced technology and resources today controlled by the imperialist powers.

Particularly after the demise of the Soviet Union broke its economic lifeline, Cuba has suffered economic stagnation. With Cuba destitute and facing the U.S. economic blockade, in the early 1990s the ruling Communist Party loosened some restrictions on private enterprise and encouraged tourism and other businesses that could attract foreign currency. Such moves have accelerated more recently under Raúl Castro, while ties with the U.S. have also grown stronger. There is more travel between the two countries and bank transactions are easier.

We uphold the right of the Cuban deformed workers state to enter into diplomatic and economic relations with any country it chooses. Increases in small-scale private enterprises and commercial and financial ties to U.S. and other imperialist corporations do not amount to the piecemeal restoration of capitalism. However, they do bring the danger of undermining the collectivized economy and strengthening internal counterrevolutionary forces.



John Herman Williams

Robert F. Williams and wife Mabel in Havana, 1961. Cuba provided Williams refuge from racist U.S. government after he was driven into exile for organizing armed self-defense against KKK terror.

Obama’s call for ending the embargo is on behalf of a growing section of corporate America that wants to set up shop in Cuba, where their competitors from Europe and elsewhere have been doing business. Meanwhile, internal pro-imperialist forces are being fostered by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which bankrolled anti-Communist dissidents in the former Soviet bloc and does the same today in the remaining Stalinist-ruled workers states. In addition to groups pushing “independent” journalism and using the demand for Internet access as a rallying cry against the Castro regime, the NED funds an outfit called Supporting Independent Unions in Cuba, which harks back to “free trade unions” that ran point for the CIA during the Cold War.

The recently reopened U.S. Embassy in Havana will no doubt be a hive of activity for such forces, which are also being bolstered by the Catholic church. Emulating his 16th-century Jesuit forebears, Pope Francis visited Cuba last year, helping prepare the ground for the would-be conquistador Obama. The Vatican’s influence in Cuba is a particularly dire threat to women given its die-hard opposition to abortion and contraception.

In badgering the Cuban government about (unnamed) political prisoners, the American media dutifully ignored those locked up in the U.S. “incarceration nation.” The press went on to make much of the arrest in Havana of some 50 members of “Ladies in White” prior to Obama’s visit. That organization was formed in 2003 in support of imprisoned relatives who were associated with the Varela petition campaign, which demanded the right of private enterprise, amnesty for political prisoners and “free elections.” These demands amounted to a call for “democratic” *counterrevolution*—the electoral rise to power of capitalist-restorationist forces. We defend the Havana regime’s imprisonment of active collaborators with U.S. imperialism. But we oppose the repression of critics or political opponents who defend the revolution and its social gains, such as the imprisonment of Cuban Trotskyists in the early 1960s.

We are for *workers democracy*. Our program calls for political revolution in Cuba to place power in the hands of workers and peasants councils (soviets). Led by a Leninist-Trotskyist party, such a regime would support the fight for workers revolution throughout the Americas. This is the only way to defeat the forces of capitalist counterrevolution once and for all

and to open the road to Cuba’s further development toward socialism.

U.S. Jailer-in-Chief Sings a Freedom Song

In many respects, Obama was the man for the job of opening the door into Cuba. The president, who had given U.S. imperialism a face-lift after the Bush years, talked music and sports with his Communist Party hosts while writing a prescription for assisted suicide for the workers state. Furthermore, breaking bread with the Cuban government now plays well at home, where the bulk of a younger generation of Cuban Americans favors bilateral relations, unlike their rabidly anti-Communist fathers and grandfathers.

Obama’s Havana speech was pure imperial arrogance and cynicism. The same man who has led a vendetta against

Reuters



Baltimore, April 2015: Protester against racist cop killing of Freddie Gray.

courageous whistle-blowers like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden taunted the Cuban regime for not being more open and tolerant. Likewise, he pointed to the supposedly high U.S. living standards attained “because workers can organize”—after two terms of waging war against teachers and other unionized public employees, furthering the decades-long decline of American workers’ wages and living conditions. But it was downright obscene when he pointed to himself as a prime example of what people with dark skin can aspire to in the U.S. After intoning that Cubans as well as Americans can “trace their heritage to both slaves and slave-owners,” Obama said that he is “able to stand here today as an African-American and as President of the United States.”

As president, Obama has deported over 2.5 million immigrants and has

overseen the continuing mass incarceration of mainly blacks and Latinos, the racist cop terror against black people that has impelled thousands to protest in the streets and the horrors of life in the ghettos, including infant mortality rates comparable to many impoverished Third World countries (and far worse than in Cuba). Apparently Obama felt comfortable in Havana echoing his pronouncement from the halcyon days of his 2008 election that racism was 90 percent of the way gone in the U.S. Today, he steers away from striking this “post-racial” theme on U.S. soil, where it is such an obvious lie. The legacy of chattel slavery lives on in American capitalist society, in which the mass of the black population is forcibly segregated at the bottom.

