

Down With U.S. Imperialism!

Syria Quagmire



U.S. Special Operations troops in village of Fatisah in northern Syria, May 25 (inset). Video still of airstrike by U.S.-led forces on Shaddadi, northeastern Syria. AFP (inset); France 24

On April 25, President Barack Obama announced that the number of U.S. Special Operations troops in Syria would be officially increased from 50 to 300. Washington’s latest strategy for fighting the Islamic State (ISIS) is for U.S. commandos to support an armed force consisting mainly of Kurds from northern Syria and backed up

by U.S. airstrikes. That armed force, the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), is providing the ground troops for U.S. imperialist intervention in the country. These latest developments can only serve to escalate the unspeakable suffering that has been inflicted on the Syrian people by the U.S. imperialists and various lesser powers.

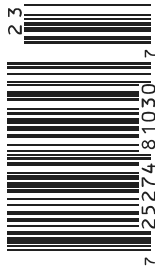
The SDF was formally announced last October, the day after the U.S. officially abandoned its fruitless effort—which had cost \$500 million—to raise an army of “moderate,” Sunni Arab insurgents. The SDF is basically a subsidiary of the People’s Protection Committees (YPG) and includes several smaller non-Kurdish

groups. The YPG is the military wing of the Syrian-based Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), which is allied to the nationalist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) based in Turkey. The setting up of the SDF was prepared by a year of joint operations in which the YPG served as proxies for the

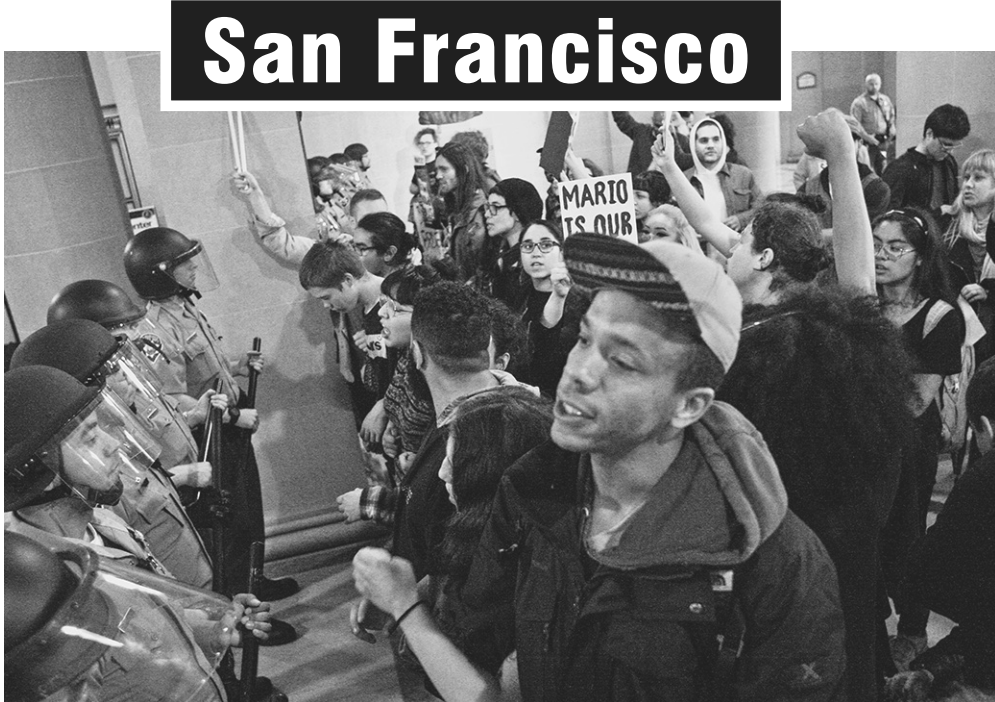
continued on page 9

Cop Terror Against Blacks, Latinos, Homeless

On May 19, an unarmed 29-year-old black woman, Jessica Williams, became the latest victim of the trigger-happy San Francisco Police Department. Williams was shot and killed inside a car the police claimed was stolen in the black Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood. Just five months earlier, a young black man, Mario Woods, was killed execution-style in the same neighborhood. The cell phone video showed Woods on a sidewalk surrounded by a firing squad of police who shot 15 rounds. This coldblooded killing sparked months of protests against the SFPD, including a recent 17-day hunger strike by five activists calling for the resignation of Chief of Police Greg Suhr. Within hours of Williams’s shooting, San Francisco’s Democratic mayor Ed Lee asked Suhr to step down. This was simply the latest installment of the city administration scrambling for damage control to repair the “progressive” image of San Francisco.



Back in January, Mayor Lee called for a Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation into Woods’s killing, feigning concern about the “dissolution of



AP

trust between communities of color and law enforcement.” As in Ferguson, Baltimore, Chicago and elsewhere, the purpose of calling in the DOJ is to douse the flames of anger and to promote faith in the federal government, which oversees

the whole plantation of racist American capitalism. In March, while the feds were “investigating,” four SFPD cops involved in gunning down 28-year-old Latino Alex Nieto in 2014 were cleared of any civil charges of “excessive force.” Nieto was

eating a burrito in a park when he was riddled with 14 police bullets (out of 59 shots fired), because the Taser he carried for his job as a nightclub bouncer was mistaken for a gun.

continued on page 8



Facebook

Above: Jessica Williams, slain by SF police on May 19. Left: Protest at San Francisco City Hall against cop terror, May 6.

On Chicago Teachers Union

28 May 2016

To the editor:

I wanted to add a point to the article on the one day Chicago Teachers Union strike in WV #1088 (Teachers One-Day Strike Draws Wide Support). It is standard fare for the trade-union bureaucracy to herd their membership into the voting booths for the Democratic Party and pour millions of hard-earned union dollars into the coffers of these enemies of the working class, which the CTU most certainly does. But the “militants” of the Caucus of Rank and File Educators and their left hangers on, particularly the International Socialist Organization, have gone whole hog by touting the line that the Chicago Public Schools administration and the CTU should be on the same side in this bitter contract dispute.

This was captured best by CTU vice president, self-proclaimed socialist and “principled trade unionist,” Jesse Sharkey, when he spoke to ABC news a day before the CTU’s 1 April strike: “CPS and CTU are going to have to come together

for some agreed solutions in Springfield. If we are fighting about which bills are going to actually produce solutions it’s going to make it even harder to get bills through and so hopefully *this* [strike] produces some public pressure and CPS and CTU can come together with some joint solutions down at the capital” (my emphasis). Lest anyone was still confused, on Chicago Tonight, CTU president Karen Lewis stated, “CPS should be with us marching for the revenue.” Let’s be clear, CPS is hell-bent on smashing the union and to suggest anything different serves to disarm the union in the fight for its life.

In the face of widespread sentiment for an all-out strike, April 1st was organized *explicitly* to apply pressure on the Illinois state legislature and to let teachers blow off steam. The bureaucracy’s lobbying efforts push the lie that teachers and the bourgeoisie are all in this boat together.

Lewis says, “We will eventually get a contract. But what good is a contract if there’s no money to pay for it?” The union



WV Photo

Chicago, April 1: Over 10,000 teachers and their supporters rally during one-day strike.

leadership put forward numerous tax proposals and pushed their members to engage in a lobbying campaign. It is not the job of the Chicago teachers to find the money for their paychecks and pensions. Quite frankly, a solid strike by the CTU would do more to help “find the money” than all the lobbying in the world. It is a question of power and program. The leadership’s legalism in the face of the anti-union law SB7 and their futile pursuit of collaboration with CPS deprived the members of the chance for a powerful strike when Chicago Mayor Emanuel’s fortunes

were rock-bottom. Now the membership has little choice but to wait until schools reopen in the fall.

The collusion of the trade-union bureaucrats with the bosses goes hand in hand with their abandonment of union militancy. What the unions need is a genuine class-struggle leadership that is dedicated to fighting against all capitalist exploitation and oppression, not misleaders who advise the workers to put their trust in the very forces that are attacking their wages and benefits.

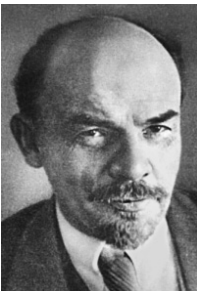
Chicago teacher



TROTSKY

Imperialism and Capitalist Plunder

This year marks the 100th anniversary of V.I. Lenin’s 1916 work Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism. Written amid the carnage of World War I, Lenin’s pamphlet was a pioneering Marxist analysis of the origin and workings of capitalist imperialism. For Leninists, the development of imperialism underscores the urgent need for an internationalist revolutionary party to lead the proletariat to power and root out the decaying capitalist order.



LENIN

It is characteristic of capitalism in general that the ownership of capital is separated from the application of capital to production, that money capital is separated from industrial or productive capital, and that the rentier who lives entirely on income obtained from money capital, is separated from the entrepreneur and from all who are directly concerned in the management of capital. Imperialism, or the domination of finance capital, is that highest stage of capitalism in which this separation reaches vast proportions. The supremacy of finance capital over all other forms of capital means the predominance of the rentier and of the financial oligarchy; it means that a small number of financially “powerful” states stand out among all the rest....

Typical of the old capitalism, when free competition held undivided sway, was the export of *goods*. Typical of the latest stage of capitalism, when monopolies rule, is the export of *capital*....

On the threshold of the twentieth century we see the formation of a new type of monopoly: firstly, monopolist associations of capitalists in all capitalistically developed countries; secondly, the monopolist position of a few very rich countries, in which the accumulation of capital has reached gigantic proportions. An enormous “surplus of capital” has arisen in the advanced countries.

It goes without saying that if capitalism could develop agriculture, which today is everywhere lagging terribly behind industry, if it could raise the living standards of the masses, who in spite of the amazing technical progress are everywhere still half-starved and poverty-stricken, there could be no question of a surplus of capital. This “argument” is very often advanced by the petty-bourgeois critics of capitalism. But if capitalism did these things it would not be capitalism; for both uneven development and a semi-starvation level of existence of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and constitute premises of this mode of production. As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will be utilised not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists, but for the purpose of increasing profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap.

—V.I. Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916)

12 May 2016

Dear comrades,

May 15 commemorates the *Nakba* or Catastrophe: the expulsion of an estimated 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from their homeland by which Israel was established in 1948. Comrade Wilde’s rich forum on Palestine states that “some 50 percent of the Palestinian population lives outside the Occupied Territories—in Jordan, Lebanon, Israel” (“Defend the Palestinian People!” WV No. 1089, 6 May). It is important to include Syria, with a Palestinian population before the present civil war close to 600,000. With the onslaught of that sordid conflagration Palestinians have suffered what they call a “Second Nakba” with more than 250,000 refugees uprooted and sent into a second exile.

Yarmouk, the largest Palestinian refugee camp, which had 150,000 residents and became a thriving suburb of Damas-

cus, has been subjected to a total military siege by the Assad regime since 2013 and turned into a murderous battlefield by the contending factions. Now reduced to 1,000 families, even one year ago UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon compared Yarmouk to a “death camp.”

Of the nine million Palestinians in the Near East, due to the *Nakba* and the expulsions of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, more than five million Palestinians in the Near East are registered as refugees, including 72 percent of Gaza’s residents, or better put, inmates. Flowing from Comrade Wilde’s defense of Palestinian national rights is our demand for *the right of return* for Palestinian refugees and their descendants. The demand and its realization underline that there can be no just solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict outside of a socialist Near East.

Comradely regards,
Reuben Samuels

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

Local Directory and Public Offices

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

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

Chicago.....

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

Los Angeles

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

New York

Box 3381, Church St. Sta., New York, NY 10008, (212) 267-1025
nysl@tiac.net
Public Office: 1st Sat. of every month, 1-4 p.m., and by appointment, 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, Manhattan

Oakland.....

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

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA/LIGUE TROTSKYSTE DU CANADA

Montréal.....

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

Toronto

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

Vancouver.....

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

WORKERS VANGUARD

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

DIRECTOR OF PARTY PUBLICATIONS: Liz Gordon
EDITOR: John Blake
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Susan Fuller
EDITORIAL BOARD: Elizabeth Johnson (managing editor), François Donau (production manager), Blandine Hauser (letters editor), Bruce André, Ray Bishop, Bonnie Brodie, Jon Brule, Ed Clarkson, Paul Cone, Michael Davisson, George Foster, Walter Jennings, Michael Joyce, Jane Kerrigan, James Robertson, Joseph Seymour, Alan Wilde, Laura Zamora
The Spartacist League is the U.S. section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist).
Workers Vanguard (ISSN 0276-0746) published biweekly, except skipping three alternate issues in June, July and August (beginning with omitting the second issue in June) and skipping the last issue in December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 299 Broadway, Suite 1618, New York, NY 10007. Telephone: (212) 732-7862 (Editorial), (212) 732-7861 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116. Email address: vanguard@tiac.net. Domestic subscriptions: \$10.00/22 issues. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Workers Vanguard, Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116.
Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.
The closing date for news in this issue is May 31.

No. 1091

3 June 2016

2

WORKERS VANGUARD

On Brazil Impeachment ICL Intervention at LO Fête

We publish below an intervention on Brazil by a comrade of the Ligue Trotskyste de France at the annual Fête organized by the French pseudo-Trotskyist Lutte Ouvrière (LO) in May. With impeachment proceedings under way against Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), much of the opportunist left internationally has rallied in support of the PT-led government under the cry “No to impeachment!”

