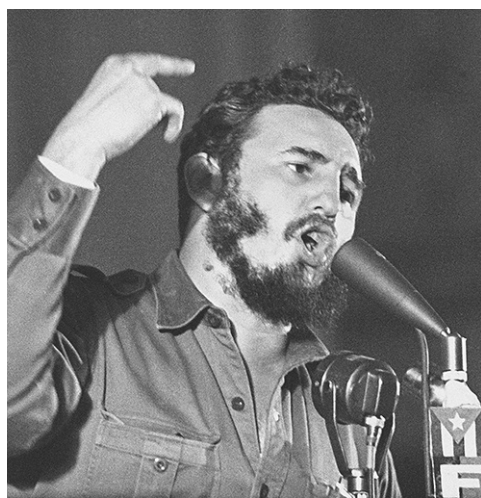


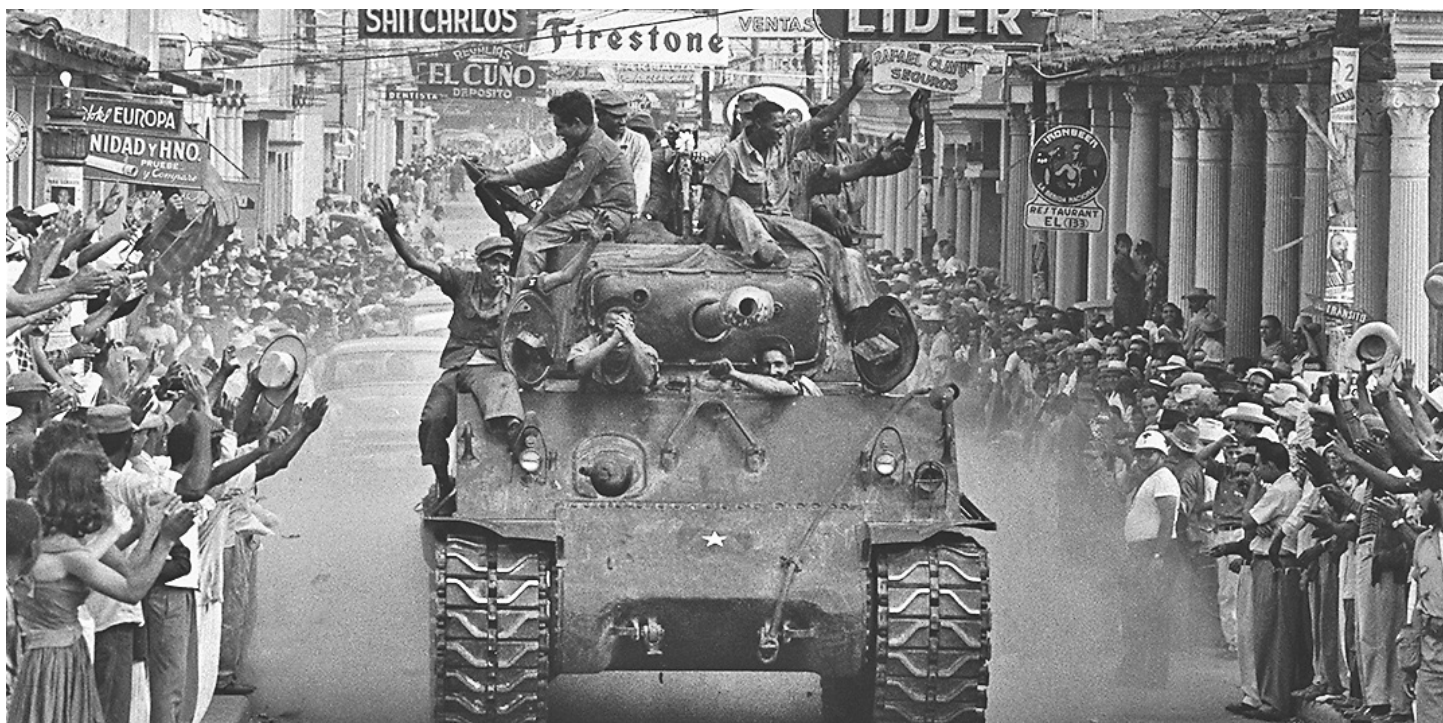
## Fidel Castro 1926–2016

# Defend the Gains of the Cuban Revolution!



AP (above); Glinn/Magnum

**Above: Fidel Castro addresses May Day rally, Havana, 1960. Right: Castro's petty-bourgeois rebel forces drive toward Havana, 1959.**



Having survived hundreds of assassination attempts by the U.S. and its counterrevolutionary *gusanos* (worms), Fidel Castro, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, died in bed on November 25 at the age of 90. As Cuban reactionaries in Miami celebrated his death in the streets, president-elect Donald Trump described Castro as a “brutal dictator” whose legacy includes “the denial of fundamental human rights.” This coming from the man who will soon be the CEO of U.S. imperialism, which is holding dozens of prisoners within the torture chambers of Guantánamo Bay, a major U.S. military base on a piece of stolen Cuban land.

Ever since the government of Fidel Castro expropriated the capitalist class in Cuba in 1960, establishing a bureaucratically deformed workers state, the U.S. ruling class has worked relentlessly to overthrow the Cuban Revolution and re-establish the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in that country. These attacks included the 1961 Playa Girón (Bay of Pigs) invasion under Democratic president John F. Kennedy, the funding of counterrevolutionary terrorists in Miami and on the island as well as the starvation economic embargo.

The elimination of capitalist class rule in Cuba led to enormous gains for its working people. With aid from the Soviet Union, a centralized, planned economy was built, guaranteeing jobs, housing, food, health care and education. The revolution especially benefited women and blacks, breaking down racial and gender barriers. Despite decades of the U.S. embargo, Cuba's health care system,

which includes abortion as a free service, is still the best in economically underdeveloped countries. The infant mortality rate is lower than in the U.S. Cuba has more doctors and teachers per capita than just about anywhere else, and Cuban doctors have provided medical assistance to scores of other countries (for example, sending hundreds of doctors to assist during the 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa).

The counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92 had disastrous consequences for Cuba. The Cuban economy had been heavily subsidized by the USSR, amounting in the 1980s to up to 36 percent of the Cuban national income. By 1993, per capita economic output had suffered a 40 percent decline, resulting in power outages, shortages of basic goods and tight food rationing. In response, the government instituted a series of “market reforms,” which have led to greater inequality that has hit women and black Cubans hardest. Such inequality persists because of material scarcity, reinforced by technological backwardness and national isolation and compounded by mismanagement by the Havana Stalinist bureaucracy.

As Trotskyists who fight for world socialist revolution, we stand for the unconditional military defense of the Cuban deformed workers state against imperialist attack and capitalist counterrevolution—as we do for the other remaining deformed workers states of China, North Korea, Vietnam and Laos.

## For Workers Political Revolution Against Stalinist Bureaucracy!

At the same time, we stand in political opposition to the Stalinist bureaucratic misrulers—a parasitic layer sitting on top of proletarian property forms—whose nationalist dogma of “socialism in one country” and its attendant ideology of “peaceful coexistence” with world imperialism are obstacles to the defense of the workers states. The fight to defend and extend the Cuban Revolution requires an additional revolution, a proletarian political revolution to sweep away the ruling Castroite bureaucracy and establish a regime based on workers democracy and revolutionary internationalism.

We oppose the U.S. embargo—which has been loosened but still remains—and demand the immediate return of Guantánamo Bay to Cuba. We defend Cuba's right to trade and have diplomatic relations with capitalist states, including the U.S. While increases in small-scale private enterprises and commercial and financial ties to the U.S. and other imperialists do not amount to a piecemeal restoration of capitalism, they do pose the danger of undermining the collectivized economy. They also strengthen internal counterrevolutionary forces, which will doubtless be working out of the recently established U.S. Embassy in Havana.

Fidel Castro was to many people a larger than life figure, a David who stood up to the American Goliath. Having spoken out against American racism, he was admired by many black activists during the civil rights movement and afterward.