The Cuban Revolution took a huge step toward overcoming the island’s own history of slavery and racial segregation by expropriating capitalist property. In a country where two-thirds of the population is black or mixed-race, blacks benefited disproportionately from efforts to raise the living standards of the poor. It is no accident that almost all those who fled the revolution were white. Despite vestiges of racism, Cuba is far more racially integrated than the U.S., and intermarriage between whites and blacks is commonplace.

In facing down the American rulers, the revolution inspired many black militants in the U.S. who were fighting for their own liberation. A number of them found refuge from U.S. government persecution in Cuba, including Robert F. Williams. As head of the NAACP in Monroe, North Carolina, Williams organized

black armed self-defense against KKK terror. He visited Cuba in 1960, getting a first-hand look at the revolution. Expelled from the NAACP by its legalistic, middle-class leaders and hounded by the FBI, in 1961 Williams escaped to Cuba. There he broadcast “Radio Free Dixie,” until it was shut down after Williams developed political differences with the Stalinist regime.

More recently, Cuba has been a safe haven for Assata Shakur, a Black Liberation Army member who was victimized in a racist frame-up for the 1973 killing of a New Jersey state trooper. After escaping prison, Shakur fled to Cuba, where she has lived for more than 30 years since being granted political asylum. The Cuban government has refused repeated demands to extradite her. ***Hands off Assata Shakur!***

In a stinging rebuke to Obama (“Brother Obama,” *Granma*, 27 March), Fidel Castro recounted the imperialists’ dirty tricks against Cuba and pointed to some of the revolution’s achievements, not least for black people. His letter also recounted the Cuban Army’s heroic and successful struggle in Angola beginning in 1975 against the military forces of apartheid South Africa, whose white-supremacist rulers were backed to the hilt by the U.S. Castro’s rebuff to Obama calls for raising a glass of fine Cuban rum (except it’s still banned here). That said, the statement closing his letter that Cuba is “capable of producing the food and material riches we need” through its own efforts is simply absurd. Castro’s nationalist glorification of autarky is a recipe for continued impoverishment on the island, which has almost no industrial base and counts doctors among its chief exports.

A level of inequality persists in Cuba
continued on page 8



Reuters

Obama plots with counterrevolutionary Cuban dissidents at U.S. Embassy in Havana, March 22.

Archives...

(continued from page 2)

improvement. For example, miscellaneous leftist elements presently or recently in the Socialist Workers Party have lately rediscovered in old SWP bulletins the writings on Eastern Europe from the early 1950’s of the Vern-Ryan tendency, a faction in Los Angeles long since dissolved into Max Shachtman’s Independent Socialist League (itself long since dissolved into the Socialist Party/Social-Democratic Federation). Dennis Vern had in turn borrowed the core of his outlook from the British Trotskyist Revolutionary Communist Party’s majority faction led by Jock Haston, until the Hastonites liquidated essentially into right-wing Labourism. What is not necessarily appreciated today is that the Haston/Vern thesis—that wherever the Red Army arrived at the end of World War II, by that fact that piece of land was a deformed workers state—was a felt liquidation of Trotskyism, not as logic would indicate to the Stalinists, weak in Britain and the U.S., but ultimately into the reformist reflections of one’s own bourgeois order.

But Haston and Vern *did see* one aspect of the social transformation in Eastern Europe which was largely lost on the perplexed Trotskyist theoreticians of the time, such as Hansen and Germain-Mandel—namely that account must be taken of the existent armed force as an elementary consideration in seeking to understand what process is going on. But Haston and Vern stopped at only the beginning of wisdom. And they skewed that piece of wisdom besides. The given class character of the



Castro embraces Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev at United Nations, 1960.

state until or unless overthrown certainly determines the direction of social development within the society which that state protects. However, in Eastern Europe the core of the state was a *Russian* army, agent of the *Russian* Stalinist degenerated workers state.

In the short run the Russian Stalinist leadership could and did exercise choice (choice not freely arrived at) as to the social outcome—hence the elementary error in the Haston/Vern syllogism “class character of the state equals domination of that class in the society” when the state (army) is Russian and the society is, for example, Austrian or Hungarian. The Russians evacuated the areas they controlled in Austria and Iran but directed the transformation of the bulk of Eastern Europe into social and political counterparts of the Soviet Union—i.e., *consolidation in the wake of Russian conquest*.

An exception was the particular but at the time not obviously noted case of Yugoslavia, whose social transformation was

essentially internally arrived at. Despite the Tito-Stalin split the significance of Yugoslavia only became fully clear in the light of the Chinese and also the Cuban revolutions.

Wohlforth

The Yugoslav, Chinese and Cuban revolutions can in no way be explained in terms of a direct imposition of Russian rule—by anybody to the left of the John Birch Society, that is, with the exception of Tim Wohlforth of the Workers League/“International (Healyite) Committee.” And even Wohlforth’s tortured dogmas—that trivial parody of Marxism entitled “The Theory of Structural Assimilation” (a *Bulletin* publication of 1964)—manifestly collapsed with the author’s inability to incorporate Cuba in his schema. As Wohlforth noted in his preface:

“In the summer of 1961 I wrote a preliminary draft document on the nature of the Cuban state and the theoretical implications flowing therefrom [“Cuba and Marxist Theory” (reprinted in *Marxist Bulletin*

Cuba...