The PT, a reformist workers party, has governed Brazil in a series of coalitions with capitalist parties since 2002, dishing out vicious austerity to the working masses and slashing public spending. The working class has no side in this conflict: we neither favor impeachment, which would mean support to the right-wing forces mobilized against Rousseff, nor oppose impeachment, which would amount to political support to the PT-led capitalist government. Above all, we are for political independence of the working class from capitalist forces.

As our comrade notes in his remarks, the French New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) lined up behind Rousseff, as did the U.S.-based Internationalist Group (IG), which puts these groups to the right of the arch-reformist LO on this ques-

tion. Notably the IG, including its leader Jan Norden who was present at the Fête, passed on the chance to present its support to Rousseff in the Brazil forum. Its intervention at the Fête consisted mainly of distributing a special supplement (in English) of some 34 pages announcing two “regroupments”—one with a micro-split of two frustrated Mensheviks from the ICL in the U.S., and another with two former members in Italy who quit 15 years ago and have since been politically dormant in an Italian village. The IG, which only held its first national conference 19 years after it was founded, purports to be building an international, but it is a house of cards. (Let’s not forget the IG’s one-time Ukrainian section, which turned out to also be the Ukrainian section of as many as ten other opportunist “internationals.”)

Their supplement reaffirms the IG’s abject capitulation to the European Union (EU). The EU is the enemy of the working class and immigrants in all of Europe. Along with its euro, the EU is the vehicle for German imperialist domination of Europe, attacking the German working class and inflicting on the Greek population the most severe economic hardship in living memory. The IG denounces “The

ICL’s de facto call for Grexit (Greek exit from the euro and the European Union) under bourgeois rule,” and even warns that Grexit “could undercut the fight to unite European workers against capitalist austerity” (*Back to Trotskyism*, May 2016).

The implication that the EU promotes working-class unity echoes the right-wing European social democrats and places the IG to the right of the formal position of the Cliffite Socialist Workers Party in Britain as well as Peter Taaffe’s Committee for a Workers’ International. As we noted after the IG called for abstention in the July 2015 Greek referendum on EU austerity: “The truth is that a self-proclaimed revolutionary Trotskyist organization that can’t even call for a vote against the dictates of the EU is on a bridge to the Fourth Reich of German imperialism” (WV No. 1075, 2 October 2015).

* * *

I am speaking for the Ligue Trotskyste, which publishes *Le Bolchévik* in France, for the International Communist League. For once we have an opportunity to give a good grade to LO, even if it is a little one, so we are not going to forego it: LO is indeed correct to have refused to oppose the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff.

The PT government is a capitalist popular-front government—i.e., a class-collaborationist alliance between a reformist workers party and bourgeois organizations. It’s a bourgeois alliance that we oppose *on principle*, which is not the case for LO. LO thus called to vote for Mitterrand in 1981 and for Ségolène Royal in 2007 and participated for six years, between 2008 and 2014, in the administration of capitalist municipalities on popular-front tickets, like Jean-Pierre Mercier did in Bagnolet.

Now there are a whole bunch of groups which are, despite all of this, to the right of LO, and, more to the point, of the revolutionary Trotskyists of the ICL, on the question of Rousseff. Most of the Brazilian left, with the NPA of course in their tow, the Internationalist Group and many other groups, called to oppose Rousseff’s impeachment. This is an outright capitulation to the bourgeois popular front and a class betrayal, concealed under more or less delirious rhetoric about a “parliamentary coup” or a “strong state,” etc. Well, I want to point out that the absurdity of this position of a “parliamentary coup” is particularly clear in France, which has a really bonapartist constitution where the parliament *cannot* impeach the president.

To get back to the fundamental question here, i.e., the question of the popular front, there is only one organization that is true to the principled opposition to the popular front that Trotsky formulated, for example, in 1936 regarding France—the Blum-Cachin Popular Front—or the Spanish Popular Front: it is the International Communist League and its French section, the Ligue Trotskyste de France. Thank you. ■

Killer Capitalist Sentenced to Country Club

On May 12, some six years after a fiery explosion at Upper Big Branch (UBB) mine in West Virginia snuffed out the lives of 29 miners, former Massey Energy CEO Don Blankenship walked into prison to serve a one-year sentence for conspiracy to willfully violate mine safety standards. Blankenship was acquitted of securities fraud and making false statements to the Securities and Exchange Commission, which could have carried a sentence of 30 years. To the bosses and their courts, lying to Wall St. is a far greater crime than causing the death of nearly 30 miners. In fact, Blankenship will be spending his time at a “Club Fed”—a privately run minimum security facility in California that boasts an unfenced, campus-like environment with a sports complex and a music department.

The 5 April 2010 disaster at UBB was capitalist industrial murder. In the month preceding it, the mine logged 50 safety violations, many related to ventilation. Of those who died that day, 71 percent had signs of incurable black lung disease. Three separate investigations afterward concluded that the deadly combination of methane gas and highly combustible coal dust was the cause of the explosion. Survivors reported that workers who tried to get dangerous conditions addressed were ignored, threatened or told to tamper with the monitoring equipment. A union safety committee could have stopped work at UBB. But there was no union at UBB.

For coal operators like Massey Energy, accumulating violations and fines is just part of the cost of doing business—and cheaper than installing necessary ventilation and safety equipment. Every cited

2010 West Virginia Mine Disaster



Candlelight vigil in April 2010 honoring 29 coal miners killed in explosion at Massey Energy’s Upper Big Branch mine.

violation is challenged, and until it is settled, the company pays nothing while the government’s limp Mine Safety and Health Administration investigates. This agency does not exist to protect workers but to lull them into believing that government agencies can be relied on to defend their interests. As Blankenship’s sentence demonstrates, the capitalist government, including its courts and agencies, exists to defend the interests of the bosses against working people.

UBB was Massey Energy’s premier money-making mine, and Blankenship made it his personal business to keep out the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). In face-to-face meetings he bullied workers and threatened to close

the mine; the UMWA was defeated three times, despite the fact that 70 percent of the workers had signed union cards.

Blankenship is a notorious overlord in a notoriously brutal industry. As a district manager in the 1980s, he was an architect of a vicious, union-busting strategy to push the UMWA into bargaining separately with each subsidiary; isolated strikes were then defeated with a combination of state troopers and bought-and-paid-for judges as well as armies of mercenaries, attack dogs and scabs. Entire mining communities were put under siege during months-long strikes. While he was CEO of Massey Energy, 52 miners were killed.

The UMWA bureaucracy, both under the leadership of current AFL-CIO head

Richard Trumka and today under Cecil Roberts, did not respond to these attacks with the historic weapons of the union: solid picket lines and the strategy of “one out all out” until an industry-wide settlement is reached. Instead, they pursued the losing scheme of selective strikes, individual acts of civil disobedience and lawsuits. At the same time, the UMWA leadership did not defend union militants singled out by the government for victimization.

In 1987, the UMWA tops deserted four Kentucky miners, including Donnie Thornsby, a local president, who were framed up for the shooting death of a scab. They received sentences of 35 to 45 years, and Thornsby remained in prison until 2010. Likewise, in 1993, Jerry Dale Lowe, a safety committeeman from Logan County, West Virginia, was abandoned to face eleven years without possibility of parole for “interfering with interstate commerce.” Contrast these vindictive sentences to the slap on the wrist given to Blankenship!

The grieving families of the 29 UBB miners, along with those of the 23 other victims killed in Massey mines under Blankenship’s control, will not see justice in the capitalist courts. Something approaching justice for Blankenship could only come from a workers tribunal. What’s desperately needed is the forging of a new, class-struggle leadership in the union, which must be part of a fight to build a revolutionary workers party that can lead the assault on this bloodthirsty capitalist system. ■

NOTICE

**Workers Vanguard skips
alternate issues in
June, July and August.
Our next issue will be
dated July 1.**

Moving?

To receive *Workers Vanguard* without interruption please let us know at least three weeks before you move. Send your new *and* old address to:

Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO
New York, NY 10116

NEAR EAST HISTORY OF BLOODY FRENCH COLONIALISM



Bettmann



Ullstein

French imperialism crushed Great Druze Revolt, 1925. Left: Resistance militants executed by French Mandate authorities. Right: Two days of shelling by French artillery devastated Damascus, killed over 1,400.

The following presentation, excerpted for Workers Vanguard to focus on French imperialism's role in the Levant (Syria and Lebanon), was given at a 7 November 2013 forum in Paris of the *Ligue Trotskyste de France*, section of the *International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)*. The full presentation originally appeared in the *LTF's* publication, *Le Bolchévik* No. 206, December 2013.

Our December 2012 article "Syrian Civil War: Legacy of Imperialist Divide-and-Rule" [translated from *WV* No. 1009, 28 September 2012] discussed the Sykes-

LE BOLCHEVIK

Picot agreement. Signed secretly in 1916, the pact was between the French imperialists, represented by [François] Georges-Picot, and the British imperialists, represented by [Mark] Sykes. The two parties agreed on a plan to dismember the Near East for their mutual benefit. All of it was promptly whitewashed with humanitarian phrases and a mandate from the League of Nations, which today would be called a United Nations Security Council resolution.

French imperialism was originally supposed to get not just Lebanon and Syria, but also the oil-rich area of Mosul, which today is in Iraq, as well as an equal share in the international administration of Palestine. In the end, France only got Lebanon and Syria. What actually happened was that British troops invaded the region in 1918. Great Britain thus reinterpreted the Sykes-Picot agreement in a way that more closely corresponded to the military reality on the ground. If the British continued to negotiate with the French, it was because they were facing nationalist unrest in Ireland, Egypt and India, and because they didn't have the means, after World War I, to open a fourth major front. So French imperialism gave up Mosul as well as its share of Palestine, but in return it got 23.75 percent of Iraq's oil. That was the beginning of the *Compagnie Française*

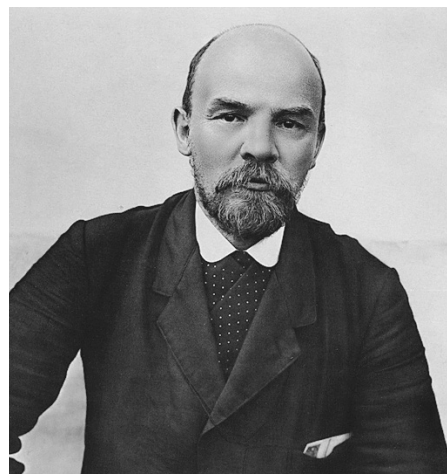
des Pétroles, which today is more widely known by the name of Total. And French imperialism became master of Syria. France was supposed to get a piece of what is now Turkey, roughly corresponding to the southwestern part of the Kurdish area, but because of the consolidation of Kemal Atatürk's regime in Turkey, it was forced to abandon that plan.

As we have emphasized numerous times, it was the Bolsheviks who, after the victory of the revolution in Russia, published all these secret treaties. This action contributed to strengthening national liberation movements against the imperialist powers. We do not know what we will find in the safes of Quai d'Orsay [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] and the Elysée Presidential Palace when the French workers take power, but we too will publish the infamous secret machinations that the Hollande government is conducting right now, and those of his predecessors.

The French occupation of Syria in 1920 was no walk in the park. Arab nationalism in Syria had already taken hold toward the end of the Ottoman rule. As the Ottoman Empire collapsed, one of the sons of the Hashemite dynasty,

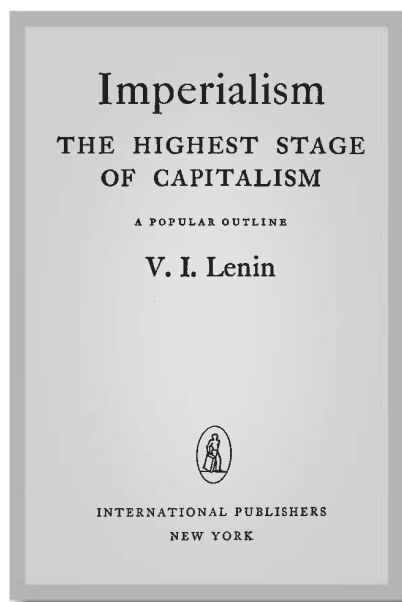
Faisal, proclaimed himself king of Syria and a congress met in March 1920 to proclaim the country's independence. The French launched a military expedition that chased out Faisal and the independent government. In 1921, the French had 70,000 soldiers in the Levant (Syria-Lebanon), later reduced to 15,000. The "pacification" of Syria between 1920 and 1925 would leave 6,000 dead on the side of the colonial troops, and a number far higher on the Syrian side. There was especially strong resistance in the territory dominated by the Alawite religious sect, with support from the Kemalists. This resistance was not crushed until 1921, after a Franco-Turkish agreement in which France renounced its claim to Cilicia (in southeastern Turkey).

The French imperialists, from the beginning, pursued a divide-and-rule policy that has marked Syria to this day. They split off Lebanon, combining it with a Sunni community large enough that the Maronite Christians would be eternally dependent on the imperialists for their security. They separated the Druze territory from that of the Alawites, and they granted a special status to the Alexandretta administrative district, which was



B.D. Vigilev

Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin wrote 1916 pamphlet providing Marxist analysis of imperialism. (See Quote of the Week, page 2.)