When he visited New York to address the United Nations in 1960, he made a point of staying at the Hotel Theresa in Harlem. A number of black militants found refuge in Cuba, including Robert F. Williams, hounded out of the U.S. because of his advocacy of black armed self-defense. He escaped to Cuba in 1961, where he broadcast “Radio Free Dixie” until it was shut down after Williams developed political differences with the Castro regime. To this day, black militant Assata Shakur lives in Cuba, having escaped the clutches of the U.S. authorities, who still seek her head. Many people in southern Africa recall the role Cuba played in the anti-apartheid struggle, including the courageous Cuban soldiers who, supported by the Soviets, fought against CIA-backed forces and apartheid South Africa's invasions of Angola in the 1970s and '80s.

We remember all that and more. But we also know that the Cuban regime that was headed by Fidel Castro and since 2006 stewarded by his brother, President Raúl Castro, is fundamentally nationalist and opposed to international proletarian revolution. Time and again, the Castro regime admonished leftist insurgents in Latin America not to follow the “Cuban road”—i.e., the overthrow of capitalist rule. When the Nicaraguan masses smashed the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, Fidel Castro advised the Sandinista government “to avoid the early mistakes

*continued on page 6*



# On North Korea

New South Wales, Australia  
1 October 2016

Your recent article on North Korea betrays a reliance on unreliable sources. It describes Korea's division as being "at the 38th parallel". The dividing line hasn't been the 38th parallel since 1950. This is no small point, because America prolonged the Korean War for years because it refused to agree to return the border to the 38th parallel.

Your article also accepts that China is not enforcing sanctions on North Korea. I've never seen any evidence of this. The UN sanctions are not comprehensive, and do not prohibit normal civilian trade. The article also states that "China is unwilling to entertain the collapse of the North Korean regime, which would plunge the peninsula into chaos". I don't think there's any evidence that the collapse of North Korea would be any more chaotic than the collapse of East Germany. If the regime ceased to function, the South Korean government is well-placed to move in. This statement seems to be based on Western wishful thinking analysis which argues that China should intervene because otherwise it will face floods of refugees etc. How China, with a billion people, could

be threatened by immigration from a country of twenty million is unexplained. This kind of analysis just indicates how much Western analysts are trapped in the bubble of their own country's phobias.  
Niall C.

**WV replies:** Our article "Defend North Korea!" (WV No. 1096, 23 September) referred to the armistice signed in 1953 at the end of the Korean War as "sealing Korea's division along class lines at the 38th parallel." The DMZ (Demilitarized Zone), which divides North and South Korea, does roughly follow the 38th parallel. Washington prolonged the Korean War not due to a dispute over where to draw the border, but because U.S. rulers would not accept the existence of the North Korean deformed workers state. As for us, we Trotskyists stand for the revolutionary reunification of Korea through proletarian political revolution in the North and workers socialist revolution in the South.

Regarding the sanctions, the bourgeois press is full of complaints that China is not enforcing the sanctions. For instance, a 27 October article in the *Economist* notes that "if China enforced existing UN sanctions on North Korea, the regime would be feeling the pain." A main point

of our article, however, was that the bureaucratic castes that hold political sway in the deformed workers states have a long and ignoble record of betraying each other to the imperialists.

The key political point of Niall's letter is his challenge to our contention that a counterrevolution in the North would "plunge the peninsula into chaos," implying that such an overthrow would be of little consequence. He cites the example of East Germany (DDR). In fact, the counterrevolution in the DDR, the road to which was paved by the betrayal of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, had devastating consequences for workers, women and immigrants in East Germany. Moreover, it set the stage for capitalist counterrevolutions throughout East Europe and the Soviet Union.

Those counterrevolutions, from 1990 to 1992, triggered mass immiseration accompanied by a murderous rise in nationalism and racist terror. Capitalist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union triggered an

unparalleled economic collapse, skyrocketing rates of poverty and disease, and the overturn of decades of social progress. As of last year, according to the UN, capitalist Russia ranks 126th in the world in life expectancy, just barely ahead of Syria. To describe the consequences of that historic defeat for the international working class as "chaos" is in fact an understatement; catastrophic would be a better description.

Capitalist counterrevolution in North Korea would embolden the Japanese and U.S. imperialists as well as Washington's South Korean client state. It would bring U.S. forces to the border of China, greatly intensifying the military threat faced by the Chinese deformed workers state. This underscores a main theme of our article: the importance for the international working class of defending the gains of the Chinese and North Korean revolutions and the need for proletarian political revolutions to sweep away bureaucratic misrule in those countries. ■

## Trump Trauma

Brooklyn, NY  
13 November 2016

Dear WV:

When George Bush was elected over Democrat John Kerry in 2004, you wrote, as best I can remember, "The re-election of George Bush is bad news, but the election of John Kerry would not have been good news."

Filling in the corresponding names from the 2016 election would pretty well sum things up.

Another point: on the Wednesday after, Clinton, and on Thursday, Obama and the entire media, were telling us that despite everything we must "unite" with "our" new president.

Why? "Unite" with what? Unite with his racism, unite with his sexism, unite with his KKK supporters?

This proves that their opposition to Trump was totally bogus. Do any of the pro-Hillary demonstrators realize this?

Obama said, "If you succeed, the country succeeds." Trump's election was, in my opinion, a "success" for the ruling class. He said and will try to do what they want to say and do but couldn't without losing all credibility.

As a comrade said, Trump is the true face of capitalism, stripped of its Democratic Party mask.

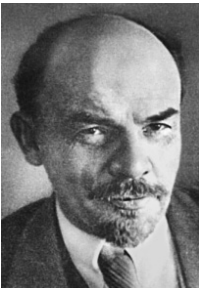
Fraternally,  
Jack L



TROTSKY

### Solidarity with Class-War Prisoners!

*The Partisan Defense Committee's annual Holiday Appeal raises funds for its program of sending monthly stipends to class-war prisoners. The PDC's stipend program revives a tradition of the early American Communist Party's International Labor Defense. James P. Cannon was the ILD's first secretary, a Communist Party leader and later the founder of American Trotskyism. In motivating support for those who have been imprisoned for taking the side of the working class and oppressed, he stressed that such support is not charity but an elementary act of solidarity.*



LENIN

oned for taking the side of the working class and oppressed, he stressed that such support is not charity but an elementary act of solidarity.

The *New York Times*, the organ of big business, is making its annual plea for contributions for Christmas to the "100 Neediest Cases." Other capitalist papers and organizations are conducting similar drives. The men, women and children of the working class, who have been on the rack of capitalist exploitation and are now dropped into the abyss of misery and poverty, are chosen and classified by these arch hypocrites—so their sanctimonious appeal can be made to the comfortable capitalists, to soften the bitterness of these few workers with the insult of charity, and to salve their own conscience by acts of "generosity."

This horrible farce is annually repeated in scores of other cities.

The militant workers have nothing but hatred and contempt for such appeals and drives. This year, therefore, they are again following the world-wide custom that has developed in the ranks of the working class for many years. It is the custom of raising a special fund for the men in prison for the labor cause and their wives and children, of transforming the hypocritical spirit of Christmas into the spirit of solidarity with the class-war fighters behind bars.

The International Labor Defense has already started a campaign for a Christmas Fund for the men in prison, and their dependents who suffer on the outside. The labor militants throughout the entire country are working to collect this fund. Nowhere has the appeal or the response been made on the basis of charity. Everywhere has been emphasized the duty of those who are outside toward the men on the inside....

The men in prison are still a part of the living class movement. The Christmas Fund drive of International Labor Defense is a means of informing them that the workers of America have not forgotten their duty toward the men to whom we are all linked by bonds of solidarity. It is the Christmas drive of Labor and must have its generous support!

—James P. Cannon, "A Christmas Fund of Our Own," *Daily Worker*,  
17 October 1927, reprinted in *Notebook of an Agitator* (Pathfinder Press, 1973)

## WORKERS VANGUARD



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The closing date for news in this issue is November 29.