(continued from page 7)

because of *material scarcity*, reinforced by backward technology and national isolation and compounded by Stalinist mismanagement. The loosening of the nationalized economy has aggravated racial disparities. On the whole, black Cubans were not well placed to benefit from the opening up of businesses like tourism, where lighter-skinned people are often favored in jobs dealing directly with foreign clientele. Furthermore, remittances from overseas overwhelmingly go to white Cubans, who are more likely to have wealthier relatives abroad. Washington has recently relaxed the limits on such remittances, which give a layer of white Cubans a big leg up in starting businesses on the island.

Growing imperialist economic penetration and social inequality serve to continually reinforce pro-capitalist tendencies within Cuba and to undermine popular support for the revolution. Trying to exploit divisions between black, white and mixed-race Cubans, the NED has turned on its spigot for “activists” supposedly promoting racial integration on the island. Obama preaches that U.S. efforts are meant to “lift up” black Cubans. To see what awaits oppressed layers following capitalist restoration, one need only look at East Europe and the former Soviet

Union after counterrevolution a quarter-century ago. The return of the profit system devastated working people’s lives and brought massive ethnic bloodletting, violent persecution of immigrants and Roma (Gypsies) and a full-bore assault on basic rights for women.

For Proletarian Internationalism

Following his trip to Cuba, the first by a U.S. president in almost 90 years, Obama flew to Argentina in support of the recently installed right-wing president Mauricio Macri. His visit occurred 40 years to the day after a military coup led by General Jorge Videla ushered in a reign of terror against leftists and union militants, many of them supporters of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. The Argentine junta was backed to the hilt by Washington, which three years earlier had helped engineer the coup in Chile that overthrew Salvador Allende’s bourgeois Popular Unity government and drowned the combative proletariat in blood. The Videla regime systematically tortured and slaughtered thousands in Argentina’s “dirty war”—a favorite method was to throw prisoners from airplanes into the Atlantic. The widely disseminated photo of Obama and Macri “honoring” the junta’s victims could suitably be captioned: “In Memory of a Mission Accomplished.”

Obama is clearly seeking to firm up U.S. imperialism’s hold over its Latin Ameri-

Cuban and Angolan soldiers near Cabinda, Angola, February 1976. Cuban troops were key to repulsing invasion by forces of apartheid South Africa.



can “backyard.” By tightening the screws on oil-rich Venezuela, Washington aims to get rid of the troublesome bourgeois-populist government led by Nicolás Maduro, successor to Hugo Chávez (see “Venezuela in Crisis,” WV No. 1084, 26 February). This policy is also designed to further squeeze Cuba, which has been relying on cheap oil from Venezuela. Revolutionaries in the U.S. must oppose these and all other machinations of their imperialist rulers. But Marxists do not give political support to nationalist populists or other bourgeois forces, which are enemies of the fight for proletarian revolution.

As with all Stalinist regimes, the Havana bureaucracy opposes the perspective of revolutionary proletarian internationalism, instead looking to supposedly friendly bourgeois regimes to act as a counterweight to American imperialism. The Castroites’ anti-revolutionary program was made unmistakably clear in regard to Nicaragua after the masses smashed the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, shattering the state apparatus and opening the road to a social revolution. We said at the time: “Defend, complete, extend the Nicaraguan revolution!” But Fidel Castro advised the petty-bourgeois Sandinista government to “avoid the early mistakes we made in Cuba: the political rejection by the West, premature frontal attacks on the bourgeoisie, economic isolation.”

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union, which had been undermined by decades of Stalinist mismanagement and betrayal, confirmed the futility of trying to construct “socialism in one country,” whose necessary corollary

#8)—SL note]. The first discussions of this document immediately convinced me that I was utterly and totally on the wrong track. Like the SWP leadership itself, I was simply throwing together scraps of theory to ‘explain’ an impression of reality in Cuba and to justify a political conclusion—one of course far more critical of the Cuban leadership than that of the SWP majority. If I was to get to first base in understanding Cuba it became clear that I had to fit Cuba into a general theoretical understanding of postwar developments as a whole. Thus first I had to wrestle with the theoretical problems raised by East Europe, Yugoslavia and China before I could expect to get anywhere on more current developments. Ironically, the more I reached an understanding of these events the less I found them related to Cuba. So a document, which started out as an analysis of Cuba, does not even deal directly with that question. We are issuing an analysis of Cuba separately.”

Wohlforth’s “theory” boils down to the following: first, absorption of adjacent states into the Russian degenerated workers state; second, social transformation of the newly acquired region; third and finally, its release as a separate deformed workers state—all because of a “defensive expansionist” drive by the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy in response to the urgent threat from capitalist imperialism. Wohlforth even explained North Vietnam’s becoming a deformed workers state by his own version of the “domino theory”: first China was absorbed by Russia and regurgitated, then North Vietnam likewise by China.