40 percent Turkish. They ended up ceding this territory to Turkey in 1939.

In *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), Lenin explained that "an essential feature of imperialism is the rivalry between several great powers in the striving for hegemony, i.e., for the conquest of territory, not so much directly for themselves as to weaken the adversary and undermine *his* hegemony." The history of the French Mandate is thus also, in a fundamental way, that of the rivalry between French and British imperialism. In fact the French imperialists were quite obsessed with "perfidious Albion," whose hand they saw in all their troubles in the Levant, especially during the great revolt of 1925. These two imperialist powers could only form an alliance to prevent a third thief from muscling in on their territory or to undercut Arab nationalism, which threatened them both.

The Great Druze Revolt of 1925

Even after years of "pacification," French imperialism was far from having permanently subdued its colonial subjects. In 1925, a great revolt broke out in the Jabal al-Druze, or Druze Mountain, in the south of the country, which won the enthusiastic support of Syrian nationalists. What must be noted here is that the French colonial abuse, which was the last straw and provoked the revolt, took place under the banner of the Cartel des Gauches [left-wing coalition] that ruled France at that time. It was a government of the bourgeois Radical Party supported by the SFIO (Socialist Party). The new high commissioner to the Levant, General Sarraïl, was not a far-right nut, but rather a "progressive," typical of the Third Republic. He was a Radical Party member and a Freemason, an anti-clericalist who aroused the hostility of the Lebanese Maronite Christian clergy.

The revolt was provoked by the heavy-handed policies of a local representative of France, a certain Captain Carbillat. He began to build roads to open up the Druze Mountain, but at that time the overwhelming majority of the population did not have vehicles. There were presumably military reasons for this sort of operation: to facilitate access for tanks and military convoys. The fact that Carbillat accomplished such tasks by resorting to forced labor, as was typical in the French colonial empire until at least 1946, did not make him a hero of modernity in the eyes of the peasants. Colonial violence against the Druze increased, but the last straw was the fact that he proclaimed himself governor of the Druze country by taking advantage of a quarrel among the leaders of a Druze clan. Sarraïl, the left-winger, imprisoned the Druze dignitaries who had approached him to complain about Carbillat's behavior.

The revolt began in July 1925 on the Druze Mountain over local claims but then spread well beyond. Circassian colonial troops committed abuses under the direction of Captain Collet, of whom I will speak later. When insurrection broke out in Damascus, French troops savagely bombarded the city in October. On 17 November 1925, *L'Humanité*, newspaper of the French Communist Party (PCF), reported more than 1,400 killed, including 336 women and children.

The PCF and Repression in the Levant

It is nice to read what *L'Humanité* wrote at that time, especially when one compares it to today, with the PCF now a mere social-democratic shadow of its former self. Despite an information blackout in the French bourgeois media, the PCF ran articles starting in early August on "the revolt, 100 times justified, of the oppressed masses of Syria" (*L'Humanité*, 3 August 1925). It strongly condemned French colonial terrorism and demanded the end of the French Mandate, continually comparing it to the colonial Rif War (in northern Morocco), which was going on at practically the same time in the summer of 1925. [PCF leader] Gabriel Péri called for "mass fraternization with the oppressed in revolt" (*L'Humanité*, 9

August 1925). The next day, *L'Humanité* reported 200 French soldiers killed at Soueïda and declared:

“It is the duty of the French proletariat to use all its power to help the indigenous masses in the colonies to shake off the yoke of French imperialism. It is their duty and it is in their immediate interest, as it will spare the proletariat the blood sacrifices that capitalist society will demand. “Just as the Syrian and Malagasy troops refused to fight their brothers from Druze Mountain on August 4 and 5, so the French soldiers, sons of workers and peasants who are or will be sent to Morocco, to Syria, and perhaps to Indochina, should refuse to fight for the imperialist enemy and should extend a fraternal hand to the oppressed of the colonies! True peace will be the result of the defeat of our imperialism.”

A lot of colonial troops were in fact used at that time. It is clear in *L'Humanité*'s coverage that the struggles against colonial plundering in Morocco and Syria were part of the same picture. We often cite an exemplary action by the dock workers in Marseille, who took the loads of arms they were supposed to ship to Morocco and dumped them in the sea. This heroic gesture of internationalist solidarity is a concrete example of what it means when we call for taking up the defense of a neo-colonial country against imperialist intervention. The proletariat must really be mobilized for class struggle actions that can have an impact on military operations.

On the other hand, *L'Humanité* on 10 August 1925 polemicized against the socialists of the SFIO, who at best demanded that the French government defer to the League of Nations. As the PCF pointed



9 October 1925 issue of French pro-Communist Party union newspaper calls for 24-hour general strike against wars in Morocco and Syria.

out, the League of Nations would not fail to entrust France with a mandate to re-establish capitalist order.

In 1925, the fraternization that *L'Humanité* called for did happen, at least in a few cases. For instance, in an issue dated 25 August 1925 the newspaper salutes the “magnificent” behavior of colonial Algerian troops in Beirut. Another article (1 February 1926) reports:

“During a four-day battle in which 1,330 Druze fought against 3,800 French (Spahis [colonial cavalry] and Armenian volunteers), the battalion entrusted with defense of the Rashaya Fortress refused to continue a fratricidal struggle. “A second battalion, sent in great haste from Riyaq, joined the first, threw down their weapons and fraternized with the Syrians. “After three days, thanks to the landing of fresh reinforcements at Beirut, the French command finally managed to bomb the Rashaya neighborhoods, with the help of asphyxiant gas. “These are the brutal facts, without embellishment. “‘Fraternization’ is an idea that has come a long way; it is now becoming reality. “The example shown by two battalions in Rashaya, refusing to fight against their oppressed brothers, will be understood. “Now more than ever, fraternization must become one of the most effective means to stop fratricidal struggle between French proletarians and Syrian peasants!”

Undoubtedly to stamp out this sort of fraternization, French officers encour-



Demonstration for Syrian independence, Damascus, 1930s.

aged soldiers to loot when they didn’t do it on their own (*L'Humanité*, 17 November 1925 and 17 November 1926).

According to *L'Humanité* (20 September 1925), two million French workers (probably an exaggerated figure, but even so) declared themselves against the war in Morocco and Syria, and the PCF talked about preparing a 24-hour general strike. In fact, on October 12, a large strike took place in France against the war in Morocco, during which a worker was killed (*L'Humanité*, 17 October 1925).

Thus far, we have not managed to find many documents on the PCF’s work regarding the Syrian insurrection. The historian Charles-Robert Ageron wrote in one of his books that the PCF had kept a low profile around Syria compared to the Rif War, but Ageron does not provide any evidence that the PCF’s Syrian work was any different than what it did around the Rif War. A report by the PCF’s 1926 Colonial Commission indicates that it had worked very successfully within an Armenian regiment (French imperialism used a lot of Armenian and Circassian troops against the insurrection in Syria). However, after the dissolution of the regiment the PCF was unable to carry out any other work. It had established relationships with representatives of the insurrection and sought to create a legal union movement. It had relatively limited means and thought one of the main things it could do was to establish a bimonthly newspaper and distribute propaganda among the French troops.

Thus we have a leaflet in French and Arabic calling on French soldiers to fraternize and help the insurgents liberate themselves. The leaflet also addresses the colonial troops, reminding the Moroccans, Tunisians and others of their own colonial oppression in their home countries. In early 1927, a report from the Colonial Commission, I assume a report to the Communist International (CI), also indicates that the PCF was not in a position to offer material assistance to the insurgents, nor even to send a party member to serve as a liaison with the Palestinian communists. Nonetheless, this shows that they considered these questions.

The PCF’s local connections were tenuous. The Communists had to overcome the reluctance of Armenian and Arab militants to fuse into one organization and struggle against repression (18 of their comrades had been arrested, and in fact at that point the Syrian and Lebanese Communist Party had been shut down by the colonial police). Just a few words about the Syrian Communist Party. The ground was prepared for founding the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon in October 1924, when a Jewish militant from Palestine, Joseph Berger, met some young militants in Beirut. The group initially had a strong Arab Christian component, and in 1925 it fused with an Armenian youth group, the Spartak Youth, led by Artin Madoyan, who remained an important leader of the party for at least 30 years. In January 1926, the Communist Party was shut down by the colonial police and did not begin to reconstitute itself until after the amnesty in 1928.

The actions of the PCF at the time were in many respects heroic, even if they were not without political problems—for example, their perspective of a “democratic republic in all the Arab countries.” In fact, it was around this time that the Stalinists concretized their position that before struggling for socialism, it was necessary to achieve the bourgeois stage of national liberation.

By 1928 Trotsky would generalize the theory of permanent revolution, which had proven its correctness in Russia in 1917, to all countries of belated capitalist development. He emphasized that for these countries it was an illusion to seek a stage of real national liberation under capitalism. The local bourgeoisie was too weak to accomplish the tasks historically linked to classic bourgeois revolutions like the French Revolution: it would find itself squeezed between its imperialist bosses and a rising proletariat. Only the proletariat has the historic interest and the social power to take power in its own name and resolve the unresolved tasks by expropriating the bourgeoisie and struggling for the international extension of the revolution.

The 1936 General Strike and the Popular Front

I do not have time this evening to give a detailed history of all the crimes committed by French imperialism in Syria during the bloody period of the French Mandate, but I would like to talk about an important period around 1936. In response to a period marked by particularly murderous imperialist plunder, a general strike shook the country for more than a month, from 20 January to 6 March 1936. Martial law was declared and the repression was ruthless (more than 3,000 were arrested), but French imperialism was finally forced to retreat by the determination of the Syrian masses. The nationalist leaders were freed and the French began negotiations with the nationalists of the National Bloc, which would eventually lead to signing a treaty with France in the fall.

The Popular Front was elected in France in May 1936. Though the French negotiator understood that it was in France’s interest to make some concessions, the Popular Front government led by Léon

Blum remained intransigent. In particular, it refused to replace the high commissioner, de Martel. Finally a Syrian delegation to Paris put together a draft treaty with the French in mid September 1936. The treaty included a clause for the protection of religious minorities, which had been the cover for French aggression in the Levant since 1860. The French also got to keep some troops in place, within a certain framework. The nationalists prevailed, but in fact the French were stirring up trouble in the Druze and Alawite areas against the formation of an independent government in Damascus which was inevitably predominantly Sunni. Furthermore, the treaty was subject to a probationary period of three years. The French soon obtained exorbitant supplementary concessions, which were refused by the Syrian parliament, and the treaty remained a dead letter.

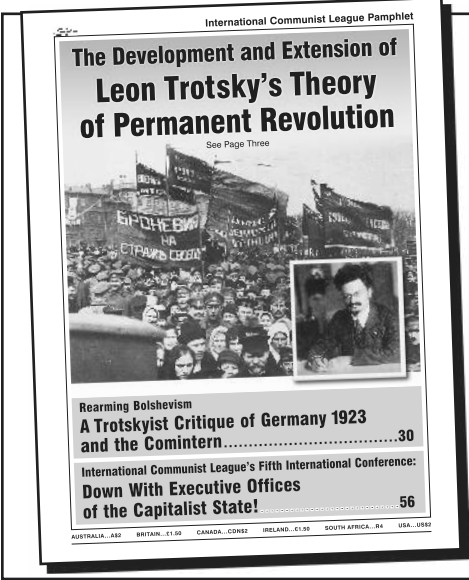
What is important in this story is that there are reports that the Syrian Communist Party, which had been founded more than ten years previously, supported the treaty. The PCF, and above all the Communist International, had told it to do so because in 1936 Stalin favored an alliance with the French imperialists against Hitler, even if it meant sacrificing revolution in France and the Communist parties of the colonial countries.

The striking contrast here is with the PCF’s determined struggle ten years earlier for the independence of Syria and Morocco and for the unconditional withdrawal of French troops. This change was the result of internal pressures within the PCF to become nothing more than a reformist party, and of the degeneration of the CI. In Lenin and Trotsky’s time, the CI had led the fight against the pro-colonialist positions among French Socialists. But the isolation of the Soviet Union, aggravated by the defeat of the German revolution in 1923, made it possible for a parasitic clique led by Stalin to usurp political power in the Soviet Union.

The CI was transformed little by little into an appendage of Stalinist foreign policy. After Hitler took power in 1933 without a single shot being fired, none of the CI’s parties called into question the Stalinists’ catastrophic policies in Germany. The CI’s degeneration was complete. The CI adopted the line of the popular front, which meant rejecting the independence of the working class from the capitalists by allying with bourgeois “anti-fascists.” In France, this meant uniting with the Radical Party, the historic party of the colonialist Third Republic. The PCF thus betrayed the possibility of a socialist revolution in France in 1936, and at the same time abandoned the cause of independence for Syria and for Lebanon.