No. 1101

2 December 2016

# Mount Greenwood, Chicago

# Racist Mob Cheers Cop Terror

On the afternoon of November 5, 25-year-old Joshua Beal was shot and killed by two off-duty cops as he and other family members and friends were returning from burying Beal's cousin. The funeral procession was set upon simply because it was a group of black people driving through the white, cop-infested neighborhood of Mount Greenwood on the far southwest side of Chicago. After an off-duty firefighter accused the mourners of blocking a fire station, a fight broke out and several off-duty cops rushed to the scene. In the ensuing melee, the cops fired 14 shots, killing Beal. Tiffany Boxley, Beal's mother, cried, "Chicago police gunned my baby down like a vicious animal." Moments later his brother Michael was arrested on charges of attacking an officer. Outrageously he was held for five days on a punitive \$500,000 bail. ***Drop the charges against Michael Beal!***

What made this killing even more grotesque was the white mob that immediately mobilized in defense of racist cop terror. Black Lives Matter activists who went to the scene to comfort and assist the Beal family were met with a much larger crowd of local racists chanting "N---r go home!" "Get the fuck out of here!" and "Blue lives matter." This ugly scene was repeated two more times in the following days when protesters returning to the scene were confronted by racist mobs of hundreds. Threats of violence forced activists to cancel another protest at a local high school. One commented that the mob "showed that a black man can be killed by police, and they were overjoyed about that." He added, "It really felt like we were back in the '60s." Indeed, the racist mobilization was reminiscent of the horde of thousands who attacked a 1966 march for open housing led by Martin Luther King Jr. in Chicago's Marquette Park neighborhood.

This is not the 1960s—but Chicago in 2016. Mount Greenwood is notorious for being an overwhelmingly white, rac-



Ward/DNAinfo

**Racist "Blue Lives Matter" mob in Mount Greenwood, November 8.**

ist enclave, infested with cops who are required by law to live within the city limits. It has a long history of racist reaction. In 1968, when the local all-white elementary school was forced to accept eleven black students, hundreds of racists mobilized to protest the presence of the black children on their first day in school. In 2008, when seven of those black students returned for a 40-year reunion, they were again confronted by a howling mob and a swastika painted on the school's front door. Protests met the integration of the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences in the 1980s and then again in the 1990s when the school was slated to include more minority students. Five years ago, an integrated couple's home was vandalized by white youths screaming racial epithets.

Not surprisingly, Mount Greenwood was one of the city's few bastions of support for Donald Trump in the recent election. But it has been the Democratic Party that has run Chicago for 80 years and has made it "Segregation City." Racial and ethnic divisions, long used to divide the working class and prop up capitalist class rule, are enforced through a machinery of cop terror. It was Democratic Party mayor Richard J. Daley who presided over the 1969 cop raid that killed Black Panther leaders Fred Hampton and Mark Clark. It was the Democrats, including Chicago's first black mayor, Harold Washington, who ran the

city when, for almost 20 years, notorious police lieutenant Jon Burge and his henchmen in the Violent Crimes Unit tortured black "suspects" to extract confessions. And it was the Democrat Rahm Emanuel who covered up the video of the killing by Chicago cops of Laquan McDonald, sparking outraged protests last winter.

Joshua Beal is the latest in the long list of black victims of the killer cops in racist capitalist America. Black Lives Matter activists have joined in the call for "community control" of the cops, sowing the dangerous illusion that the rulers can be pressured to cede control of the police to the very people the cops are paid to repress. Among police "reform" measures pushed by liberals and a host of reformists over the years have been residency requirements such as that in Chicago. As the experience of Mount Greenwood demonstrates, such reforms do nothing to restrain the capitalist rulers' thugs in blue.

The bitter reality is that in a country whose economy was founded on chattel slavery, black lives don't matter to the ruling class. The cops are the armed enforcers of a system in which workers are brutally exploited and the mass of the black population is forcibly segregated at the bottom of society. This is why the fight against racist cop terror must be linked to the fight for the working class to overthrow this whole rotten, capitalist system through socialist revolution.

The workplace and factory floor remain rare pockets of integration in this increasingly segregated society. Chicago has a significant multiracial labor movement—including auto workers, city workers, transit workers, teachers and Teamsters—with tremendous potential social power. Class struggle for the common class interests of black, white and immigrant workers can help break down racial divisions and advance the fight against this racist capitalist system.

As we wrote in "We Need a Multiracial Workers Party," (WV No. 1081, 15 January): "All the raw material is there to launch a class-struggle fight that could fuse the power of labor to the anger of the ghettos and barrios. But sitting on top of this volcano are the trade union bureaucrats."



Family photo

**Joshua Beal**

Those union misleaders have long shackled labor's power by subordinating the interests of the working class to those of the capitalist exploiters, primarily by tying workers to the capitalist Democrats. What is needed to unleash this potential power is a class-struggle leadership, based on the political independence of the working class. Workers need a party of their own, not an electoral vehicle, but a revolutionary party that seeks to lead workers and the oppressed in struggle against racial oppression and for a workers government. ***For black liberation through socialist revolution! ■***

## 31st Annual PDC Holiday Appeal

## Free All Class-War Prisoners! Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

### NEW YORK CITY

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*Featured speakers:*

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Robert King**

(former Angola 3 prisoners)

District Council 1707 Auditorium  
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take A, C or E train to 42nd St. stop)  
Information: (212) 406-4252

### CHICAGO

**Sunday, December 11  
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Information: (312) 563-0442

### OAKLAND

**Saturday, January 21  
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**This is not charity—  
it's an act of solidarity  
with those in prison.  
Their fight is our fight!**

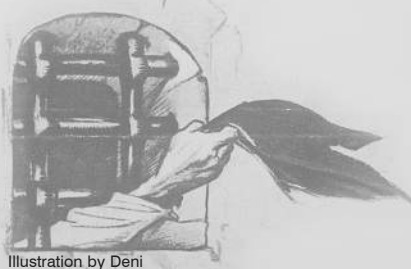


Illustration by Deni

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## SEIU Bureaucrats Embrace Cops

The response by the 1199SEIU union tops to the cop shooting of a black health care worker in North Miami in July starkly shows the nature of the pro-capitalist union misleadership.

Behavioral therapist Charles Kinsey was trying to help his patient, a severely autistic man who had wandered from a mental health center into the street. Cops soon showed up with assault rifles. As a video of the lead-up to the shooting shows, Kinsey was lying on his back with his hands in the air, his patient calmly sitting on the ground playing with a toy truck. Despite his composed plea, "Sir, there is no need for firearms," the cops opened fire, striking Kinsey in the leg. From his hospital bed he recalled: "I was more worried about [the patient] than myself." He added, "As long as I've got my hands up, they're not going to shoot me. This is what I'm thinking.... Wow, was I wrong."

As the cops flipped over the bleeding Kinsey and handcuffed him, he asked: "Sir, why did you shoot me?" A cop responded, "I don't know." As black people across America *do* know, shooting at them is a reflexive response of the police. Kinsey's skin color made him a target for these thugs of the racist, capitalist state.

Monica Russo, Florida-based executive vice president of health care workers union

1199SEIU, released a statement on July 21 condemning the shooting as another example of racist injustice. However, its demands are repulsive:

"We call on our brother and sister officers to stand with us in confronting the institutional racism and distrust that exists between police and communities of color.... The caregivers of 1199SEIU Florida, stand committed to calling on our brothers and sisters in the Police Benevolent Association, elected leaders, and members of the community to join us at the table."

Not our "brothers and sisters," police are part of the state, which in essence consists of bodies of armed men who defend racist capitalist rule. Private security guards are cop auxiliaries, many of whom are organized by SEIU. Neither have any place in the labor movement. The leadership of this heavily black and immigrant union works hard to sell the lie that our enemies are our friends: that cops are workers who can be made to serve us, and that the capitalist Democratic Party is on our side.

Instead, SEIU and all unions need leadership that will, as we noted in "Black People Under Siege" (WV No. 1093, 29 July), "turn the righteous anger against the rampaging cops into a struggle against the social order they defend, a struggle to make the working class the rulers of a new society." ■



# Death on the Docks in Europe

## Unions Must Fight for Job Safety!



Hamburg, July 7: Dock workers take part in “Global Day of Action” to protest unsafe conditions that have resulted in workplace deaths.