But looking at his map Wohlforth noticed that Cuba is rather distant from Russia and an island to boot! Thus was Wohlforth left holding the position which the Workers League still, more or less shamefacedly, advances today—that the



Corbis

Cuban nurse cares for newborns in maternity ward. Infant mortality rate in Cuba is lower than in the U.S.

Cuban state led by Fidel Castro is capitalist. And this is presumably why the so prolific Wohlforth has left us still waiting in 1973 for the promised “separate analysis of Cuba.” (Come to think of it we haven’t noticed any recent reprinting of “The Theory of Structural Assimilation” either.)

* * *

In opposing the SWP Majority’s revisionism, our original tendency came into existence and fought for three main programmatic points in orienting to the Cuban revolution and its defense: insistence on the Permanent Revolution, i.e., the view that no essential task of the revolution could be achieved short of the victory and consolidation of a workers state; and, correspondingly, insistence on the struggle for hegemony of the working class in the revolution; together with the necessity for a conscious Trotskyist party as the proletarian vanguard to lead that struggle.

“Transitional State”?

As noted in our earlier preface, in 1961 Shane Mage—with the agreement of Wohlforth and with the disciplined support of others in our then common tendency—had advanced a politically principled but theoretically yet vague and indefensible position: that the Cuban state had no yet defined class character, that it was a “transitional state.” This viewpoint, together with the way it was imposed upon the tendency, was one of the early frictions in what finally resulted a year and a half later in the split of Wohlforth from what became the Spartacist tendency. Mage’s 1961 resolution on the Cuban question was brought, previously entirely uncirculated among the tendency, into one New York tendency meeting with the statement by Wohlforth that in any case it had to be submitted to the SWP internal bulletin the following morning. Since a possible majority of the tendency in New York and nationally considered that Cuba had already become a deformed workers state, many of us went along only out of a strong sense of discipline demanded by the programmatic struggle in the SWP.

For the next immediate period the disputed question of what was *presently* the class character of the Cuban state—Mage’s “transitional state,” the bulk of the tendency’s “deformed workers state,” or (after leaving Mage’s position and a brief fling with the tendency majority’s view) Wohlforth’s “capitalist state”—tended to leave certain theoretical aspects in the shadows, in particular a precise analysis, chronologically specific, of the *earlier* periods of the Cuban revolution. These differing interpretations, while all conjuncturally consistent with our common programmatic basis, were nonetheless a source of tension within the tendency.

Then in November 1962 Wohlforth, abetted by A. Phillips and Gerry Healy, split from the tendency essentially over whether to seek a bloc with the SWP Majority to head off its threatened unification with the European Pabloists—a policy which Wohlforth/Healy sought to foist on the tendency in the guise of a debate on the nature of the SWP (see *Marxist Bulletin* #2). Our political struggle around the issues raised for the SWP’s 1963 Conven-



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Ernesto “Che” Guevara, leading proponent of guerrillaism, speaking during Inter-American Economic Conference in Uruguay, 1961.

tion and our unsuccessful fight against expulsion from the SWP (precipitated by Wohlforth’s fabricated “revelations” about us to the Majority) preoccupied our tendency for a year.

In 1964 extensive oral discussion in the New York section of the tendency led to Mage’s pretty much vacating his position and to an arrival by consensus at the following central proposition: Cuba became a deformed workers state with the pervasive nationalizations in the summer and fall of 1960, which liquidated the bourgeoisie as a class.

Since most of our argumentation was directed against the SWP majority, which saw Cuba as evolved from “a workers and peasants government” into a “healthy” workers state “though not yet possessing the forms of workers democracy” and led by “the unconscious Marxist, Fidel Castro” (the Joseph Hansen position), most of our verification centered upon the qualitatively deformed, i.e., Stalinist, character of the Cuban worker’s state: the compulsion for Castro to discover and declare that he was a “Marxist-Leninist” and for the Fidelistas to fuse with the pre-existing Cuban Stalinist party while purging it of its loyalty to the *Russian* bureaucracy; the existence of a powerful state apparatus of repression, and separate from the masses, as revealed in the massive (and quite justified) incarceration of suspect sections of Cuban society during the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion; the self-admitted bonapartist role of Fidel Castro personally in arriving at the crucial decisions in the missile crisis, a life or death matter for the whole Cuban people.

A Petty-Bourgeois Government

We took it as incontestable that the Cuban armed rebels who had originally come ashore from the Granma were in every way a *petty-bourgeois formation*. Their militarily marginal struggle was the last straw for the Batista regime, which was hated by the masses, increasingly isolated from the upper layers of Cuban society and finally abandoned by Yankee imperialism. The rebel army which occupied Havana on 1 January 1959 continued as a politically heterogeneous petty-bourgeois formation possessing massive popular support.

Its initial coalition government with authentic liberal-bourgeois politicians took place in the context of a shattered old bourgeois state apparatus. In the course of the earlier guerilla struggle—a species of civil war—the commanders of that rebel army had had their previous direct

connections with oppositional bourgeois-liberal elements broken and had become episodically autonomous from their class (and in many cases biological) fathers, the Cuban bourgeoisie. After taking power, they were confronted by U.S. imperialism’s clumsy and mounting attempts to bring them to heel through brute economic pressure upon Cuba without corresponding attempts by the contemptuous Eisenhower administration to create the conditions and connections to reknit the new rulers to the old social fabric in order

July 1917: Demonstrators in Petrograd carry banner with Bolshevik slogans including “All Power to the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants Deputies!” Unlike in the Russian October Revolution, during the peasant-based Cuban Revolution, the working class played no active role.