The head of the Syrian CP, Khalid Bakdash, was even part of the wheeling and dealing as an advisor to the Syrian delegation that negotiated the neocolonial treaty in 1936. The most radical fringe of the nationalist movement opposed the neocolonial treaty. As a result, the Ba’ath Party emerged from this milieu little by little and became dominant among radicalized youth, with the Communist Party trailing behind. In a sense, the 1936 treachery of the PCF, which pushed for a liberal neocolonial solution to the Syrian

continued on page 10



International Communist League pamphlet comprising three articles from ICL press: “The Development and Extension of Leon Trotsky’s Theory of Permanent Revolution,” “A Trotskyist Critique of Germany 1923 and the Comintern” and “Down With Executive Offices of the Capitalist State!” These articles together constitute an introduction to the historically founded principles and program of Trotskyism (i.e., genuine Marxism).

\$2 (56 pages)
Make checks payable/mail to:
Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

Labour Party...

(continued from page 12)

Tories for allegedly befriending “Muslim extremists.” Corbyn strenuously rejected charges that Labour was full of racists, but he did acquiesce to the suspension of a number of party members. Worse yet, his chief lieutenant John McDonnell volubly endorsed the crusade to hunt down “anti-Semites” in the party. Those suspended included Muslim MP Naz Shah, who was also forced to resign as McDonnell’s parliamentary private secretary, and sometime left-Labourite Ken Livingstone. These suspensions should be rescinded immediately.

Livingstone has much to answer for to the working class. As mayor of London he faithfully served the City bankers, he urged Tube [subway] workers to cross RMT picket lines and defended the role of the police in the cold-blooded execution of Brazilian electrician Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005. As a Spartacist League placard at the London May Day rally read: “Ex-Mayor Livingstone: Pro-City, Pro-Police, Anti-Union, but NOT Anti-Jewish!” A second placard read: “No Vote to Blairite Stooze Sadiq Khan!”

To his credit, Livingstone rightly stated: “If you look at what this is all about, it’s not about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.... What this is all about is actually



Workers Hammer

Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn addressing 2016 London May Day rally.

the struggle of the embittered old Blairite MPs to try to get rid of Jeremy Corbyn” (BBC News online, 30 April). Indeed, a spokesman for the Zionist Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) admitted as much when he ranted, “Save your pitch fork for Corbyn.”

As we documented in our article, “Britain: Banana Monarchy” (*Workers Vanguard* No. 1082, 29 January), since Corbyn’s election, the Tories, Blairites and the bourgeois media—especially the liberal *Guardian*—have waged an unrelenting class war aimed at removing him. Only days after Corbyn took over as Labour leader, the *Sunday Times* (20 September 2015) published a warning from an unnamed “senior serving general” that Corbyn would face a “mutiny” if he tried to act on his commitment to scrap the Trident submarine nuclear missile system or pull out of NATO. This coup threat was echoed two months later when the head of the armed forces, General Nicholas Houghton, in full military regalia, effectively declared on TV that Corbyn’s opposition to nuclear weapons made him unfit to be prime minister. Houghton was immediately backed up by Corbyn’s defence spokesman, the Blairite Maria Eagle. Barely a week has gone by without some overt attack on Corbyn by Blairite plotters. But as the outcome of the latest vendetta shows, every plot to remove him comes up against the stubborn fact that he is more popular than ever among the party membership, which has doubled in size since his campaign for party leader.

Corbyn is hardly a revolutionary; he is firmly committed to a parliamentary path to what would effectively be a new ver-

sion of the old Labourite “welfare state.” Nonetheless, Corbyn’s election as Labour leader came as a nasty shock to the bourgeois establishment, and especially the right wing of the Labour Party. His campaign set in motion a process to restore the party’s historic links to its working-class base, reversing the direction the Blairites had taken towards becoming an overtly capitalist party. As we wrote in “Britain: Banana Monarchy”:

“Any move that weakens the grip of the Blairites within the party is in the interests of the working class in its struggles against the capitalist class. As the Spartacist League/Britain has stated from the beginning, we have a side in the class war raging in the Labour Party. Against the right-wing attempts to oust him, we say: *Defend Jeremy Corbyn’s right to run the Labour Party, and in his way!*”

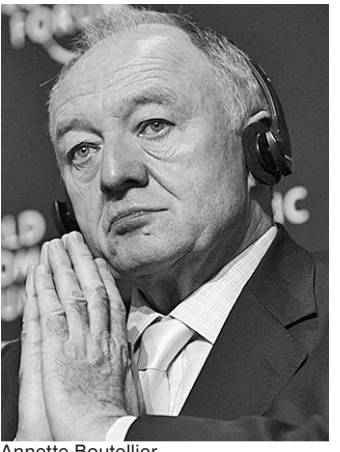
Zionism: No Friend of the Jewish People

August Bebel, a central leader of the pre-World War I German Social Democracy, pithily described anti-Jewish bigotry, which whipped up populist venom by singling out “Jewish bankers,” as the “socialism of fools.” But those who today promiscuously toss around unfounded accusations of anti-Semitism are sinister enemies of all who solidarise with the Palestinian people and of the left and workers movement as a whole. The campaign to neutralise and silence international solidarity with the besieged Palestinian people is orchestrated from the highest levels of the Israeli state, with support from its imperialist patrons in Britain, the U.S. and Germany.

In 2011, the Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu enacted a law that criminalised advocacy of a boycott of Israel. And at a March 28 conference in Jerusalem to plot strategy against the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz called for “targeted civil eliminations” of BDS “leaders.” Coming from a government that has killed some 200 Palestinians just since last October, and slaughtered more than 2,300 during its July 2014 onslaught on Gaza, this is not idle chatter.

Within the Labour Party, there is considerable overlap between Labour Friends of Israel and the Blairite Progress grouping. In early April, Progress head Richard Angell issued an “action plan” involving the Jewish Labour Movement to deal with “antisemitism within [Labour’s] ranks” (mirror.co.uk, 5 April). The Jewish Labour Movement is affiliated not only to the Labour Party but also to the World Zionist Organization, which finances the expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

This provides some context for the recent raft of “anti-Semitism” smears in Britain. In February, Alex Chalmers, a BICOM intern, slandered the Oxford University Labour Club for having “some kind of problem with Jews” after they voted to endorse Israeli Apartheid Week on campus. When Malia Bouattia, a Muslim woman of Algerian origin who supports the Palestinian cause, subsequently



Annette Boutellier

Inset: Sometime Labour left-winger Ken Livingstone, former mayor of London. Spartacist League/Britain literature table at May Day 2016 rally in London.



Workers Hammer

ran successfully for the presidency of the National Union of Students, she, too, was accused of being anti-Jewish. Vicki Kirby, a Labour candidate in Woking [outside of London], was suspended for a 2011 tweet that Guido Fawkes dug up and doctored to make it look as if she promoted racist caricatures of Jews. As Jewish writer David Baddiel attested, Kirby had simply quoted some lines from his 2010 comedy film *The Infidel*.

Fawkes likewise “outed” Naz Shah for a 2014 Facebook post, before she became a Labour MP, that depicted a map of Israel superimposed on a map of the U.S. Ironically, those who maligned Shah for allegedly supporting the forced transfer of the Israeli Jewish population are the very people who apologise for an Israeli government filled with open proponents of the forced transfer of the Palestinian population from “Greater Israel.” It turned out that the map was originally posted by American Jewish academic Norman Finkelstein, who pointed to the obvious dark humour intended: “So, we have this joke: Why doesn’t Israel become the 51st state? Answer: Because then, it would only have two senators” (opendemocracy.net). The Zionists hate Finkelstein, the son of a concentration camp survivor, not least for his indictments of how they cynically wield the Nazi genocide of the Jews as a bludgeon against those who speak out against Israeli atrocities.

Ken Livingstone was accused of being anti-Jewish because, in defending Shah, he had the chutzpah to say that when “Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism. This was before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews.” Sundry critics tried to dismiss Livingstone’s statement by pointing out how his facts were

mangled (Hitler never won an election, etc., etc.). Despite his glib reduction of the Holocaust to a product of Hitler’s madness, his point about collaboration between Zionists and the Nazis is correct. Livingstone cited Lenni Brenner’s *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (1983), a book the Spartacist League/Britain drew on for the article “Zionist Big Lie targets *Perdition*” (*Workers Hammer* No. 88, May 1987). The Zionists prevented that play, written by Jim Allen and directed by Ken Loach, from being staged in London because it was based on the true story of Zionist collaboration with the Nazis in facilitating the deportation to the death camps of more than 400,000 Hungarian Jews in 1944.

Hitler’s ultimate aim was the extermination of all Jews, Zionist and non-Zionist alike. But in its first years, the Third Reich frequently accepted the proffered assistance of the Zionists in helping make Germany “*Judenrein*” (cleansed of Jews). As documented by Yeshiva University historian Lucy Dawidowicz in *The War Against the Jews 1933-1945* (1975), only months after Hitler came to power, the Zionist Federation of Germany (ZVfD) “proposed that the ‘new German state’ recognize the Zionist movement as the most suitable Jewish group in the new Germany with which to deal” and “that since emigration would provide a solution to the Jewish question, it should therefore receive government assistance.” The ZVfD welcomed “the foundation of the new state, which has established the principle of race.” Two months later, the Jewish Agency signed the secret August 1933 *Ha’avara* (Transfer) agreement with the Hitler regime, which allowed wealthy German Jews to move to Palestine (and only to Palestine) with part of their capital in order to provide an outlet for German exports.

In turn, the Nazi state granted special status to the Zionist movement, which was far smaller than the non-Zionist Jewish organisations. In January 1935, Nazi chief Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Gestapo and second-in-command of the SS, told the Bavarian political police that “the activity of the Zionist-oriented youth organizations...lies in the interest of the National Socialist state’s leadership” because they were preparing Jews for emigration to Palestine (quoted in Dawidowicz). While active socialists and communists were thrown into Dachau, the Zionists were for some years the only non-Nazi political group allowed to function legally, the Zionist banner the only flag aside from the Nazi swastika to fly on German soil.

There was more to this than Zionist *Realpolitik* in the face of overwhelming Nazi repression, as latter-day apologists would have it. As the revolutionary workers movement grew towards the end of the 19th century, so did organised anti-



Reuters

Israeli airstrikes against Gaza, July 2014.

Jewish bigotry. Overwhelmingly, the Jewish workers, and a significant layer of the Jewish intelligentsia, sought their salvation through the struggle, alongside their non-Jewish class brothers and sisters, for socialist revolution. It was to stanch this movement and to incite pogroms that the tsarist secret police propagated *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a crude forgery that conjured up an international Jewish conspiracy to take over the world. But when rumours of a pogrom spread through St. Petersburg at the height of the 1905 Revolution, the workers' soviet mobilised some 12,000 armed workers to fight the reactionaries; likewise in Warsaw, integrated workers defence guards were set up to patrol Jewish areas and ward off pogromist mobs (see "Revolution, Counterrevolution and the Jewish Question," *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 49-50, Winter 1993-94).

In his 1958 essay "The Non-Jewish Jew," Marxist historian Isaac Deutscher accounted for the disproportionate role of Jews in the socialist movement:

"They were *a priori* exceptional in that as Jews they dwelt on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions, and national cultures. They were born and brought up on the borderlines of various epochs. Their mind matured where the most diverse cultural influences crossed and fertilized each other....

"Like Marx, Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky strove, together with their non-Jewish comrades, for the universal, as against the particularist, and for the internationalist, as against the nationalist, solutions to the problems of their time."

Zionist founding father Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) despised the assimilationist and pro-socialist Jewish proletariat. Rather than fight anti-Jewish bigotry and repression, Herzl and his fellow Zionists used it as an excuse to separate Europe's Jews from their compatriots and mould them into a nation with its own homeland, in Palestine. Ideologically nurtured in the cradle of German national "awakening," Zionism embraced the reactionary ideals of *Blut* (blood) and *Volk* (nation). Born long after the bourgeois nation-state had outlived its historically progressive role in the era of capitalist consolidation, Zionism distinguished itself in being a particularly venal and racist brand of nationalism. The Zionist leaders raised the battle cry, "A land without people for a people without land," knowing full well that to make Palestine a land without people would require the expulsion of much of its Arab population.

The Zionist project could only be realised with the support of a powerful imperialist patron—be it tsarist Russia, the Kaiser's (or Hitler's) Germany, Britain or the U.S. The Zionists peddled their wares with the claim that they could neutralise Jewish support for the revolutionary socialist movement. As Winston Churchill later ranted, the Zionists could help in defeating the "sinister confederacy" of "International Jews" who conspired "for the overthrow of civilization" ("Zionism versus Bolshevism, A Struggle for the Soul of the Jewish People," *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, 8 February 1920). While



Jewish families rounded up by German soldiers in Warsaw Ghetto, April 1943.

Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann looked to the British or U.S. imperialists, the Revisionist right wing inspired by Vladimir Jabotinsky gravitated towards Mussolini's Italy and even Hitler's Germany. As late as 1941, a Revisionist splinter calling itself the National Military Organisation (NMO), better known as the Stern Gang, appeared to the Third Reich:

"Common interests could exist between the establishment of a New Order in Europe in conformity with the German concept, and the true national aspirations of the Jewish people as they are embodied by the NMO."

—quoted in *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*

It was such "common interests" that led Herzl and his followers to find allies among the more reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie, who wanted to rid themselves of "their" Jews. Weizmann managed to secure the 1917 Balfour Declaration, with its vague promise of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The British imperialists aimed to establish a bulwark of support in the region, pitting Jews against Palestinians. They also hoped to undermine Jewish support for Bolshevism on the eve of the victorious October Revolution in Russia, then Britain's ally in World War I.