The following is an edited translation of an article from Spartakist No. 214 (Fall 2016), newspaper of the Spartakist-Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands, German section of the International Communist League.

### SPARTAKIST 4

In the past few years, fatal accidents have been on the rise at container terminals in Europe. According to the European Transport Workers Federation (ETF), in 2015 workplace deaths were reported at ports in Belgium (Antwerp), Spain (Bilbao and Valencia), Germany (Bremerhaven), Finland (Helsinki), Sweden (Oxelösund) and Portugal (Sines). These are in addition to injuries that can leave workers totally incapacitated, not to mention the increase in debilitating and exhausting work-related stress. In a phenomenon typical of capitalism—a crisis of overproduction—the shipowners have been building ever-larger container ships despite a weakening of world trade, thereby creating massive overcapacity. Now the shipping companies want to preserve their profits via massive “cost reductions,” i.e., making seamen and dock workers pay the bill.

For the shipping companies and port operators, workplace injuries and deaths are collateral damage in their quest for higher profits, reflecting the brutal reality of the relationship between the working class and the capitalists. Workers, including those who are somewhat better paid, must sell their labor power in order to live, whereas the capitalists, who own the means of production, extract their profits from workers’ labor. How much profit the capitalists can extract from the workers is determined by the struggle between the working class and the capitalists. In addition to limiting pay raises or even slashing wages, the bosses seek to increase the number of workdays, to make them longer and to push speedup. Trade unions should be the defense organizations of the workers, fighting not just for higher wages and benefits but also for better working conditions and against increasing labor “flexibility.” The fight for better workplace safety could strengthen the unions, especially in industry and logistics.

Ports are strategic junctions of international trade, critical for the economy and for the bourgeoisie of industrialized countries. German imperialism, with its heavy reliance on industrial exports, is dependent on the functioning of its ports. Hamburg and Bremerhaven along with Rotterdam in Holland and Antwerp in Belgium are particularly important. The German bourgeoisie has ratcheted up the rate of exploitation of the working class

through the creation of a large low-wage sector, using these super-profits to expand its leading position as an exporter. German capitalism dominates Europe, bleeds dry the working class in smaller countries and oppresses those countries via the imperialist European Union (EU). At the same time, this means that dock workers internationally hold tremendous potential social power in their hands. Given their role in the economy, dock workers and seamen should understand their power to bring the capitalist profit system to a halt. What stands in the way are the nationalist and protectionist policies of the bureaucratic trade-union leadership, which has pledged fealty to the bosses.

The worldwide attacks by shipowners and port companies along with the accidents affecting dock workers led the two umbrella organizations of dock worker unions, the ITF (International Transport Workers’ Federation) and IDC (International Dockworkers Council), to carry out a joint “Global Day of Action” on July 7, seeking to “draw attention to their work situation” and “create a clearly visible signal for healthy and secure jobs,” as well as to commemorate those dock workers who had died on the job. While there was a one-hour work stoppage in some ports, as in Le Havre, France (as well as on the U.S. West Coast), in others there were only short interruptions. Though this Day of Action did not significantly affect shipping, it symbolically demonstrated the potential of international dock worker solidarity. Effective international class struggle is necessary to resist the murderous chase after profits in the ports and aboard the ships. French dock workers showed their power when, beginning on May 24, they struck the oil terminals at Le Havre and Marseille for over two weeks. This action was in solidarity with the strike of the refinery workers and many others against the anti-union El Khomri law, a strike that paralyzed virtually all of France.

### Deadly Industrial Accidents in Hamburg and Bremerhaven

The preventable death of 37-year-old Bülent Benli shines a light on the situation of the dock workers. Employed as a lasher, he was killed on 10 October 2014 while he was in a “lasher basket” (a cage for transporting personnel between the dock and the ship) at the Burchardkai terminal of Hamburg Port and Logistics Inc. (HHLA). Bülent Benli was a casual, working day to day without a fixed work contract, and had gotten the job through the dock worker dispatching agency Gesamthafenbetrieb (GHB). His death must be laid at the feet of the HHLA bosses, who make their huge profits at the expense of on-the-job safety. The City of Hamburg owns around 70 percent of

HHLA. Burchardkai is the largest container terminal in Hamburg and a showpiece terminal, one of the great pearls among the treasures of the Hamburg moneybags, who still use day laborers just as they did 100 years ago.

As dock workers told us, there are various procedures and security equipment, any one of which could have prevented Bülent Benli’s death, but which are not in use at Burchardkai. Lashers there have to use hand signals to “communicate” with crane operators 125 feet or more above them, as if it were the Middle Ages. Conditions would be safer if there were a



Bülent Benli, Hamburg dock worker killed at work on 10 October 2014.

radio link between lashers and the crane operators and if there were an additional worker who could communicate when the lashers are busy. The crane operators at Burchardkai also lack a standard safety feature, which, when engaged, automatically limits the speed of the lash basket when people are being transported. The HHLA bosses would rather skimp on the expense of safe procedures, which would require more personnel and equipment and would decrease profits. Instead they prefer to play with the lives of the lashers.

Lashers secure containers to ships and other containers using twistlocks and turnbuckles. In the play *Tallymann un Schutenschubser* [Tallyman and Barge Pusher], which is set in Hamburg, a former seaman and harbor worker characterizes the lashers as “the gold of the coast.” Volker Ippig, former goalkeeper for the Hamburg soccer team FC St. Pauli and also a casual and lasher, stated in a 28 June 2009 interview with the newspaper *Die Tageszeitung (taz)*: “When you’re pulling the twistlocks fast as hell, then things really move. You can’t hold out doing this for hours, just for a certain period. Hard work? Yes. But good work, decent work.” Lashing is the most danger-

ous and hardest work in the port. The terminal operators save money by employing workers from small, low-wage lashing outfits. And even though companies like GHB pay the union contract rate, lashers are always on pay scales much lower than crane operators and other port workers.

An additional factor in Bülent Benli’s death was that he was dispatched to the job even though he had worked only a few weeks as a lasher and had not been adequately trained. The GHB website nonetheless boasts: “Crucial to GHB’s success is its highly skilled workforce. That is why we place the highest value on initial and continuous training. We offer top training opportunities in all our fields.” Nice words from the bosses, but the union had better see to it that the jobs are safe and that workers receive the necessary initial and ongoing training.

Another fatal accident occurred on 14 May 2015 at Bremerhaven’s North Sea Terminal (NTB), when an undetected crack led to a crane boom collapsing, killing the 52-year-old crane operator, Volker Hermann, who was buried beneath it. Regular, adequate inspections could have prevented this accident. Why wasn’t this crack discovered earlier and couldn’t similar accidents occur on other cranes? An article in the February 2015 issue of *Verkehrsreport* [Transport Report], journal of the trade union ver.di, alludes to Hermann’s colleagues’ fear of more such accidents, but the article gives no perspective for a fight by the union. Instead, the paper uncritically recounts how the harbor police have assumed “responsibility for uncovering the facts.” But the police will always “investigate” in the interest of the bosses. The police and courts are central parts of the capitalist state and protect its system of exploitation.

Trade-union actions could have ensured that similar cranes would be examined at the known weak points. The death of one dock worker in Bremerhaven due to a crane component failure was obviously not seen by other terminal companies as any reason to inspect their own cranes. When crane operators at various Hamburg terminals expressed their justified anger, the situation was smoothed over by management while the trade-union tops maintained silence. Thus, less than a year later, on March 11, there was an accident similar to the one in Bremerhaven. An undiscovered crack led to a boom “draw bar” dangling from a crane at the container terminal Altenwerder (CTA, the automated terminal in Hamburg operated by HHLA and Hapag-Lloyd), fortunately without serious consequences. To keep their business running smoothly, the capitalists lied to the workers. Safe operation of container cranes demands frequent, extremely detailed inspections. Ver.di must fight for the implementation of appropriate safety measures, including by carrying out job actions if necessary.