VAAP



to facilitate accommodation to the brutal demands of the imperialists.

No less crucial than the estrangement created by the civil war conditions between the petty-bourgeois guerilla fighters and the bourgeois order was the absence of a class-conscious combative proletariat which would invariably have polarized these petty-bourgeois militants, drawing some to the workers’ side and repelling others back into the arms of the bourgeois order. Hence the exceptional latitude available to this *petty-bourgeois government* in the face of the escalating tit-for-tat economic struggle with the American government in that period and under the enormous popular, patriotic upsurge of the undifferentiated Cuban masses.

Deformed Workers State

But when the end was reached with the economic liquidation of the Cuban bourgeoisie (far more systematic and complete than the Chinese Maoists have instituted to this day—even including nationalizing the street ice cream vendors), this petty-bourgeois government even under these most favorable conditions was unable to find a third way between labor and capital to characteristically organize a society, and by virtue of its newly acquired social position—holding a political monopoly at the head of a nationalized economy—was compelled to embrace that ersatz Marxism which is the necessary ideological reflection of a Stalinist bureaucracy, however newly fledged.

To be sure, the existence of the Russian degenerated workers state presented the encouragement of a model and, more important, the material support which made the outcome a practicality. But in no way did the Russians or their domes-

tic enthusiasts directly create the actual process within Cuba itself. The alliance with the Russians was an outcome of, not the precondition to, the formation of a deformed workers state in Cuba.

At no point was there a classless “transitional state” in Cuba. To repeat, in the intervening period between the shattering of the old capitalist Batista state, the compradors of American imperialism, and the consolidation of a deformed workers state, there was a petty-bourgeois government—not a class-neutral one—with the core of its power being the petty-bourgeois Rebel Army. This regime had temporarily become autonomous from the bourgeois order through the violent polarization of the guerilla struggle, moving through a period of great popular (not specifically proletarian) mass upsurge, but as yet not locked upon a nationalized economy. Moreover its existence episodically apart from the fundamental social classes—the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—was made possible by the failure of the working class to itself pose a challenge to capitalist rule.

Hence this regime possessed the indeterminacy in outcome and tension of either the potential to regenerate and consolidate a capitalist state or for a section of that regime to lock on to the form of nation-

alized property and thus verify through a living process the validity of the earlier Trotskyist characterization that, viewed from a most general standpoint, the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy is in one of its central contradictory aspects—i.e., the transmission belt for the pressure of the world bourgeois order on a workers state—a petty-bourgeois formation. The decisive section of the Castroites could make the transition to the leadership of a deformed workers state because in the absence of the egalitarianism and proletarian democracy of a state directly won by the working people, they never had to transcend or fundamentally alter their own radical petty-bourgeois social appetites, but only to transform and redirect them. And parenthetically, in this is both the decisive significance and the necessity of the political revolution, approached from the Cuban experience, i.e., from a different aspect than that of the long, losing rearguard action that Trotsky fought in Russia in the 1920’s. ■



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Dilapidated housing in downtown Havana, May 2009.

Marxist Bulletin 8

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France...

(continued from page 12)

would allow it to pass its El Khomri bill without much trouble. Even the French Communist Party (PCF) voted for the state of emergency. Last year, it was in the wake of the anti-Muslim “I am Charlie” wave of national unity [see “France: Down With ‘War on Terror’ Repression!” WV No. 1060, 23 January 2015] that Hollande and [Prime Minister Manuel] Valls got the [anti-labor] Macron Law passed. But their plan could derail as the El Khomri bill has become the focal point for the hatred of this racist capitalist government that has built up over almost four years. Hundreds of thousands of workers and youth demonstrated on March 9, and again on March 17, to demand the withdrawal of the bill.

The El Khomri bill aims to make employment qualitatively more precarious by allowing employers to fire workers for virtually no reason, with little notice and at almost no cost. The bosses could impose a fixed pay rate, meaning that ten- or twelve-hour workdays would be paid the same as seven-hour days. To introduce such a measure, an employer would simply need a formal agreement with his employees, including by way of a so-called “workplace referendum.” This is an open assault against the unions. In small or medium-sized enterprises, all an employer needs to do to organize such a referendum is to win over a single “authorized employee.” In larger companies, management only needs the support of one or several trade-union representatives as long as their unions received even a combined 30 percent in elections [to various elected posts and workplace committees mandated by French law]. This would be the culmination of years of anti-union attacks that have often been carried out with the active collaboration of the union bureaucracy (such as the Sarkozy Law [which aimed at further tightening government and management control over the unions]). *Down with the El Khomri law!*