In this latter aim they failed. In the course of the Russian Revolution and the civil war against imperialist and domestic counterrevolutionary forces, which carried out pogroms against Jews and reds wherever they went, the dispossessed Jewish masses flocked to the Bolshevik banner. The Jewish nationalist and pro-Zionist socialist groups in Russia and the Ukraine became empty shells. As the Third All-Russia Conference of the Jewish Communist Sections declared in 1920:

"The Jewish workers and the poorest of the Jewish people understand quite well that only the communist order will put an end to all pogroms, will root out all nationalist prejudices, will erase all national restrictions and install over the whole face of the earth a genuine brotherhood of peoples."

—*News of Central Bureau of the Jewish Sections* (October 1920)

The Bolshevik Revolution and the early Soviet state under Lenin and Trotsky were a beacon to workers and the oppressed everywhere, including the Arab masses subjugated by British imperialism in the Near East, who suffered under the barbarity of capitalist "civilisation." The overthrow of capitalism and the institution of a planned collectivised economy opened the road to the liberation and development of all the many Soviet peoples. Even after the reactionary and nationalist Stalinist bureaucracy usurped political power from the working class, it was the proletarian class character of the Soviet Union that allowed it to save well over two million Jews fleeing the Nazi murder machine and to smash Hitler's Third Reich. In contrast, the imperialist "democracies" turned back all but a handful of Jewish refugees. Many of the Jewish refugees who were allowed into Britain were detained as so-called enemy aliens during World War II and thousands were deported. Most notorious was the ship *Dunera*, which was packed with 2,000 mostly Jewish refugees along

with 450 Italian and German prisoners for the two-month voyage to Australia.

For a Socialist Federation of the Near East!

Young activists who solidarise with the cause of the Palestinian people in the face of Israeli state terror would do well to consider the words of the Jewish Communists in 1920. Revolutionary proletarian internationalism is the only road to the national and social emancipation of the Palestinian people. This may seem far-fetched in an age when the opportunist "far left" sneers at the Marxist goal of an egalitarian international communist order and even class struggle seems a thing of the past. However, if the past decade has demonstrated nothing else, it is that catastrophic crises are endemic to the capitalist profit system. The same holds true of the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, as the current strike wave in France and years of protests and strikes in Greece demonstrate, notwithstanding the stranglehold of the reformist, pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracies.

The capitalist state of Israel is no exception to this Marxist understanding. While Israeli society has moved steadily to the right in recent decades, the historic interests of the Israeli Jewish working class run counter to those of their capitalist rulers and exploiters. So long as the national rather than the class axis prevails, the Palestinians will lose out to the overwhelming military superiority of the Zionist state. It is only the working class of Israel that has the capacity and historic interest to shatter the Zionist state *from within*. In fighting for the creation of revolutionary internationalist workers parties in the Near East we struggle to win the Israeli Jewish workers away from their Zionist rulers, to recognise that their class allies are the working people of the Arab countries and to champion the national rights of the Palestinians. Likewise we seek to break the Arab toiling masses from Arab nationalism and Islamic reaction (see "Defend the Palestinian People!" *Workers Vanguard* No. 1089, 6 May).

The 2011 Egyptian protests did find an echo in the mass protests in Israel that summer, showing the potential to undermine the garrison mentality drummed into Israeli Jewish workers by the Zionist rulers, who tell them that they are surrounded by a "sea" of hostile Arabs. However, the uprising in Egypt did not present a challenge to capitalist rule by the proletariat; rather, it was dominated by bourgeois nationalists and Islamists. For their part, the Revolutionary Socialists (RS) in Egypt, associated with the British Socialist Workers Party (SWP), simply capitulated to these forces. From pushing illusions in the army to backing the reactionary Muslim Brotherhood and, ultimately, the coup that brought the military to power, at every stage the RS helped to ensure that the Egyptian proletariat would remain tied to its class enemies.

In Britain, the reformists of the SWP prate that the liberal BDS movement is "the potentially most serious challenge to

Israel's position and to the continuance of its long-term policy of piecemeal and de facto annexation of the whole of Palestine" (*Socialist Review*, July/August 2013). The BDS campaign is based on the bankrupt assumption that the Israeli state can be pressured by its "democratic" imperialist paymasters to halt the oppression of the Palestinian people. The notion that the (admittedly well-funded and powerful) "Zionist lobby" is responsible for imperialist support to Israel is ludicrous. It is in pursuit of its own geopolitical interests that U.S. imperialism pumps some \$3 billion a year in military aid to its Israeli gendarme.

According to the Palestine Solidarity Committee, the boycott strategy "exerts moral pressure on the British Government by giving expression to the desire to move towards a more ethical foreign policy." "Democratic" Britain, as much as, if not more than, any other country, bears the burden of historical responsibility for making the Near East the slaughterhouse that it is today. At the start of World War I, Britain sought to encourage an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, then Britain's enemy, by promising that the Arabs would be granted freedom at the war's end. Two years later, the British imperialists and their French allies, in the secret 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement,



Sydney Morning Herald
Australia, 1940: Jewish refugees deported from Britain on ship *Dunera* disembark in Sydney.

carved up the Near East for themselves. This was followed by the pro-Zionist Balfour Declaration. Thirty years later, the Clement Attlee Labour government presided over the bloody partition of Palestine (and the far bloodier partition of India). Divide and rule—that is the "morality" of British imperialism.

While defending BDS activists when
continued on page 8

16 SPARTACIST

Soviet Jews and the Struggle for Communism

Revolution, Counterrevolution and the Jewish Question

SPARTACIST

Spartacist (English edition)
No. 49-50, Winter 1993-94 (56 pages)
\$1.50
Order from/pay to: Spartacist Pub. Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

WORKERS HAMMER

Britain out!

EU: enemy of workers and immigrants

For workers unity across European borders!

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

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain

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

Order from/make checks payable to:
Spartacist Publications
PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY, Britain
Spartacist Publishing Co.
Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10116

SF Cop Terror...

(continued from page 1)

In April, the cops killed a Latino homeless man in the Mission district, Luis Gongora. Police claimed he was threatening them with a knife, while surveillance video shows the cops firing within seconds of leaving their patrol cars. On top of this came the release of vile racist text messages by a group of officers, the second such scandal to embroil the SFPD recently. Among other repulsively bigoted and homophobic slurs, the messages raved against “n----rs,” joked about lynching and called those protesting police violence “wild animals on the loose.”

In an article titled, “How the People Fired the SFPD Chief” (socialistworker.org, 24 May), the International Socialist Organization (ISO) hails the ousting of Suhr as a “victory for the movement against police brutality” that “shows that collective organization and struggle can bring about change.” But what has changed? Suhr has simply been replaced, for now, as commander of the SFPD by black police veteran Toney Chaplin. At a news conference shortly after he was appointed, Chaplin pledged “reforms, reforms, reforms” and a top-to-bottom review of the SFPD. In fact, Suhr had promised the same things.

Neither the appointment of a new police head nor the implementation of cosmetic reforms will do anything to change the inherently repressive nature of the agents of the capitalist state. Schemes like civilian review boards and police task forces were initially launched in the “liberal” Bay Area with the claims of promoting greater transparency or stricter officer discipline. The Oakland Citizens’ Police Review Board was established close to 40 years ago following a killing spree by the city’s cops that wiped out nine people in one year. Yet this did nothing to stay the hands of the notoriously racist killers of the OPD. No amount of oversight will stop the cops from doing their job to “serve and protect” the capitalist rulers, which includes the violent repression of striking workers, black people and immigrants.

From the coldblooded execution of Oscar Grant in Oakland by Bay Area transit police in 2009 to the killing of Mario Woods in 2015, the savage brutality of the cops is hardly news in this country. In the last five months, over 400 people have been killed by police nationwide. Last year, young black men were five times more likely than white men of the same age to be gunned down by cops. The daily humiliations and raw racist terror meted out by the police are integral to the sys-



March 18 protest in San Francisco against foreclosures on black homes; gentrification drives out black people, immigrants, poor.

tematic oppression of black people, which is rooted in American capitalism. The hard truth is that the only way to eliminate police brutality is to do away with this entire system and the bourgeois state apparatus—the police, the courts, the prisons and the armed forces—which enforces it.

Police Repression, Gentrification and the War on the Oppressed

The cops are the shock troops for the mounting drive to keep the streets of San Francisco “safe” for the filthy rich and the well-heeled yuppies of the tech sector, who have increasingly taken over the city. This gentrification drive has played out in a heightened onslaught against black people, Latinos and the homeless. In the last couple of decades, the city’s vast construction boom, designed to increase property values, has caused massive displacement of poor and working-class residents, all the while padding the pockets of private developers. Ground zero for this accelerating phenomenon is San Francisco’s historically working-class Latino and immigrant Mission district where studio apartments average \$2,700 a month.

At the same time, over the past several decades, there has been a mass exodus of the city’s black population. As the old saying goes, “urban renewal means Negro removal.” In the 1970s, the Fillmore neighborhood, once considered the Harlem of the West for its many black-owned jazz clubs and bookstores, was demolished. As the industrial base of the city shrank, the majority-black Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood, home to the Naval Shipyard, was severely impacted. With the introduction of containerized shipping, which shifted the main port to Oakland, jobs dried up. Four decades

ago, black people were 13 percent of San Francisco’s population. In recent years, that figure has fallen to 6 percent and is still going down. Meanwhile, black people account for some 40 percent of all those jailed.

The economic downturn of the last period, with the predatory lending of the housing “boom,” subsequent foreclosure of homes, and overall deepening unemployment, only accelerated the trend of black dislocation. Today, San Francisco has an enormous racial income gap. In 2014, median white household income climbed to \$104,300, while the city’s shrinking black population saw its median household income fall by close to 5 percent to a paltry \$29,500. Meanwhile, as rents soar, even yuppies are being priced out and moving across the Bay to places like Oakland. Over the past two decades, this spillover effect has contributed to a decline in Oakland’s black population, which has decreased from 43 to 26 percent.

Liberals and reformist leftists are well versed in peddling fantasies of changing the capitalist system of exploitation so that it can supposedly meet the needs of the working class and oppressed masses. Attributing police brutality, evictions and poverty to a question of simply bad policing or unfair policies creates the illusion that the ruling class can rearrange its priorities and do better next time. Such reliance on the bourgeoisie serves to channel anger over racist cop terror right back into the very “justice” system that upholds state violence.

The fight against cop terror needs an organized political expression, one based on mobilizing the multiracial working class that creates wealth and keeps the economy moving. Unleashing labor’s

social power in opposition to police violence could give some pause to the killers in blue and their masters. What is necessary is a show of force that does not promote the myth that police can be made accountable to the “people,” but one that mobilizes the working class independently of and *against* the Democratic Party, currently the preferred party of San Francisco’s liberal rulers and just as much a capitalist party as the Republicans. The Bay Area’s multiracial unions—longshore, municipal and transit—have the power to rally not just their members, most of whom can no longer afford to live in San Francisco, but the ghetto poor and oppressed immigrants who clean the buildings and staff the city’s stores and restaurants. But the unions are hamstrung by their current leadership who have tied them to Democratic Party politicians.

A small taste of the labor mobilization needed was shown by International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10, which shut down the port of Oakland on May Day in 2015. A contingent of some 300 longshoremen with a banner demanding “Stop Police Terror!” headed up a 3,000-strong march. But the potential power of the ILWU is kept under wraps by the labor bureaucrats. This year there was not even a whiff of union power at Local 10’s May Day event, which was centered on a call for a “National Day of Mourning” for victims of cop violence. The stop-work union meeting at the hall was in fact an outright campaign event for Bernie Sanders, who has been endorsed by the ILWU International. Sanders—who had been invited to speak—was a no-show. Danny Glover stood in and, together with speakers from other unions, stumped for the Democratic presidential candidate. The crowd was mainly non-ILWU; most longshoremen stayed home, reflecting lack of enthusiasm among the largely black membership for the choices on offer in this year’s electoral circus.

As Marxists, we fight to forge the revolutionary workers party that is essential to leading the multiracial proletariat, including its strategic black component, in the overturn of this murderous capitalist system. The liberation of black people and all the oppressed in America requires a massive reallocation of wealth and resources, which is possible only with the expropriation of the rapacious capitalist class through socialist revolution. Nothing short of sweeping away the capitalist state machinery and replacing it with a workers state—where those who labor rule and where production is based on human need, not profit—can disarm the killer cops and open the road to black liberation and a decent future for all. ■

Labour Party...

(continued from page 7)

they come under attack by the state, we oppose this strategy, which looks to the supposed “humanitarian” instincts of capitalist governments, campus administrations and corporate giants to pressure Israel. Ongoing economic sanctions serve mainly to weaken and undermine the workers and oppressed of the targeted country, not its capitalist rulers. Particularly odious are academic and cultural boycotts, which equate Israeli scholars and artists—such as the integrated West-Eastern Divan Orchestra set up by Palestinian scholar Edward Said and Jewish musician Daniel Barenboim—with the chauvinist Zionist rulers. In contrast, Marxists assert the need for *international working-class solidarity* with the Palestinians. A standing boycott by British and U.S. dock workers, for example, refusing to handle military shipments to Israel, would strike a powerful blow against Zionist state terror.