While the collapse of the crane boom in Bremerhaven received wide media coverage, generally the port bosses do everything they can to keep news of major accidents (even when there is a death) from reaching the workforce, let alone the public. When Uwe Kröger, a 45-year-old crane operator, suffered a fatal heart attack while working at Eurogate Hamburg on 31 December 2009, it took an hour and a half for medical assistance to arrive, according to Rolf Geffken (labor lawyer and author of *Arbeit und Arbeitskampf im Hafen* [Labor and Labor Struggle on the Docks]). It takes considerable effort to retrieve a dead or severely injured worker from a container crane. A special rescue team is needed to lower him down with ropes, but there isn’t such a team in the whole Hamburg container terminal! Aside from first-aid workers, there are no emergency workers at the terminals, and the nearest hospital emergency rooms are far away. When Kröger’s widow pressed charges and asked for the dangerous conditions to be inves-

# Thousands Protest Obama Visit

Barack Obama began his valedictory world tour on November 15 with a trip to Greece, a country where working people and the oppressed have long suffered the devastating consequences of the Greek bourgeoisie’s close friendship with the U.S. imperialists. Despite a ban on all public gatherings in the center of Athens, thousands of leftists mobilized in protest on the night of November 15 under slogans such as “Butcher Obama not welcome!” referring to Obama’s war crimes from Iraq to Libya and Syria. The largest demonstration involved trade unionists and others affiliated with the Greek Communist Party (KKE), which demanded closure of U.S. and NATO military bases in Greece with the call: “No land, no water for the murderers of the people!”

The timing of Obama’s visit further provoked the anger of Greek working people because it coincided with the beginning of the annual three-day commemoration of the events of 17 November 1973. On that date, the U.S.-backed Greek military junta sent tanks onto the campus of the Athens Polytechnic university to smash a student occupation called in protest against the right-wing dictatorship. At least 43 people were slaughtered in the assault. Every year on November 17, there is a massive march ending at the U.S. Embassy to honor the junta’s victims and to recall Washington’s role in propping up the bloody military regime of 1967-74. This year, those who tried to march into the center of Athens on November 15 to protest Obama were met with brutal police repression unleashed by the government led by the Syriza party. Thousands of cops attacked the marchers with batons, tear gas and stun grenades and six protesters were arrested. We demand: Drop all charges against the anti-Obama protesters!

Syriza came to power early last year pledging to keep Greece in the imperialist European Union (EU) and eurozone, but at the same time promising to relieve the savage austerity policies imposed since 2010 by the EU, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the bloodsucking banks. While much of the reformist left internationally cheered the bourgeois Syriza, our comrades in the Trotskyist Group of Greece explained before its election that we oppose Syriza “not only because it is committed to keeping Greece in the EU,



Pacific Press

Thousands protest Obama’s visit to Athens, November 15.

which is a pledge for more hunger and joblessness, but also because it does not in any way represent the interests of the working class” (“Greece: European Union Austerity Elections,” WV No. 1060, 23 January 2015). The TGG’s position has been thoroughly vindicated by Syriza’s actions in power, grinding down the Greek working people with more and more cruel measures demanded by the imperialists.

Today, Syriza is begging the imperialists and their banks to forgive some of the Greek state’s debt. They hoped that lame duck Obama would make a case for “debt relief” to German chancellor Angela Merkel when he stopped off in Berlin after Athens. While both Obama and the Washington-based IMF are pushing for debt relief (which the EU is refusing to grant), they continue to insist that Greece stick to “reforms” that slash jobs, wages, pensions and social services. These austerity measures have pushed unemployment to over 23 percent; more than 35 percent of Greeks live near the poverty line. After a visit to the Acropolis, Obama

made the requisite paeans to ancient Athens as the cradle of democracy. In fact, a more apt reference would be the ancient Athenian practice of *atimia*, whereby citizens with unpaid debts and their heirs were disenfranchised; women and slaves never had the rights of citizens.

One of the starkest examples of the disenfranchisement of Greek people under EU and U.S. domination was the referendum of 5 July 2015, in which more than 60 percent of Greeks voted against further austerity measures. Yet, at the behest of the imperialists, Syriza forced a new austerity package on the country, claiming that the package was necessary to preserve Greece’s membership in the eurozone and EU. The reformist KKE’s leadership treacherously called for people to cast invalid ballots in the referendum, rather than mobilize its powerful working-class base in struggle against the imperialist EU. WikiLeaks subsequently revealed that Obama’s White House had a hand in pushing Syriza to capitulate to the demands of the EU and IMF. Days after

the referendum, former president Bill Clinton was lined up to send a message to Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras with “an underscoring of the importance of staying in Euro for both geopolitical and economic reasons.”

In fact, “geopolitics” has long defined Greece’s subordinate relationship with Washington, especially with the U.S. drive against the Soviet Union following World War II. The workers and peasants of Greece had effectively taken control of the country after the occupying German troops withdrew in late 1944. But the KKE leadership handed power back to the Greek capitalists, who launched a civil war in which some 40,000 Communist supporters were killed with the direct assistance of British, and then U.S., military forces (see “Greece 1940s: A Revolution Betrayed,” *Spartacist* No. 64, Summer 2014).

Greece became part of the anti-Soviet NATO alliance in the 1950s. The U.S. continued to prop up right-wing forces in Greece during the Cold War, with the CIA bankrolling and engineering the colonels’ 1967 coup. Despite the counterrevolutionary destruction of the bureaucratically deformed Soviet workers state in 1991-92, NATO remains critical for the U.S. imperialists. In recent years, the Obama administration has been menacing Vladimir Putin’s capitalist Russia by strengthening NATO forces in East Europe.

Greece still hosts a NATO air base as well as a U.S. naval base in Souda Bay on the island of Crete, which is strategically located in proximity to the Near East. It is therefore no surprise that, seeking to maintain a stable NATO alliance, the warmonger Obama has pushed hard for Greece to stay in the EU. Our fight for Greece to get out of the EU and euro is an expression of our revolutionary opposition to imperialism. As our Greek comrades wrote in their newspaper *The Bolshevik* (No. 1, March 2016):

“The catastrophe in Greece is part of a worldwide capitalist crisis, which cannot be resolved within the borders of one country. In order to build a society free of hunger, poverty and oppression, what is needed is a series of socialist revolutions to sweep away the capitalist rulers, including in the imperialist centers like the U.S. and Germany, and establish an internationally planned economy based on workers rule.” ■

tigated, she was insulted by the company. Later the newspaper *Hamburger Abendblatt* printed a full-page article glorifying the crane operator’s cabin as a “sky box,” without even mentioning the death of the worker. Geffken responded in an interview with *Junge Welt* (11 October 2011): “In the Hamburg media there’s something like a conspiracy of silence when such an accident occurs.” The Hamburg capitalists, who cover up such accidents, control the bourgeois media, which refrains from any critical reporting and instead prettifies the wretched conditions.

## For a Class-Struggle Union Leadership!

Serious and fatal accidents also happen with straddle carriers, huge machines that move the containers at the terminals and load them onto trucks. On 30 November 2015, straddle carrier driver Kai Weinhold was killed at the Eurogate terminal in Bremerhaven when his vehicle overturned. Tipping over, crashing into another vehicle and even catching on fire are not uncommon. Speedup, bad pavement conditions, inadequate lighting, antiquated or untested new technology, along with failures to conduct scheduled maintenance and inspections, lead to life-threatening injuries and even to death. Harbor work is one of the most dangerous jobs, but under these intolerable conditions, otherwise preventable accidents leading to mutilation or death are inevitable: it’s industrial murder! With their round-the-clock operations, the harbor bosses are more con-

cerned with operating their equipment at full capacity than about safety inspections and maintenance schedules.