Meanwhile, the government has continued to bring charges against workers in struggle—and now against militant youth. *Drop all charges against the Air France and Goodyear trade unionists and against protesters arrested in recent days!* The fact that the unions today are weak, with less than eight percent of the workforce unionized, is not enough for the French capitalists. There are clearly some, including in the government, who think that it is possible to do without the collaboration of the trade-union bureaucracy altogether. They believe that class struggle is finished—except for that waged by the capitalists against the workers. *Valls, Hollande: Hands off the unions!*

The anti-union aspect of the El Khomri law is scarcely mentioned even by the left,



Reuters

Daily life under France’s state of emergency: Cops frisk men at Paris train station, March 25.

which focuses on defending the “Labor Code” [the body of French labor laws and regulations governing everything from working conditions to workplace elections]. For example, in a March 14 editorial, Lutte Ouvrière [LO] declared that “the Labor Code is under threat,” thus sowing the illusion that the Labor Code in itself represents a gain for the working class and that the capitalist state stands above social classes. In reality, the Labor Code merely sets the framework within which the workers are forced to sell their labor power in order to eke out a living. For the most part, the Code specifies the advantages that are granted to various types of employers in particular circumstances. The remainder of the Code represents gains that we defend, gains resulting from workers’ struggles in the streets and on the picket lines.

Laurent Berger, leader of the CFDT union federation, rushed to endorse the El Khomri bill after a few cosmetic adjustments were made. As for the leaderships of the CGT, FO and SUD union federations, they only reluctantly called for the March 9 mobilizations. For four years, they hardly uttered a word against the attacks carried out by this capitalist government—because it was *their government*. In 2012, CGT leader Bernard Thibault officially called to vote for François Hollande. The union bureaucrats’ worldview does not extend beyond the administration of French capitalism, which today more than ever means the increasing destruction of the gains of the working class.

However, one must not throw the baby out with the bath water: Despite the betrayals of the bureaucrats, the unions are organizations for the basic economic defense of the working class at the point of production. The fight to defend the

unions is the starting point for any defense of working-class gains, including the most basic, such as the seven- or eight-hour workday. *The working class* must oust the traitors at the head of the unions and replace them with a class-struggle leadership that will *strengthen* the unions. This fight is part and parcel of the fight for a revolutionary workers vanguard party.

Reformists Channeled Anti-CPE Struggle into Votes for PS

Ten years ago, the [right-wing] Chirac-Sarkozy-Villepin government also tried to ride the waves of a racist campaign against youth of North African and African origin, who had just risen up as part of a revolt in the *banlieues* [minority and working-class neighborhoods on the outskirts of big cities]. That government put forward a measure, the “First Employment Contract” (CPE), which would have generalized lack of job security for all newly hired youth [who could be fired without cause]. University and high school students demonstrated for weeks, during which time the government tried to fan the flames of racism by campaigning against *banlieue* high school students, who were labeled “*cas-seurs*” [hooligans]. But the labor movement increasingly mobilized its forces until the government withdrew the CPE.

A youth mobilization can be the spark for a widespread mobilization of workers, as was the case in May 1968 or with the CPE in 2006. But it is the working class that has the social power to stay the hand of the capitalists and their government because it is the workers who produce the wealth and profits appropriated by the capitalists in the factories, ports, refineries, transportation, etc. By stopping work, the workers can bring the entire economy to a standstill.

The fight against the CPE marked the last significant political victory against the capitalist government in France to be won through mass mobilizations. Since then, workers have repeatedly suffered huge setbacks, and the El Khomri law is even more brutal than the CPE. Why is this? How can we prevent this from happening again?

Ten years ago, we warned that the reformists would divert the mobilization into the presidential elections the following year. And indeed, the PCF, the [predecessor of the] NPA [New Anti-Capitalist Party] and Lutte Ouvrière called for a vote to [Socialist Party candidate] Ségolène Royal in 2007. Not content with this betrayal, they repeated it five years later when they campaigned for François Hollande in the second round of the 2012 presidential elections. (LO, for its part, refused to explicitly call for abstention.) In contrast, we said, both in 2007 and in 2012, that the election offered no choice for workers.

In the March issue of their newspaper, *l’Eincelle Anticapitaliste*, the NPA youth group now states:

“2010: eight million people in the streets, refineries blockaded, two and a half months of mobilizations. But the pension reform was passed, and everyone looked to the 2012 presidential elections. Hollande took advantage of this to cash in on votes. Four years later, millions of people have experienced this particularly nefarious socialist government, which has not only carried out the bosses’ agenda, but was able to do so thanks to the ‘left,’ with the consent of the leadership of the major unions.”

But in 2010 the NPA itself steered workers toward the elections, with its spokesman Olivier Besancenot stating that “the pensions struggle will be a decisive factor in the outcome of 2012. Now is the time to weaken the [right-wing] government and the right” (*Tout Est à Nous*, 2 September 2010).

Unlike in 2006 or 2010, today’s attacks against workers and youth are being waged by a nominally “left-wing” capitalist government. The PS is sharply divided at the top between those who want to remain social-democratic traitors and those, like Valls, who want to break openly with the labor movement and become outright bourgeois politicians.