Marxists reject the notion widely held on the left that an oppressor nation forfeits its right to self-determination. This is a species of nationalist moralism, which ends up mirroring the lie that equates Zionism with the Jewish people. As we explained in “Birth of the Zionist State:

A Marxist Analysis” (WV No. 45, 24 May 1974):

“Out of the destruction of European Jewry by Hitler (without whose aid the Zionists would have gone the way of the Shakers and other utopian sects) and at the expense of the Palestinian Arabs, a settler colony was transformed into a nation....
“This Hebrew nation came into existence through force and violence, through the suppression, forced expulsion and genocide of other peoples. Communists must oppose this brutal national oppression. Yet once this historical fact is accomplished, we must certainly recognize that nation’s right to self-determination, unless we prefer the alternative, namely national genocide.”

We defend the Palestinian people against the Zionist state down the line, even when that means taking a military side with Islamic fundamentalists like Hamas in Gaza. But we recognise the right of the Israeli Jews as well as the Palestinians to national self-determination. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at bottom a situation of interpenetrated peoples. Both peoples lay claim to the same small sliver of land. Under capitalism, the exercise of national self-determination by one side necessarily comes at the expense of the other. There can and will be no just resolution to the conflicting national rights of the Palestinian and Israeli Jewish peoples short of the establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East, requiring the



YIVO Institute

Following Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, counterrevolutionary forces carried out pogroms against Jews. April 1918: Jewish workers’ self-defense unit in Odessa.

overthrow of all the bourgeois states of the region through proletarian revolutions.

For revolutionaries in Britain, solidarity with the oppressed in the neocolonial countries must start with opposing our “own” ruling class and fighting to bring down British imperialism through socialist revolution at home. Leftist youth who seek effective solidarity with the Palestinian people against Zionist terror need to study the lessons of the Bolshevik Revo-

lution, the greatest victory for the working class and the oppressed to date. Based on those lessons, the Spartacist League/Britain, section of the International Communist League, fights to cohere a revolutionary workers party as part of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International. It is only through the worldwide victory of the socialist proletariat that all manner of exploitation, oppression and imperialist barbarity will be overcome. ■

Syria...

(continued from page 1)

U.S. military. During that time, as Kurdish forces overran ISIS-controlled villages, they repeatedly carried out communalist expulsions, driving Arabs and Turkmen from their homes.

“Iraq First”

The formation of the SDF marks an adjustment in Washington’s military strategy for fighting ISIS. Dubbed “Iraq First” by administration officials, that strategy had focused on providing bombing support to Washington’s proxies in Iraq, namely, the Baghdad government, the Shia militias and the Kurdish *pesh merga* in the north of the country. U.S. airpower and special forces continue to support those Iraqi proxies as they push toward Mosul, the biggest city in that country controlled by ISIS. Imperialist airstrikes are currently being carried out in support of Iraqi government forces as they assault Falluja. In May, the imperialists and their lackeys also opened a new front in Syria as the SDF began attacking Arab-majority villages on the outskirts of Raqqa, the de facto capital of ISIS in Syria. U.S. officials have declared that the eventual aim is to seize Raqqa, clearly auguring a major escalation in the U.S.-led war against ISIS.

Meanwhile, Russian president Vladimir Putin announced in March that he would be significantly scaling back Russia’s military intervention in Syria. The purpose of that intervention was to bolster the regime of Russia’s ally, Syrian president and Alawite Bashar al-Assad, whose forces recaptured the historic city of Palmyra from ISIS at the end of March. Even as it declares war on ISIS, the Obama administration—or at least significant components of it—are still banking on the fall of the Assad regime. As noted by Jonathan Steele in the *London Review of Books* (21 April), U.S.-led airstrikes against ISIS (also known as IS) are “highly selective. They helped the Syrian Kurdish ground forces, the YPG, to liberate the towns of Kobani and Tal Abyad, both on the border with Turkey, from IS last year, but did nothing to protect the Syrian army when it came under threat from IS. When IS forces laid siege to Palmyra last May and drove Assad’s army out after a week-long battle, not a single American plane was seen.”

The intensification of the U.S. intervention in Syria should be welcome news to the likely Democratic Party presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton. A consistent hawk both within the Obama administration and without, she has called for establishing a no-fly zone in northern Syria (which would pose a conflict with Russia), expanding the deployment of Special Operations troops and beefing up the bombing campaign. Meanwhile, her rival for the nomination, Bernie Sanders, while opposing the idea of a no-fly zone, is a firm supporter of the administration’s bellicose policy in Syria. Sanders simply proposes a different policy to advance U.S. imperialism’s interests in the Near East, essentially calling for the Saudi Arabian monarchy and other reactionary Arab regimes to provide the ground troops in Syria. As for presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump, he has ranted about stepping up bombing ISIS, carrying out more intense torture and killing families of accused terrorists.

After coming to office on a promise to end the war in Afghanistan and withdraw virtually all troops from Iraq, Barack Obama has kept some 9,800 troops in Afghanistan and over 6,400 soldiers and support personnel in Iraq. The escalation of the U.S. intervention in the Near East underscores the need for class-conscious workers everywhere, particularly in the U.S., to oppose all wars, occupations and depredations carried out by the imperialists, centrally the Americans.

It is not ISIS or some other Islamist force that has taken income inequality in the U.S. to virtually unprecedented heights. The same U.S. capitalist ruling class that wreaks death and destruction abroad gorges itself on profits while the workers it exploits have their jobs axed and



Xinhua

Displaced Syrians walk to refugee camp on Jordan-Syria border, May 4. Imperialist intervention in Syria has fueled mass flight of refugees.

their health and pension benefits torn up. This same ruling class unleashes its cops to kill black youth on the streets, holds nearly one-quarter of the world’s prison population in its dungeons and rounds up desperate immigrants for deportation.

We have no side in Syria’s squalid civil war between the butcher Assad and various rebel forces dominated by different kinds of Islamists. But we do have a side against the U.S. and other imperialist powers. Thus, while implacable opponents of everything the reactionary cutthroats of ISIS stand for, we take a military side with ISIS when it aims its fire against the imperialist armed forces and their proxies in the region, including the Kurdish nationalist forces in Iraq and Syria. At the same time, while our main opposition is to the imperialists, we also oppose the other capitalist powers, such as Russia and Turkey, involved in Syria and are for all of them to get out.

Our political position is framed by the Marxist understanding that the U.S., the foremost imperialist power, is the greatest enemy of the world’s workers and oppressed. In standing for the defense of ISIS against the blows of the imperialists, we recognize that any setback for Washington could also stimulate domestic opposition to U.S. imperialism among a populace that has been ground down by years of seeing its wages and jobs slashed. We aim to turn the disillusionment and anger of working people in the U.S. into class struggle against the capitalist rulers at home. It is through such struggle that the proletariat can be won to the struggle to build a revolutionary workers party that will lead the fight for socialist revolution to destroy the imperialist beast from within.

Imperialism and Kurdish Self-Determination

As part of our fight for a socialist federation of the Near East, we have long raised the call for a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan. However, we have also coupled this correct call with the argument that Kurdish self-determination could only be realized by the revolutionary overthrow of the four capitalist regimes among which the Kurdish people are divided: Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. This argument, which we have raised since 1984, actually weakens the centrality we have always placed on the fight for Kurdish national rights.

The proletariat of Turkey, for example, could never sweep away capitalist rule in that country without taking up the just national struggle of the Kurdish masses, whose oppression is a key prop to Turkish nationalism and its rule. On the other hand, Iraqi Kurdistan has secured significant autonomy from the Baghdad regime, albeit under the aegis of U.S. imperialism. This virtual independence could very well come under attack if and when the U.S. imperialists withdraw their forces.

Thus, after a clarifying internal discussion, we now call for a united independent Kurdistan, without having as a precondition the overthrow of capitalist property relations in the region. At the same time, our goal remains the establishment of a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan, as part of a socialist federation of the Near East. The Kurds have clearly demonstrated their desire for independence. By championing Kurdish self-determination,

the working classes of the Near East would undercut U.S. imperialism’s capacity to manipulate the Kurds’ grievances in order to further dominate the region.

We also support independence for Kurds from the individual capitalist states (e.g., the right of Kurds in Turkey to secede). However, in Iraq and Syria, the Kurdish nationalists have currently subordinated the just fight for self-determination to their alliance with U.S. imperialism. These nationalists, by aiding the predatory designs of the imperialists, have committed a crime for which the long-oppressed Kurdish people will pay the price when their imperialist patrons turn against them, as has happened repeatedly in the past.

Leftist Water Boys for Imperialist Intervention in Syria

It should be obvious for leftists that a victory for the U.S. and its underlings in the Near East would further embolden the imperialists in their drive for domination and would set back the struggles of all the oppressed, including the Kurds. Yet that understanding, which is elementary for Marxist opponents of imperialism, is trampled on by numerous reformists.

A case in point is Socialist Alternative (SAIt), which claims to oppose U.S. intervention in Iraq and Syria while simultaneously backing Washington’s Kurdish proxies. Following the defeat of ISIS in Kobani, SAIt praised the “heroic resistance” of the YPG and buried the widely reported fact that YPG officers were directly coordinating battlefield operations with U.S. commanders. SAIt hailed the YPG for “relying a great deal on women fighters and on secular and multi-ethnic solidarity” which “reaffirms the idea that if the masses have a socially progressive goal worth fighting and dying for, they will achieve wonders” (socialistalternative.org, 9 February 2015).

Providing a pseudo-Marxist cover to such abject support to the imperialists’ foot soldiers is the Internationalist Group (IG). These centrists have long prided themselves on raising empty, bombastic slogans to “drive out” the imperialists. However, to read their several (painfully long) articles on the Syrian civil war and U.S. intervention in the region is to read a hodgepodge of confusionism designed to alibi a consistent line: the IG’s refusal to take a military side with ISIS against U.S. imperialism and its local proxies.

In an October 2015 article on internationalist.org, the IG wrote, “Every blow struck against the NATO marauders, even by the atavistic *jihadis* (holy warriors) of the I.S., is in the interests of the exploited and oppressed” (“Flashpoint Syria: Russian Intervention and Imperialist Aggression”). But the IG in effect denies that any such blows are being struck by ISIS. An April 2015 article denounces our simple statement that we take a “military side with ISIS against the U.S.-led coalition and its local adjuncts” by claiming that we “invent an anti-imperialist struggle where it doesn’t exist.”

The reality is that, in Iraq and Syria, the reactionary forces of ISIS are today engaged in combat with the military forces of American imperialism and its on-the-ground proxies. To refuse to stand for their military defense under such circumstances, as the IG does, is nothing short of an abject

capitulation to U.S. imperialism. The IG even ludicrously complains that ISIS is “not seeking to unite the oppressed masses of Iraq and Syria to throw off the imperialist yoke” (*Internationalist*, October-November 2014). No kidding! Only revolutionary internationalist workers parties could unite the masses of Iraq and Syria to throw off the imperialist yoke.

But the IG has a long history of investing various supposedly progressive Third World nationalist forces with such capacity. Thus, it alibis the YPG/PYD Kurdish nationalists. In its April 2015 article, the IG attacks our statement that Syrian Kurds are the imperialists’ proxies by claiming that the PYD had only concluded a “temporary military alliance” with U.S. imperialism (as opposed to an eternal one?!). By October 2015, the IG was forced to acknowledge that the YPG was “coordinating with U.S. airstrikes against the Islamic State” and declared them to be a “semi-ally” of U.S. imperialism.

In fact, both the YPG/PYD and Washington openly boast of their military alliance. As a YPG spokesman, Polat Can, frankly acknowledged: “We have a direct and strong relationship with the United States, and we have worked together to coordinate in targeting terrorists” (dckurd.org, 24 July 2015). As for the U.S., shortly after General Joseph Votel, the head of Central Command, visited Kurdish forces in Syria in May, images emerged of U.S. special forces in Syrian Kurdistan wearing YPG insignia. In March, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Kurds “have proven to be excellent partners of ours on the ground in fighting ISIL,” another moniker for ISIS.

Notwithstanding the IG’s apologies for the Kurdish nationalists, this is hardly the first time that the imperialists have used the military forces of oppressed peoples as their proxies. An example was in 1999 when the U.S./NATO imperialists, under the rallying cry of “poor little Kosovo,” sought to justify their terror bombing of Serbia in the name of defending Kosovar Albanians. From early in the U.S./NATO intervention, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) functioned as a detachment of the imperialist forces, serving as spotters for imperialist bombing of Serbian positions. While we had long championed self-determination for the Kosovar Albanians, we insisted that to support the KLA in that context could only mean providing support to the imperialist attack against Serbia. We Marxists stood for the military defense of Serbia and for the defeat of the imperialists and their KLA auxiliaries.

Defeat U.S. Imperialism Through Socialist Revolution!

As is clear from the squabbles among the Republican and Democratic candidates in this election cycle regarding the U.S. intervention in the Near East, the two capitalist parties share a common interest in maintaining U.S. supremacy in that strategic and oil-rich region. As always, imperialist depredations abroad are combined with a concerted campaign at home against unions and the wage and benefit gains workers have won through struggle. Such evils are endemic to the system of capitalism in its decay.