Blaming individual workers for causing accidents by not adhering to safety rules is standard practice for the bosses. It is the duty of the trade unions to collectively shield their members from the immense pressure they are under to “get the job done” without interruptions. Workers are forced into a vicious circle: either they are disciplined by the company for pointing out too many safety problems, or they risk their health or even their lives by ignoring safety instructions. For the workers to protect themselves, the *collective strength* of the unions must be brought to bear. What is needed is a determined and continuous struggle to establish and maintain safe working conditions, especially given changing conditions in the port. Workers and the union must have control over job safety. The unions and factory councils must demonstrate that they are capable of shutting down the whole operation in the event of danger. Safe working conditions require constant vigilance and struggle *against* the bosses. Union control instead of confidence in the bosses! Harbor workers need their own *union* safety committees, with representatives who have the right to *stop unsafe work immediately on the spot*. The question of safety on the job touches directly the opposing class interests of workers and capitalists. Safe working conditions for dock workers means less profit for the shipowners and terminal operators. A fight for safe equip-

ment, safe work procedures and adequate training is counterposed to the interests of the capitalists. Thus, awareness that the workers are in irreconcilable class conflict with the capitalists is needed.

In 1934, American longshoremen, with a *class-struggle* leadership, successfully struck West Coast ports, laying the basis for the forging of the powerful West Coast longshore union, the ILWU. The strike resulted in key gains, including in regard to safety. In disputes over safety, individual ILWU members covered by the master longshore contract have the *contractual* right to “stand by” (stop work) until the issue is resolved. But just as in Germany, such gains are continually subject to assault by the bosses; as with ver.di, the ILWU has a lengthy history of agreeing to giveback contracts. For a detailed depiction of how struggles were fought to a victory see our pamphlet *Then and Now*.

What is necessary is a class-struggle union leadership, but the present leadership of German unions stands under the political control of the social democracy. Both the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Left Party are bourgeois workers parties—they have a working-class base but a bourgeois, capitalist program. They promote reliance on the institutions of capitalism and its state even when the safety of workers is at stake. Instead, workers need a revolutionary multiethnic workers party independent of the bosses. And they need a union leadership that understands that the interests of the workers and bosses are directly coun-

terposed and mobilizes the power of the union. Strong class-struggle unions are a necessary counterweight to the capitalist bosses. But as long as society is in the hands of the capitalists and centered on maximizing profit, any victories will only be transitory. Only when workers take state power into their own hands and smash the profit system will it be possible to bring about genuine, lasting safety in the workplace and, moreover, to satisfy the material needs of all mankind. ■

A Spartacist Pamphlet

1934 Strikes

Class-Struggle Leadership  
Made a Key Difference

Then and Now

MINNESOTA, MAY 1934: At the Battle of Duponts Run, thousands of strikers and supporters routed cops and withstanding special troops.

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(continued from page 1)

we made in Cuba: the political rejection by the West, premature frontal attacks on the bourgeoisie, economic isolation.” At home, the Cuban government has accommodated the growing power of the reactionary Catholic church, including by warmly welcoming the Pope of counterrevolution, Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II), in 1998 and more recently the current Pope, who played a pivotal role in negotiations between the regime and the Obama administration.

While we recall the heroic battles fought by Cuban troops in Angola, we also recognize that the objective of the Cuban and Soviet Stalinists was never the overthrow of capitalist rule in Africa. That war was followed by the 1989 execution of Cuban General Arnaldo Ochoa Sánchez, a war hero in Angola, after a Stalinist show trial orchestrated by Castro and reminiscent of the Moscow purges of the 1930s.

## The Origins of the Cuban Deformed Workers State

Cuba under the dictator Fulgencio Batista was essentially a subsidiary of the American Mafia and the United Fruit Company (a point captured well by the movie *The Godfather: Part II*). When Fidel Castro's petty-bourgeois guerrilla forces of the July 26 Movement entered



**Heroic Cuban soldiers repulsed JFK's counterrevolutionary 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion.**

movements in Latin America, wielding radical-democratic rhetoric to reassert bourgeois control. But with the capitalist state apparatus shattered and under the relentless pressure of U.S. imperialist hostility, the Castro regime nationalized U.S.-owned and domestic capitalist holdings, creating a deformed workers state.

The existence of the Soviet Union was crucial in this development, providing not only a model for the Castro regime but, more importantly, economic assistance and a military shield that fended off the U.S. imperialist beast just 90 miles away.

majority lionized the forces led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, falsely equating the Cuban regime with the revolutionary Bolshevik government of Lenin and Trotsky that emerged out of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. This political capitulation went hand in hand with the SWP's deepening abandonment of the struggle for workers revolution in the U.S.

In fact, the Cuban regime is qualitatively similar to the one that emerged in the Soviet Union after the Stalinist bureaucracy took political power out of the hands of the working class in a political counter-revolution that began in 1923-24 and was consolidated over the next several years. With the unfolding of the Cuban Revolution, the SWP claimed and expected that peasant-based guerrilla warfare would be the wave of the future and the means to overthrow capitalism. In counterposition, the RT asserted in the programmatic document, "Toward Rebirth of the Fourth International, Draft Resolution on the World Movement," submitted to the 1963 SWP convention:

“Experience since the Second World War has demonstrated that peasant-based guerilla warfare under petit-bourgeois leadership can in itself lead to nothing more than an anti-working-class bureaucratic regime. The creation of such regimes has come about under the conditions of decay of imperialism, the demoralization and disorientation caused by Stalinist betrayals, and the absence of revolutionary Marxist leadership of the working class. Colonial revolution can have an unequivocally progressive significance only under such leadership of the revolutionary proletariat. For Trotskyists to incorporate into their strategy revisionism on the *proletarian* leadership in the revolution is a profound negation of Marxism-Leninism no matter what pious wish may be concurrently expressed for ‘building revolutionary Marxist parties in colonial countries.’ Marxists must resolutely oppose any adventurist acceptance of the peasant-guerilla road to socialism—historically akin to the Social Revolutionary program on tactics that Lenin fought. This alternative would be a suicidal course for the socialist goals of the movement, and perhaps physically for the adventurers.”

While Cuba under Castro never had democratic organs of workers rule—sovi-

ets (workers councils)—the fact that in the early months and years after the 1959 takeover the ruling bureaucracy was only in the process of formation made Cuba initially open to the intervention of Trotskyists. This was a transient opening, but one that had to be tested. The RT thus gave the program of political revolution in Cuba a transitional formulation, calling to “Make the Government Ministers Responsible to and Removable by Workers’ and Peasants’ Democratic Organizations.” But in short order, the bureaucracy consolidated its rule over the working masses.

An example of this was the repression of the Cuban Trotskyist organization, the Revolutionary Workers Party (POR, affiliated with the international tendency led by Juan Posadas). In May 1961, the Havana government seized their newspaper and smashed the type for an edition of Trotsky's *The Permanent Revolution*. Leading members of the POR were arrested and sent to prison. Despite our political differences with the POR, we vigorously defended them against Stalinist repression (see "Freedom for Cuban Trotskyists!" *Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965).

Today, in the wake of Castro's death, many "democratic" imperialist leaders are emphasizing their denunciations of repression in Cuba and their call for "free elections." The latter, i.e., parliamentary democracy, is nothing other than a call for "democratic" counterrevolution: the electoral rise to power of capitalist-restorationist forces. It stands in sharp counterposition to soviet democracy, which would encompass those parties chosen by the workers and their petty-bourgeois allies that stand for and defend the socialist order. We defend the Havana regime's imprisonment of active collaborators with U.S. imperialism. At the same time, we oppose the repression of critics or political opponents who are not actively working for counterrevolution.

Notwithstanding its many accomplishments and its survival for nearly 60 years, the Cuban Revolution remains in the crosshairs of the world imperialist order. The U.S. and other imperialists aim at nothing less than the re-enslavement of the island and its people, turning it into a neocolony of poverty, racial and sexual oppression and brutal exploitation.

Revolutionaries in the U.S., the bastion of world imperialism, have a special duty to defend Cuba against capitalist restoration and U.S. imperialism. The isolated Cuban deformed workers state will not forever be able to withstand the immense economic and military pressures exerted by the U.S. and the capitalist world market. Genuine defense of the Cuban Revolution demands a revolutionary internationalist perspective that links the struggle against Stalinist misrule with the fight to destroy U.S. imperialism from within through socialist revolution. The key requirement for victory is the building of revolutionary workers parties as sections of a reformed Fourth International that Trotsky would recognize as his own. ■



**October, 2014: Cuban doctors and health care workers unload medical supplies at airport in Freetown, Sierra Leone, as part of mission to combat Ebola epidemic.**

Havana on New Year's Day 1959, the bourgeois army and the rest of the capitalist state apparatus that had propped up the hated Batista dictatorship disintegrated. The initial measures of the petty-bourgeois Castro government were to outlaw gambling, suppress prostitution and seize the holdings of Batista and his cronies. These actions were followed by modest land reforms in line with Cuba's 1940 bourgeois constitution.