Reformist workers parties are in decline across Europe. In Italy the former Communist Party has become an outright bourgeois party, the Democratic Party of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi. Aside from the Jeremy Corbyn phenomenon in the British Labour Party, a significant number of workers have turned to bourgeois populists, who no longer even claim to stand for the working class (Podemos in Spain, Syriza and Popular Unity in Greece)—that is, when they don’t turn toward the populism of the far-right (in France, the FN [National Front]). On the left in France we have [Left Party leader] Jean-Luc Mélenchon proclaiming an “era of the people” that will supposedly turn the page on the “era of the proletariat.”

For reformists today, like those of the NPA in 2010, a labor mobilization in the streets and the factories would serve as the starting point for forging a new parliamentary dead end, a popular-front alliance including “left-wing” bourgeois formations (the Greens, supporters of Mélenchon, etc.) and social democrats (PS dissidents, PCF), with the NPA and others in tow. If it isn’t [prominent PS dissident Martine] Aubry, it will be Mélenchon or someone else.

No! *Down with class collaboration with the bourgeoisie!* It is necessary to break the endless cycle of “left-wing” capitalist

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governments—each more anti-working-class than its predecessor—followed by a strong comeback by reactionary forces. Because of its role in production, the proletariat is the only social class that has the power and historic interest to overthrow the entire capitalist system through socialist revolution, led by a party like the Bolsheviks, who led the Russian Revolution of 1917.

Down With the European Union and the Euro!

The El Khomri law is intended to hammer the final nail in the coffin of the so-called “welfare state,” to modernize France and prevent it from losing more ground to its competitors. Emmanuel Macron, the Minister of the Economy, stated: “This will enable us to bring France into line with European Union law. This is the first step toward adapting our economy to the modern world, which will introduce more flexibility and at the same time more individual security, not based on statutory or corporatist arrangements” (*Le Monde*, 17 March).

The European Union (EU) is a reactionary and unstable bloc between rival powers. Every “Directive from Brussels” [headquarters of the EU] amounts to a further attack against workers in each EU country. While German imperialism is today the main beneficiary of the EU, the second is none other than its French rival, which is no less rapacious toward Greece, for example, than are the Frankfurt bankers. *Down with the EU and the euro!*

By continuing to push for the European Union to be reformed in a more “social” direction, the reformists leave the door



Missiles aboard French aircraft carrier in eastern Mediterranean, part of imperialist bombing campaign against ISIS in Syria.

Europe where they were faced with militant struggles as well as the threat to the international capitalist order represented by the Soviet Union, born of the October Revolution, and East Europe. In these countries, the capitalists had been expropriated even though political power was usurped by a parasitic caste of Stalinist bureaucrats.

The fight to defend gains achieved by the working class here went hand in hand with unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union and East European countries against imperialist threats and the danger of counterrevolution. At the time, we Trotskyists uniquely fought for that program. Our perspective for the East

example, to set the CFDT against the CGT. A class-struggle leadership would seek to organize *all* workers in an industry in a single *industrial union*, including temporary workers and subcontractors, to put an end to the race to the bottom for work contracts. *One industry, one union!* Such unions will only emerge as a result of great class battles, and in opposition to the bureaucratic apparatuses of the CGT, CFDT, FO, etc.

Faced with the threat of endless increases in working hours for those who still have jobs, the CGT now calls for a 32-hour workweek. All well and good, but given the current unemployment rate, it will take more than that to provide work for everyone! What is necessary is the *sharing of available work among all hands with no loss in pay.*

The most basic demands against the scourge of unemployment always come up against the capitalists' rapacious drive for profit. Naturally, the capitalists will argue that it is not possible and that their finances don't allow it, in spite of the CICE [tax credits] and other billions in subsidies that this government showers on them. In response, a revolutionary leadership would say: Very well, let's open the books—the workers themselves will expose the bosses' swindles. That poses the question of strike committees, factory committees, and ultimately of soviets. As Trotsky stated in the 1938 Transitional Program:

"If capitalism is incapable of satisfying the demands inevitably arising from the calamities generated by itself, then let it perish. 'Realizability' or 'unrealizability' is in the given instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle. By means of this struggle, no matter what its immediate practical successes may be, the workers will best come to understand the necessity of liquidating capitalist slavery."

Down With the Racist Security Laws!

The “war on terror” has twin manifestations: internally through repression against the French and immigrant Muslim population, and externally through bloody military interventions in Mali, Libya and Syria. One cannot genuinely oppose one without opposing the other. In order to get the El Khomri bill passed, the government seeks to pit non-Muslims against Muslims. It can only be defeated by opposing all aspects of the “war on terror.” *French troops out of Africa and the Near East!*

The government is attacking and expelling refugees fleeing wars waged by the imperialists in Syria and elsewhere. It is even seeking to give itself the power to strip people of their French citizenship. [After the publication of this supplement, President Hollande was forced to drop that plan.] This targets a strategic component of the working class—precisely those who are least likely to join in national unity to save French capitalism. Against this outrage, the labor movement should fight for *full citizenship rights for all who are here, and against all expulsions. No stripping of nationality! Down with the state of emergency!*



Rouen, March 31: Trade unionists defend student protesters against cop violence.

wide open for the FN, allowing the latter to present itself as the only genuine opponent of the EU. Instead of fighting for international working-class unity against the capitalists, the CGT union bureaucrats are campaigning to “produce in France,” stirring up chauvinism that the FN feeds off. *Workers have no country!*

Under capitalism, all gains made by the working class are absolutely reversible. Following World War II, the capitalists were forced to grant significant concessions to the workers, particularly in West

was proletarian political revolution to oust the nationalist Stalinist bureaucrats and establish political power based on workers councils (soviets), and for the West, workers revolution to oust the capitalists. The capitalist counterrevolution in East Europe and the Soviet Union 25 years ago was an enormous defeat for workers throughout the world.