The U.S. working class must be won to the understanding that its enemy is its “own” ruling class and that it needs to oppose imperialist aggression abroad. Many working people are understandably repelled by the medieval brutality of groups like ISIS. But the gruesome crimes of ISIS pale in comparison to those of U.S. imperialism, which is responsible for the slaughter of tens of millions around the world.

The only way to overcome capitalist oppression is the one blazed by the workers revolution of October 1917 led by Lenin and Trotsky’s Bolshevik Party. The International Communist League is dedicated to reforging the Fourth International—world party of socialist revolution—by fighting to infuse the international proletariat with an understanding of its historic task: to overturn the imperialist order and reorganize society worldwide on an egalitarian socialist basis. ■

France...

(continued from page 12)

la République in Paris, it is called Nuit Debout. This movement attracts mainly a variety of petty-bourgeois leftists who voted for François Hollande and after four years, are deeply disappointed by the deeds of their president. The government propaganda machine (state TV, *Le Monde*, etc.) initially seized the opportunity to replace images of union demonstrations with those of Nuit Debout, being unusually kind to this supposedly subversive movement. (It did not last, however.)

This is actually not surprising. Under the guise of “convergence of struggles,” the movement is in effect dissolving the mobilization of the working class against the El Khomri law into a jumble that combines just causes, such as the fight to defend undocumented workers against the cops, with various petty-bourgeois fads. For the initiators of Nuit Debout, the labor movement is at best just another element of social protest. Of course, this does not prevent the government of Hollande

and [Prime Minister Manuel] Valls from sending its cops to shut down soup kitchens offered by volunteers and to sow terror. Cops now cordon off the Place de la République to search everyone coming in and savagely beat up everyone still there at the end of the night. **Down with police repression!**

The Centrality of the Working Class

That the NPA [New Anti-Capitalist Party] is enthusiastic about Nuit Debout is to be expected: “convergence of struggles” behind the petty bourgeoisie as called for by Nuit Debout corresponds exactly to the maximum perspective of this organization.

A bit more surprising is the enthusiasm of the PCF [French Communist Party], which has even tried to extend the movement to the suburban working-class neighborhoods (a complete flop). The national secretary of the PCF, Pierre Laurent, even published a book titled *99 Percent*. This book, which is only recommended for severe cases of insomnia, rehashes the myth that society is divided between the

rich 1 percent and the remaining 99 percent of the population. It blurs the class line by dissolving the working class in “the people” and the bourgeoisie into the upper layer of the petty bourgeoisie.

Who constitutes the bourgeoisie is not simply a question of higher or lower income. It is the class that owns the factories and other means of production. It constitutes a tiny minority of the population, more like 1 percent of 1 percent. In the 1930s they were called the “200 families,” and they are still largely the same families.

On the other hand, the actual working class is far from being 99 percent of the population and constitutes perhaps a fifth to a third. The rest is a mixed bag, the petty bourgeoisie, which includes all kinds of underprivileged sectors and various layers of engineers, teachers or farmers. This mixed bag also includes landlords, human resources directors, cops, priests or bourgeois politicians, whose interests are fundamentally opposed to those of the working class.

The power of the working class and its historic role as the gravedigger of capi-

talism does not come from any particular moral quality we attribute to it, but rather from its objective role in production. The workers sell their labor power to the bosses for a wage (immediate and delayed), which allows them to (barely) reproduce this labor power. But during their working day they produce more than their wage: they produce surplus value. This allows the capitalist class to accumulate additional capital, to pay for overhead (notably to the petty bourgeoisie) and to pay their share to landowners; also to consume luxury goods.

The capitalist economy is governed by the law of profit, not the needs of the workers and oppressed. It is an irrational and uncontrollable anarchic system that inevitably creates deep economic crises leading to the destruction of large parts of the economy and, ultimately, to wars.

Only the working class has a fundamental interest in overthrowing this decaying system. Unlike the farmers or small businessmen, workers in general work as a collective with a well-defined division of labor, and it makes no sense for individual workers to personally own

Colonialism...

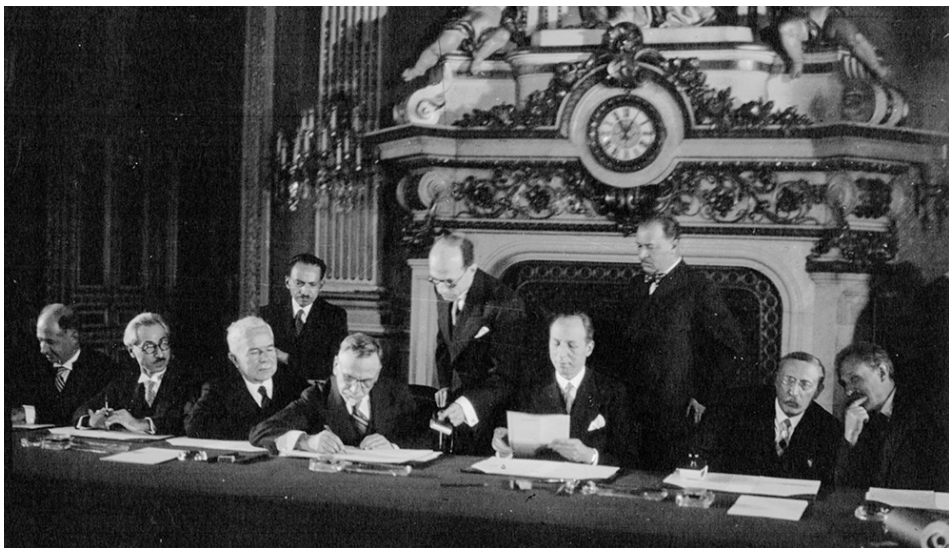
(continued from page 5)

question, prepared the rise of the Ba’ath Party and the dictatorship of the Assads, father and son.

Independence at Last

The struggle in Syria continued for several more years before independence could be wrung from the French. During World War II, the French administration in the Levant remained loyal to Vichy [the Nazi-collaborationist French regime]. The British ended up intervening militarily in the summer of 1941 to drive out the Vichy regime when their interests in Iraq were threatened by German imperialism, which was gaining strength in the region. Some of [Charles] de Gaulle’s troops were involved; this was in fact one of the only cases in which Gaullists physically fought against troops from Vichy. But, as in 1918, it was the British who had military supremacy in the Levant, and they seized the opportunity to marginalize the French.

De Gaulle, with the PCF in his pocket, fought like a lion, including against the British, to preserve French imperialism’s foothold in the Levant. To underline Gaullist intentions, Colonel Collet, the butcher of the Druze in 1925, was named representative of “Free France” in Damascus. De Gaulle had to accept more or less free elections in 1943, which resulted in pro-independence governments in Beirut and Damascus. The French high commissioner, Jean Helleu, had witnessed the crushing of the Moroccan nationalists at Meknes in May, 1934. When the Lebanese parliament ratified independence, he simply had the government imprisoned! This provoked an outcry, and the French backed down after fierce pressure from the British, who feared that the anti-colonialist upheavals might extend into their own area of influence and/or that a third thief, U.S. imperialism, would seize



Bibliothèque nationale de France

September 1936: Signing of treaty between Syria and French colonial masters, which promised independence but remained a dead letter. French president Léon Blum is second from right; Hashim al-Atassi, the Syrian representative, seated fourth from left, signs the treaty.

the opportunity to supplant them.

But the French government still kept troops in the Levant. This led to a new massacre, with Damascus once again bombarded by France in May 1945, although the war was officially over in Europe. And, just like the French massacres in Sétif and Guelma in Algeria a few weeks earlier, these massacres were committed with the complicity of the PCF, which was part of de Gaulle’s government. Independence did not go into effect until 1946, with the withdrawal of French and British troops. Syria was the first country to have successfully achieved its independence from French imperialism. Obviously the imperialist shenanigans did not stop after independence, but that is a story for another day.

The Results of the French Mandate

The Mandate did not result in capitalist development in the Levant. On the contrary, it led to a constriction of economic

development in the region occupied by France. Syria had been one of the most advanced regions in the Arab world and it was a cradle of nationalism. But in multiple ways, it regressed under French occupation.

At the economic level, this occupation led to the establishment of multiple customs barriers in areas where merchandise previously circulated freely, from Basra on the Persian Gulf to Sarajevo in the Balkans. Aleppo, which is the biggest city in Syria, followed by Damascus, stagnated for many years because it had been cut off from its economic hinterland, Anatolia, which had become Turkish (and with which it had historically closer relations than with Damascus). These customs barriers worked in favor of the importation of French products and ruined local semi-artisanal production. In 1913 the production of merchandise in the traditional (preindustrial) sector employed more than 300,000 people. By 1937, there were no more than 170,000. Meanwhile, only 30,000 industrial jobs had been created.

The country was crushed by taxes whose essential function was not to build schools but to finance the occupation and colonial apparatus. Moreover, the objective was explicitly for the operation to be self-financing, which is to say that the expenses incurred by French imperialism would be levied from the occupied country itself. In 1931, after more than ten years under the Mandate, only 28 percent of the population in Syria was literate and only four percent had received a secondary education. In 1932, 82 percent of women in Lebanon were illiterate.

Initially the colonialists expressed hostility to the families of large absentee landlords who comprised the core of the nationalist movement. The colonialists declared that they would carry out an agrarian reform that would make Syria into a nation of conservative small property owners in the image of France. This was a common perspective of the French

Radical Party. But the reality was completely different. The banks, which were in large part financed by French capital, quickly found it safer and more profitable to lend to the large landowners, who in turn would then make loans at usurious rates to small peasant farmers. Thus, the expropriation of small peasant farmers for the profit of the large landowners quickly accelerated, contrary to the official Radical ideology. The retardation of industrial development meant that job prospects were few indeed for the exodus of people from the country to the cities.

In Algeria, the colonial regime rested on a large European community and had, at least initially, the intention of exterminating part of the Arab and Berber population. But in Syria, as in Morocco, colonial rule depended partly on relationships with prominent locals instead of an administration that was French from top to bottom. (Of course the real power in Syria also remained in the hands of the French.) This implied an alliance with some of the large Sunni property owners and the more backward rural elite, instead of the urban and educated elite.

Last but not least, there was the policy of divide and rule, which I mentioned previously, and whose effects are still being felt today. The intended purpose of this division and the protection of regional privileges was to weaken pan-Syrian nationalism as well as pan-Arab nationalism, which was potentially threatening to the French strongholds in the Maghreb.

We are unconditionally opposed to French imperialism’s neocolonial adventures, regardless of the pretext, humanitarian or otherwise, that may be invoked. Capitalism cannot be managed in any way except against the workers and the oppressed, and against the peoples of the neocolonial countries. It is not a question of electing a better president or taking to the streets to pressure the current president and the state, but rather of sweeping away the capitalist state through workers revolution. The proletariat in power, having expropriated the bourgeoisie, will struggle to extend this revolution internationally and reconstruct the world economy on the basis of rational planning. This will include particular efforts to redress the crimes of imperialism and accelerate development in the countries that until now have been retarded by the imperialist domination of the world.

I will end with a few words published in *L’Humanité* during the Rif War and the great Druze revolt (5 November 1925):

“Alongside the liberation movement of the colonial masses, the mass movement for the liberation of workers and peasants in France must be pursued, implacably and mercilessly, until the day when proletarians from the colonial world and proletarians from the imperialist centers exercise all their strength to form one and only one government: the government of the workers and peasants of the whole world!” ■



Office du Levant

French-owned silk factory in orphanage at El Kreye, Lebanon.

the production tools they use. As Trotsky explained in *Whither France?* (1934):

“Contemporary society is composed of three classes: the big bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the ‘middle classes,’ or the petty bourgeoisie. The relations among these three classes determine in the final analysis the political situation in the country. The fundamental classes of society are the big bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Only these two classes can have a clear, consistent, independent policy of their own. The petty bourgeoisie is distinguished by its economic dependence and its social heterogeneity. Its upper stratum is linked directly to the big bourgeoisie. Its lower stratum merges with the proletariat and even falls to the status of lumpen proletariat. In accordance with its economic situation, the petty bourgeoisie can have no policy of its own. It always oscillates between the capitalists and the workers. Its own upper stratum pushes it to the right; its lower strata, oppressed and exploited, are capable in certain conditions of turning sharply to the left.”

Trotsky added that for the petty bourgeoisie to turn to the working class, the proletariat itself must have confidence in its own power, and “it must have a clear program of action and must be ready to struggle for power by all possible means.”

By striking, and thereby stopping production in some sectors during the mobilizations against the El Khomri law, including paralyzing the ports several times, the working class has shown in recent weeks a hint of its social power. In Rouen, dock workers protected the young demonstrators on March 31 from a violent charge by the cops. But the working class is currently politically paralyzed by its reformist leadership. It is because of the latter’s political bankruptcy that instead of the mobilization of the oppressed and the discontented petty bourgeoisie behind the working class, we have the emergence of a movement like Nuit Debout.