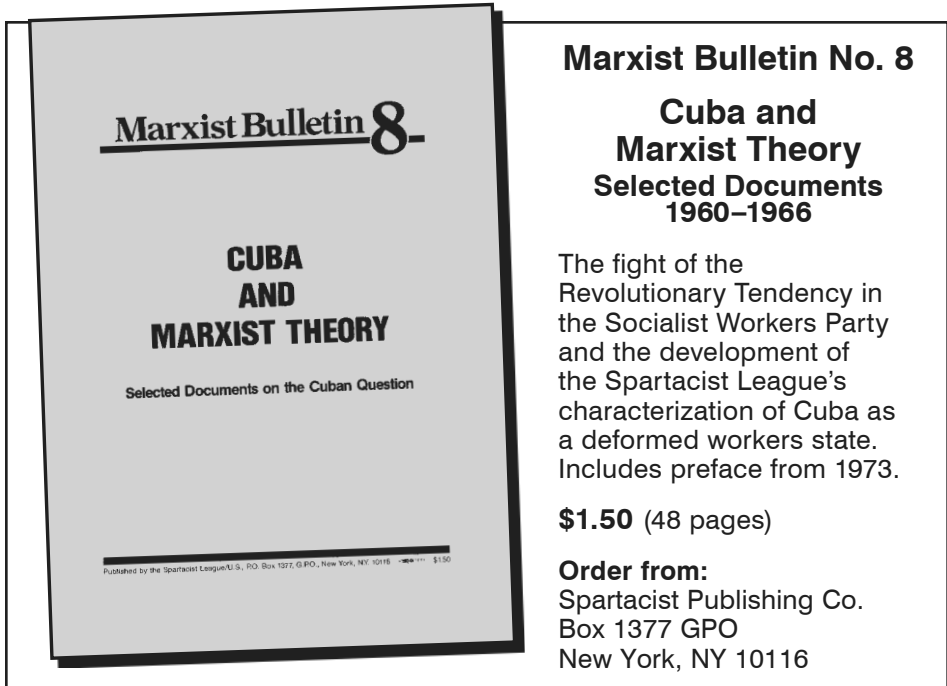
Fidel Castro's forces were temporarily estranged from the bourgeoisie and independent of the proletariat. Under ordinary conditions, such rebels in power would have followed the same pattern as similar

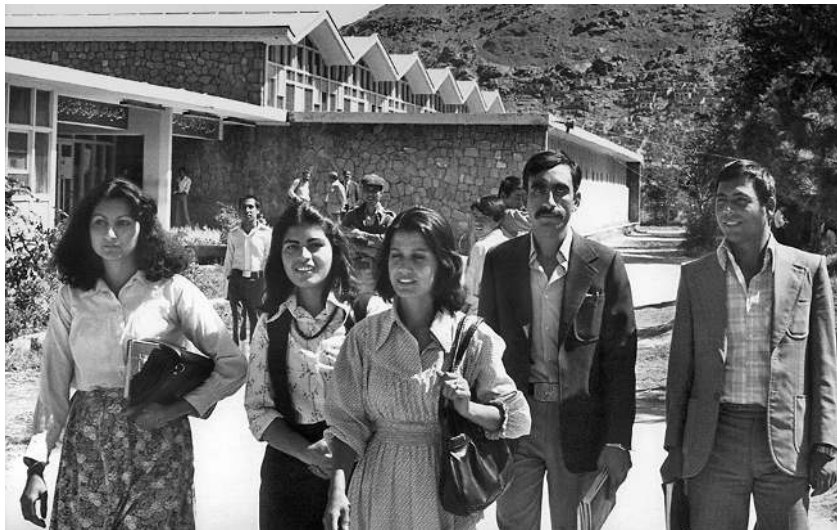
It was only as a result of exceptional circumstances—the absence of the working class as a contender for power, imperialist encirclement and the flight of the national bourgeoisie, and a lifeline thrown by the Soviet Union—that Castro's petty-bourgeois government smashed capitalist property relations (see "Cuba and Marxist Theory," *Marxist Bulletin* No. 8).

This Trotskyist understanding of the Cuban Revolution was a key programmatic question in the founding of our organization as the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the early 1960s. Following the 1959 victory of Castro's rebels, the SWP



**New York City, September 1991: Spartacist League demonstrates in solidarity with Cuba outside Cuban Mission to the UN. The 1991-92 capitalist counter-revolution in USSR cut off vital lifeline for Cuba.**





**Left: Students in Kabul, 1981. Soviet intervention provided huge gains for Afghan women, offered prospect of modernizing Afghanistan. Right: Afghan women on outskirts of Kabul, March 2016.**



# Afghanistan...

(continued from page 8)

in 1978. What followed was the biggest covert operation in CIA history, and a decade-long proxy war against Soviet military forces that intervened to bolster the modernizing PDPA regime. The Taliban, Al Qaeda and ISIS are all first- or second-generation offspring of that U.S.-sponsored “holy war.” As Trotskyists who stood for the unconditional military defense of the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state and championed the cause of women’s emancipation, we proclaimed: Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Recognizing that the material conditions did not exist for meaningful social progress to emerge from within Afghan society, where for instance mullahs outnumbered manufacturing workers over seven-to-one, we also raised the call: Extend social gains of the October Revolution to the Afghan peoples!

The mullahs had first gone on the warpath when the PDPA embarked on a program of limited reforms, which included canceling peasant debt, carrying out land redistribution, prohibiting forced marriages and lowering the bride price to a nominal sum. The new government made schooling compulsory for girls and launched literacy programs for women, building 600 schools in just over a year. The earliest bloody confrontations were over women’s education, as PDPA cadres and women literacy workers were driven from villages and killed. A *New York Times* reporter observed at the time: “Land reform attempts undermined their village chiefs. Portraits of Lenin threatened the religious leaders. But it was the Kabul revolutionary Government’s granting of new rights to women that pushed Orthodox Moslem men in the Pashtoon villages of eastern Afghanistan into picking up their guns” (9 February 1980).

Unable to fend off the U.S.-backed *mujahedin* insurgency, the PDPA repeatedly requested Soviet intervention. Fearing the collapse of the PDPA regime and acting

to defend its southern flank, the USSR sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan in December 1979. While the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy did not send the Red Army into Afghanistan to accomplish a social revolution, Soviet military intervention objectively opened up the possibility of bringing the country into the modern world and of freeing Afghan women from degradation. Women were encouraged to shed their head-to-toe *burqas* and study science, medicine and engineering. By the late 1980s, almost two-thirds of the students at Kabul University were women. Some 5,000 Afghan women took up arms as members of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan militia.



**Soviet Red Army troops and Afghan soldiers, Afghanistan, 1980.**

Instead of fighting to finish off the *mujahedin*, a prospect that was within reach by the mid 1980s, the Kremlin bureaucrats temporized, hoping to appease the U.S. In 1988-89, the Moscow bureaucracy withdrew the Soviet Army. This betrayal left Afghanistan to revert to the benighted and tribal-riven slaughterhouse it is to this day and helped to pave the way to the destruction of the Soviet degenerated workers state itself. With the

counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92, U.S. imperialism’s strategic target became the Chinese deformed workers state, where capitalist rule was overthrown in 1949. The occupation of Afghanistan and the placement of U.S. military bases in Central Asia and elsewhere in Asia under the rubric of the “war on terror” were part of the effort to militarily encircle China and ultimately to restore capitalist rule.