We are fighting not only against temporary demoralization in the wake of that defeat. The very perspective of a classless socialist society must be re-instilled in the consciousness of the workers and oppressed. With the supposed “death of communism,” the older generation no longer believes in that perspective. As for youth, they cannot even conceive of a communist society of abundance for all, a society that functions according to the principle of “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.” The struggle to re-instill Marxism in the working class goes hand in hand with the struggle to forge a revolutionary workers vanguard party.

For a Class-Struggle Perspective!

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Defend the Gains of the Cuban Revolution!

Obama Pushes Counterrevolution in Cuba

Early in his March 22 speech at Havana's Gran Teatro, President Barack Obama quoted from a poem by 19th-century Cuban nationalist leader José Martí, offering his audience a "white rose" of friendship and peace. The real symbol for his talk, which was broadcast throughout Cuba, is the Venus flytrap.

For five and a half decades, the U.S. imperialists have tried through various means to smash the social revolution that expelled them from Cuba and expropriated capitalist property: economic embargo, the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and countless terrorist acts by CIA-trained *gusano* exiles, assassination plots against Fidel Castro including poisoned cigars. Declaring that such methods were "not working," Obama sang of reconciliation and the glories of democracy and free enterprise. This was simply an updated formula for overturning the Cuban Revolution through promoting pro-imperialist

"dissidents" and subverting the nationalized economy, a strategy buttressed by overwhelming American military might. For Obama as for his predecessors, "reconciliation" means nothing other than restoring capitalist slavery and again subjecting Cuba's workers and peasants to bloody imperialist domination.

Most Cubans are aware of such hallmarks of U.S. "democracy" as homelessness, people without medical care, black people wantonly gunned down by cops, youth smothered by college debt. Despite Cuba's

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Cuban president Raúl Castro welcomes U.S. imperialist Commander-in-Chief Barack Obama to Havana, March 21.

Xinhua

France



AFP

Le Bolchévik

Massive anti-government protests rock France. Left: Workers mobilization in Marseille with banner: "No to Smashing of the Labor Code," March 31. Right: Student protesters in Paris, March 17.

Protests Against Anti-Union Law

On March 31, a million people took to the streets in cities across France to protest against the draft El Khomri law, an omnibus anti-labor and anti-union bill named for France's minister of labor, Myriam El Khomri. This day of action was marked by a series of strikes by transport workers, notably railroad and Air France workers and longshoremen, as well as teachers and other public-sector workers. There is deep and widespread anger against the government's attacks on working people.

As they have in a series of recent mass demonstrations, large contingents of high school and university students joined the March 31 protests, which in several cities were twice as large as the March 9 day of action. Around the country, tear gas, water cannons, horses and brute force were used by the forces of "law and order" against the youth. In Marseille, as elsewhere, cops attacked the youth who did

Down With the "War on Terror" and Racist Police-State Measures!

not immediately disperse at the end of the demonstration; the clouds of tear gas were so thick that people in nearby sidewalk cafés were forced to flee. In Lyon, fascists attacked student demonstrators and were defended by the riot cops. In Rouen, as police attacked students with tear gas, a large contingent of longshoremen, joined by other workers, came to the students' defense, forcing the cops to back down. **Hands off the student youth! Drop the charges against all those arrested!**

The proposed law is the latest in a series of brutal anti-labor laws pushed by the government of Socialist Party (PS)

president François Hollande. The government has also been cracking down with unprecedented severity on working-class resistance. In January, eight trade-union militants, arrested while opposing the closure of a Goodyear plant in Amiens, were sentenced to nine months in prison. Five Air France workers face up to **three years in prison** after two managers literally lost their shirts at a strike rally in October.

The attacks on labor come in the context of the state of emergency that the government declared last November after the hideous ISIS massacre of 130 people in Paris and has extended until May. The

police have conducted thousands of warrantless raids on homes, especially in largely Muslim neighborhoods, at all hours of the day and night. Hundreds of people were placed under house arrest, including ecologists who were planning a demonstration on the eve of December's climate conference in Paris.

Widespread surveillance measures allow police to record telephone conversations.

We print below a translation of a March 21 supplement to *Le Bolchévik*, newspaper of the Ligue Trotskyiste de France, section of the International Communist League, which was distributed at the March 31 demonstrations in Paris, Rouen and other major cities.

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The government no doubt thought that the surge of racist "national unity" following the criminal attacks on November 13

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