The PCF and Mélenchon’s Shadow

The Nuit Debout movement is actually part of the wheeling and dealing taking place in anticipation of elections for commander-in-chief of French imperialism in less than a year. This is a fact regardless of whether the initiators of Nuit Debout recognize it or not, and of whether those taking part in the movement are aware of it or not. If the PCF is infatuated by Nuit Debout, it is probably because it is losing sleep over the possibility that [Jean-Luc] Mélenchon could emerge as the candidate of the “left of the left” for the 2017 presidential elections. The PCF is worried that Mélenchon could greatly benefit from a populist “left” initiative like Nuit Debout.

In November 2008, Mélenchon, who had been a senator and a Socialist Party honcho for over twenty years, announced that he would create his own organization, the Left Party, with a few trade-union bureaucrats and some left bourgeois politicians around [former Socialist Party leader Jean-Pierre] Chevènement. Mélenchon’s stated goal was to emulate the German Left Party, a social-democratic party that split from the SPD [the main party of German Social Democracy] and absorbed the PDS, the former East German Stalinist party. But in France the PCF resisted absorption into Mélenchon’s organization. At the same time, the transformation of

the Socialist Party into an openly bourgeois party (its “blairization”) was hampered by Martine Aubry taking control of the party at its November 2008 congress. This undercut the Mélenchonists’ hopes of a deep split in the Socialist Party.

This is why Mélenchon’s Left Party has been stagnating. After demanding in vain to be appointed as a “left wing” prime minister by Hollande, Mélenchon renounced his initial plans to emulate the German



Sipa

French riot cops arrest youth during crackdown on Nuit Debout protesters, Paris, April 23.

Left Party and definitively opted for out-right bourgeois populism. He claimed Venezuela’s Hugo Chávez as a model, as well as the Spanish Indignados and Occupy in the U.S. His shameless anti-German chauvinism has upset many of his fans.

Capitalist Crisis and Populist Rebellions

The Indignados and Occupy show where the movement of Nuit Debout inevitably leads, whatever the intentions of its participants or the denials and illusions of its founders. The Spanish occupation movement has led to the formation of the bourgeois Podemos party, which has spent months trying to establish a capitalist government with the [social-democratic] PSOE in monarchical Spain. In Greece, such movements contributed to the rise of Syriza, which today ruthlessly manages capitalist austerity on behalf of Berlin and Paris. In the United States, the youth mobilized in the former Occupy movement have been channeled into support for Bernie Sanders of the Democratic Party.

In capitalist society, a movement that is not based on the working class can only exist in the framework defined by the capitalist ruling class. At best, it leads to a form of left bourgeois populism à la Mélenchon.

And that’s at best—because of the backward, even sinister, forces also crawling around Nuit Debout. These fans of “democracy” do not hesitate to give voice to “voters” of the [fascist-infested] National Front [FN]. Others apologize for having called the provocative anti-Muslim ideologue Alain Finkielkraut a reactionary and for having driven him out of the Place de la République. Meanwhile, amid the mobilizations against the El Khomri law,

some openly express hostility to unions! One of the specials on the menu of Nuit Debout in Paris is “rewriting the constitution.” That may seem laughable; but behind this idea lurk very questionable forces. The ideologue behind this movement, a certain Etienne Chouard, advocates choosing representatives to a constituent assembly by drawing lots. His supporters took part in the ultra-reactionary “Days of Wrath” mobilization in early 2014,

swarming with fascist and Nazi splinter groups, and he sympathizes with the anti-Jewish fascist ideologue Alain Soral. For our part, we reject on principle the call for a constituent assembly (see *Spartacist* [English-language edition] No. 63, Winter 2012-13). We therefore also reject the call for a Sixth (capitalist) Republic by Mélenchon and the PCF. Channeling the massive and deep anger among workers and the oppressed against the Hollande government into this would be a sad end for the protests.

The Initiators of Nuit Debout and Their Perspectives

All this does not prevent the reactionary press—as well as [right-wing politician François] Fillon, [National Front leader Marine] Le Pen and others—from demanding that Nuit Debout be banned, denouncing it as some sort of Bolshevik conspiracy. This is grotesque. But equally ridiculous is the idea that this is a genuine democratic movement that arose spontaneously and that makes up for the limitations of bourgeois parliamentarism by expressing the real will of the people. The Nuit Debout movement was actually initiated by a milieu around Mélenchon, notably prominent journalists of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, a left-liberal newspaper that initially enthusiastically supported the anti-Qaddafi rebels in Libya even as they acted as the ground troops for NATO and [then-French president Nicolas] Sarkozy’s military intervention.

The main instigator for the movement, François Ruffin, skillfully combined the launch of Nuit Debout with the commercial promotion of his film *Merci Patron!* [Thanks Boss!]. This self-promotional film features Ruffin as a modern Robin Hood who makes Bernard Arnault, owner of Louis Vuitton, cough up some money. Bernard Arnault became one of the leading capitalists in the country when he took over the bankrupt textile empire Boussac for a pittance in the late 1980s. Actually he received a lot of money from the state under the government of [Socialist Party president François] Mitterrand for that operation, carried out in the name of “saving jobs.” He bought Christian Dior and closed textile mills in France to build his Louis Vuitton empire.

In the film, Ruffin devises a scheme to save a family of former Boussac employees from being evicted from their own home. He threatens Bernard Arnault with the prospect of a big scandal in the media at the time of the Louis Vuitton annual general meeting. The lesson is clear: clever use of the media (and especially Ruffin’s own rag, *Fakir*) is more

effective than the unions in defending the oppressed. This is an anti-union message, even if Ruffin insists that the movement must not be hostile to the trade unions, which were finally, after a month, officially invited to Nuit Debout. In fact, Ruffin proudly asserts in his book *Class War* that he does not call for a “break with capitalism” and that he defines himself as an “old-fashioned social democrat.”

Another prominent initiator of Nuit Debout is Frédéric Lordon. He became known in *Le Monde Diplomatique* for his sometimes witty articles on the economic crisis (and the inanity of his solutions to “reform” the European Union). As a matter of fact, he advocates protectionism and wrote a whole book about it. (Ruffin, for his part, calls taxes on imports a “bold proposal.”) Protectionism is a class-collaborationist ideology that claims that workers share common interests with their French exploiters in the name of “Made in France.” It creates barriers to international working-class unity against the bosses, and it demands that workers tighten their belts in the name of national unity against foreign competition.

Socialist revolution will not happen spontaneously. The working class is deeply divided by the racist campaigns waged by the capitalists, their government and the FN to pit non-Muslims against Muslims. It is also divided more generally through many objective and subjective mechanisms (outsourcing and temporary agencies, homophobia, anti-woman backwardness, etc.). And, more fundamentally, even the most advanced leftists have largely lost sight of the possibility of replacing the capitalist system with an international socialist, egalitarian society where there is plenty for all. This perspective was set forth nearly a century ago by the Russian Revolution of October 1917, which remains the beacon that guides us.

What the working class needs is a genuine communist vanguard to intervene in the struggles of the working class and to win significant layers of workers and the oppressed to revolutionary Marxism. Such a party must be built in opposition to the reformist misleaders of the trade unions and organizations such as the PCF, NPA and Lutte Ouvrière. These organizations seek to confine struggle to defense of some of the gains of the past—that is, when they do not directly play into the hands of the divisive maneuvers of the bourgeoisie.

The objective basis for building such a party will take battles of greater magnitude than those currently under way. But these struggles will take place because they are the inevitable product of the contradictions of capitalism. We seek to win workers and youth, even if today there are only a few, to this perspective, thus laying the foundations to reforge the Fourth International and lead the workers to victory. **For new October Revolutions! ■**

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Biweekly of the Spartacist League

☐ \$10/22 issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist* and *Black History and the Class Struggle*) international rates: \$25/22 issues—Airmail \$10/22 issues—Seamail

☐ \$2/6 introductory issues of *Workers Vanguard* (includes English-language *Spartacist*)

☐ \$2/4 issues of *Espartaco* (en español) (includes Spanish-language *Spartacist*)

☐ I would like to contribute \$_____ to the production of *Workers Vanguard*.

Name _____

Address _____

_____ Apt. # _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (_____) _____ Email _____

1091

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

LE BOLCHEVIK

LE MONITEUR DE FRANCE

LE MONITEUR INTERNATIONAL

N° 216 - Juin 2016

A bas la « guerre contre le terrorisme » et les mesures racistes d'Etat policier !

Loi El Khomri : machine de guerre antisyndicale

Avec une nouvelle édition le 22 mars de la loi...

Cette loi a pour objectif de renforcer qualitativement l'impact du mouvement des travailleurs de la France...

Nuits debout : populisme bourgeois « de gauche »

Au sein de la bourgeoisie...

Cette loi a pour objectif de renforcer qualitativement l'impact du mouvement des travailleurs de la France...

Publication of the Ligue Trotskyste de France

No. 216, June 2016
\$1 (includes postage)

Subscribe! \$5 for 4 issues
Includes *Spartacist* (French edition)

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

Smear Campaign in British Labour Party

Imperialism, Zionism and Anti-Jewish Bigotry

The following was written by our comrades in the Spartacist League/Britain.

In the run-up to the 5 May local and Welsh and Scottish assembly elections, the left-wing leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, was subjected to a vicious smear campaign spearheaded by Labour's right wing with the aid of the Tories (Conservatives) and the capitalist press. Corbyn was elected as party leader last September based on talk of socialism, trade-union rights and immigrant rights and is also a forthright defender of Palestinian rights. The get-Corbyn cabal, which reached all the

way to Zionist *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen and Israeli opposition leader Isaac Herzog, shrieked that the party under his leadership has become a haven for "leftist anti-Semites." To hear Tory swine like Prime Minister David Cameron and then-mayor of London Boris Johnson sanctimoniously bemoaning racism in the Labour Party was truly sickening.

The right wingers of the Labour Party, successors to former prime minister Tony Blair, have been manoeuvring to oust him. Most recently they looked forward to removing him in the

event of a Labour defeat in the elections. In the upshot, Labour pretty much held its own. Underlining the cynical character of the witch hunt, the "discovery" of ever more "anti-Semites" ceased even before the ballots had been counted, to be replaced by a new "scandal" that Corbyn's Labour Party was supposedly rife with woman-haters. The latest smear was based on specious claims, quickly proven false, that many of the 35,000 signatories to a petition urging the BBC to remove Laura Kuenssberg as its political editor had made misogynist comments. Kuenssberg has consistently

hounded Corbyn, seeing in him a representative of the working masses the establishment so loathes.

The supposed evidence of anti-Jewish bigotry ranged from the trivial to the stitched-up, much of it coming from the notorious right-wing bottom-feeding blogger who goes by the name "Guido Fawkes" and dating back to well before Corbyn became party leader last September. The witch hunters were joined by the successful Labour candidate for London mayor, Sadiq Khan, a Muslim who had himself been pilloried by the

continued on page 6

France



AFF



AP

Left: Striking workers blockade oil depot in defiance of French government's anti-labor law, May 27. Above: "Up All Night" protesters march to Socialist Party headquarters in Toulouse, France, May 10.

As Strikes Continue Against Anti-Labor Law

Nuit Debout Populist Protests

MAY 30—As we go to press, the French working class is continuing to show its anger against the government, which is determined to implement vicious new anti-worker, anti-union measures (the El Khomri law). The labor "reforms" seek to make French capitalism more profitable by making it easier for employers to fire workers and by undercutting the unions. Over a half dozen "days of action" and demonstrations have taken place since March 9, with more than a million people demonstrating across the country on March 31, in opposition to the government led by the Socialist Party's François Hollande.

The special supplement distributed by our comrades of the Ligue Trotskyste de France at those demonstrations was published in *WV* in April (see "Protests Against Anti-Union Law—Down With

the 'War on Terror' and Racist Police-State Measures!" *WV* No. 1087, 8 April). The union leaderships supported the election of the Hollande government and, as we noted, "For four years, they hardly uttered a word against the attacks carried out by this capitalist government—because it was *their government*." The bureaucratic union misleaders are responsible for the fact that the working class is imbued with bourgeois consciousness, in particular the belief that capitalism is the only possible social system and that there is a common national interest shared by bosses and workers.

In recent weeks, the unions have launched strikes in different sectors of the economy aiming to pressure the government to drop the bill. Last week, one-third of all the gas stations in France were shut or running short of fuel after militant

unionists blockaded refineries and depots. Strikes at ports have also been effective. Strikes have been announced in rail, transit and airports over the next couple of weeks leading up to the Euro 2016 soccer tournament.

The government used a special measure to push the El Khomri bill through the lower house of parliament without a vote. It will be debated in the upper house on June 14, when the unions have called another national day of action.

Large numbers of high school and university students joined in the protests on March 31 and were particularly targeted by the riot cops for tear-gassing and other attacks. Immediately afterwards, numbers of young people began occupying public squares, notably the Place de la République in Paris. Calling themselves "Nuit Debout" ("Up all night"), these activists

have been compared to the Occupy protesters in the U.S. and seem similar in their generally populist outlook and their expressed suspicion of political organizations. Also like their forebears here, these youth have been regularly attacked by the cops. *Hands off Nuit Debout and all the student protesters and union activists!*

The article translated below is from the most recent issue of the LTF's newspaper, *Le Bolchévik* (No. 216, June 2016).

LE BOLCHEVIK

In the wake of the massive trade-union mobilization of March 31, a movement of nighttime occupation of public squares has begun. Centered on the Place de

continued on page 10