## U.S. Imperialism: Enemy of Women’s Rights

Under the occupation, Afghanistan has been a living hell for women. To sell their predatory war, the U.S. rulers cynically

who do, including by spraying acid in their faces, and kill their teachers. The literacy rate for women is 12 percent, while their average life expectancy is 44, some 24 years below the world average. To escape their unbearable lives, many women turn to suicide. Even by official Afghan accounts, some 2,300 women and girls kill themselves every year—more than six each day.

The regimes installed by the imperialists during the occupation have been based largely on the same reactionary, anti-woman *mujahedin* tribal warlords who devastated the country after the Soviet withdrawal. They populate both the central and provincial governments and maintain private militias linked to smuggling and criminal networks. These warlords hold the power of life and death over the mass of Afghan people through extortion, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and murder. They kill farmers and grab their land. Empowered by the imperialists and enriched through bribery, contract awards and opium traffic, their patronage networks have become more entrenched.

Gul Agha Shirzai, who ran Kandahar in the early 1990s during the bloody rule of the *mujahedin*, was picked by Washington to be governor of Kandahar province after the invasion and is now governor of Nangarhar. Asadullah Khalid, another recipient of U.S. largesse, is the former head of Afghanistan’s security agency. According to Human Rights Watch, he has participated in arbitrary detention, torture, extrajudicial summary executions and rape of women and girls in his private prison. When he traveled to the U.S. for medical care in 2013, Barack Obama paid him a visit.

The horrors produced by U.S. imperialism’s anti-Soviet “holy war” and current occupation of Afghanistan show once again that the capitalist system is a barrier to social progress and a breeding ground for war. The only possibility of a future free of wars, misery and want rests in the victory of international socialist revolution. When the workers of the world rule, deeply oppressed and backward regions like Afghanistan will finally begin to be lifted out of their poverty, isolation and obscurantism, laying the basis for the genuine equality of all peoples. Our purpose is the forging of a multiracial revolutionary workers party, section of a reformed Trotskyist Fourth International, that is dedicated to leading the American proletariat in overthrowing the U.S. imperialist beast from within. ■

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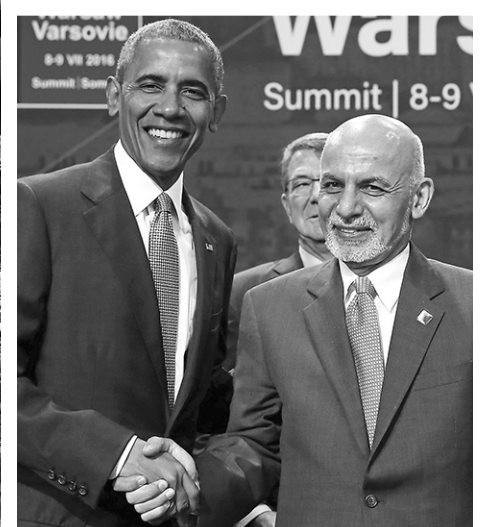
# WORKERS VANGUARD

## Afghanistan Occupation: 15 Years of Imperialist Crimes

October marked the 15th anniversary of the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan. In the launch of what has become the longest war in U.S. history, on 7 October 2001 cruise missiles and bombs rained down on Kabul, Kandahar and other parts of Afghanistan. Weeks of relentless pounding reduced villages to rubble, destroyed hospitals, obliterated Red Cross facilities and wiped out entire families. Here was the world's mightiest imperialist power, having taken hits on its own territory in the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, lashing out to assert its unchallenged supremacy. The vast firepower unleashed on an already devastated Afghanistan, like the "shock and awe" invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003, was part of a drive by U.S. imperialism to extend its global military reach and maintain its control over world resources.

When Barack Obama took over as Commander-in-Chief later in the decade, Afghanistan was his preferred theater of imperialist carnage, citing it as the "good war" compared to Bush's folly in Iraq (conveniently sidestepping the bipartisan support for the devastation of both countries). In 2009, Obama pledged to win the war and diverted tens of thousands of troops from Iraq to Afghanistan, almost tripling the number of troops there to nearly 100,000. Despite this "surge," a highly publicized offensive to wrest control of Kandahar from the Taliban collapsed. Today, even as the U.S. military continues to wreak havoc, the Taliban controls large swaths of the country, including areas outside its traditional Pashtun base, and has made repeated incursions into the northern city of Kunduz. Meanwhile, Al Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS) have both claimed shares of the country.

At the time of the invasion, we declared: "It is the obligation of the proletariat internationally, especially workers and minorities in the U.S., to defend Afghanistan in the face of the imperialist attack" (WV No. 766, 12 October 2001). We made clear that having a military side did not constitute the least political support to the reactionary, woman-hating Taliban cutthroats. Similarly, in defend-



Reuters photos

**Bodies of children slaughtered in imperialist airstrike in Kunar province, April 2013. Above: President Obama with Afghan president Ashraf Ghani at July NATO summit, Warsaw.**

## All U.S./NATO Forces Out Now!

ing Iraq against the U.S. invasion, we gave no political support to the dictatorial capitalist regime of Saddam Hussein. As we stressed, the chief means of defending the two neocolonial countries was through international working-class struggle, above all by the multiracial U.S. proletariat. The post-September 11 wars abroad were part and parcel of an onslaught by the capitalist rulers against workers, minorities and just about everyone else at home. The "war on terror" that was a pretext for the occupations was used domestically to increase state repression and regiment the population. Today, we call for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. and NATO troops and bases from Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Near East.

The last 15 years have left a trail of death and destruction in Afghanistan. Airstrikes and official night raids alone have killed tens of thousands of civilians. In 2010, amid the seemingly endless litany of sadistic outrages perpetrated by imperialist forces, a dozen U.S. Army soldiers stationed in Kandahar province were charged with the murder of Afghan civilians for sport. The soldiers cut up the bodies of their victims, keeping fingers and skulls as trophies of war. Bagram air base—a site where hundreds of people were tortured and killed and just one of Washington's many "black site" detention centers worldwide—became synonymous with U.S. imperialist savagery.

The bloodshed has displaced over one million people within the country and forced over two and a half million to flee it altogether. In 2015, Afghans constituted the second largest group of asylum seekers in Europe after Syrians. In October, by threatening to cut aid to Kabul, the European Union pressured the Afghan government to take back tens of thousands of refugees and is now set to deport them en masse to the very hellhole that the European imperialist powers helped create.

With occupied Afghanistan sinking deeper into a morass of corruption, terror, brutal oppression of women and murderous tribal warfare, the country remains one of the world's poorest. More than ten million of its 33 million people live in dire poverty, and three-quarters of the population is illiterate. Afghanistan has the highest infant mortality rate in the world; 60 percent of its children are malnourished and only 27 percent of Afghans have access to safe drinking water.

Obama has refused to lift the imperialist jackboot. In an Orwellian moment a year ago, the U.S. president declared that he does "not support the idea of endless war"

while announcing nearly 10,000 troops would remain in Afghanistan, ostensibly as "trainers." In fact, they have been carrying out special operations raids and supporting drone assassinations. As the *New York Times* reported regarding U.S. soldiers who fought the Taliban at close quarters in October 2015: "Nine months after President Obama declared an end to the American combat mission in Afghanistan, these Green Berets were at the leading edge of an offensive to retake Kunduz, where Afghan forces had melted away as insurgents attacked, leaving an entire city in the Taliban's grip for the first time since 2001" ("U.S. Role in Afghanistan Turns to Combat Again," 8 May). Tens of thousands of military contractors, i.e., mercenaries, also remain in the country.

The criminal bombing of a Kunduz hospital operated by Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) last year underscored the ugly reality of the new phase of the war. This November, U.S. aerial bombardment of a village outside Kunduz killed at least 30 civilians, including women, children and babies. With fewer troops available for night raids, the U.S. has become increasingly dependent on airstrikes, which have more than doubled since last year.

### Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan

U.S. imperialist crimes in Afghanistan extend back more than two decades before the occupation, to a time when Washington heralded the Islamic fundamentalists as "freedom fighters" against the Soviet Union and showered them with billions of dollars in aid. The CIA began to fund and train the woman-hating *mujahedin* reactionaries shortly after the Soviet-allied, left-nationalist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) came to power

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**San Francisco, October 2001: Spartacist contingent marches in antiwar rally.**